

REVIEWS

Christian England - Its Story to the Reformation by David L. Edwards. Collins. 1981. 351 pp. £7.95.

This really is a very good book indeed. It has the merit of dealing with a period of English history in short compass. The period stretches from the beginning of Christianity in England to the Reformation. It is a story of English history that has not before been told so succinctly and so well. The book will do for the general reader, for it is clearly and beautifully written. It will do for the student who wishes a general introduction to this period of English Christian history for it is accurately and carefully written and has valuable bibliographies.

The book is very well produced by Collins. It is in two parts. The first part deals with the England before the English, and continues through the conversion of England into the Anglo-Saxon achievement which came to its end in the Norman Conquest. The second part of the Middle Ages takes us from the Norman Conquest to the Reformation. The first part gives a clear and interesting account of a period all too little studied. The second part travels through some of the most fascinating periods of English Church History. We are given miniatures in clear outline of the great Anselm and of Thomas Becket. We have brought before us the great years of building the churches, of the Orders, the Cistercians and the Friars, and the development of the Cathedrals. We are reminded of the tragedy of Richard II, the writing of Piers Plowman and of Geoffrey Chaucer. There is the fascinating account of the way in which the church which seemed so secure suddenly found its security less than it had imagined. The undercurrent of the Lollards comes into view, the uncertainty of the Wars of the Roses, followed by the establishment of the Tudor Monarchy and the break with Rome. All in all, this is a book to read and to savour. It is a book to buy. David Edwards has put us in his debt before by his ability to paint word pictures on a large canvass with bold sweeps of accurate statement when others would have tried the same picture and have cluttered it with detail. Once again we must be grateful to him.

W. M. S. WEST

Religion in New Zealand Society edited by B. Colless and P. Donovan. T. & T. Clark. 1980. 215 pp. £6.95.

Sociologists, theologians, and historians have combined to produce twelve essays of much more than parochial interest. At times they seem to be writing of a piece of Western European culture transplanted to the South Pacific, with much the same religious mix, affected by much the same trends, as in this country. Secularisation, a fascination with Eastern religions, ecumenism, the charismatic movement, the strength of the "sects", all pose familiar questions to New Zealand Christians.

Yet it is the important differences that give the book peculiar interest. Although the population is predominantly of European origin, there is a substantial Polynesian (Maori) minority, plus now a large immigrant population from the Pacific Islands. There are indigenous Maori churches which combine Christian elements with specifically Polynesian ones, but even in the traditional churches there is to be found a characteristically Maori approach and contribution. Thus, for example, there is the Maori habit of tending to avoid separately religious places and occasions: worship occurs quite naturally on community occasions and in the centres for communal meeting (Europeans meet to worship; Maoris worship when they meet!).

The mainline Protestant churches are discussed by the Presbyterian Ian Breward, whose question, "Have the Mainline Protestant Churches Moved Out of their Colonial Status?" points to a pre-occupation natural among Christians whose churches began in the nineteenth century missionary ventures. There is still a strong, though rapidly weakening, emotional tie with Europe and especially with the United Kingdom. Among others, Baptists were able quickly to establish churches that were independent of the mother country, but in general the institutional independence was achieved more rapidly than the emotional. An English reader will find it odd that there is no section on the Free Churches as such; but where there is no establishment, there cannot be dissent. In earlier generations the distinction was carried over from England and had some currency, but is now relatively defunct. It is perhaps worth noting that in some things N.Z. churches have been pioneers, not least in the ordination of women: Anglicans, Methodists, and Presbyterians all preceded their British parents in this respect.

This collection should prove of interest to all students of the sociology of religion, and indeed to all with friends and relatives in New Zealand. A glossary, especially of Maori and Indian terms, and in places a fuller explanation of the cultural background, would have added to the book's value. Nevertheless, the essays stimulatingly illuminate a society with unusual religious cross-currents.

J. A. ZIESLER

The Baptist Insurance Company Limited. A short history of seventy-five years 1905-1980. by C. J. L. Colvin. 1980. 23 pp. Available from the Baptist Insurance Company Ltd, 4 Southampton Row, London WC1B 4AB.

All the major denominations have in the course of time set up their own insurance companies to provide financial cover for church property and, more latterly, for local church personnel as well. Baptists lagged behind other denominations in this regard (only the Salvation Army, apparently, formed theirs even later). As with so much else in twentieth century Baptist life, J. H. Shakespeare provided much of the original impetus.

This short history of the Baptist Insurance Company was commissioned by the Directors of the company to mark the seventy-fifth anniversary of its founding. None could be better qualified to write the story than Mr Colvin, who was actively associated with the Company for thirty-three years, including twenty-three as General Manager and Secretary from 1956 to 1979. It is a story worth the telling, for not only have so many Baptist churches and individuals benefitted from the insurance services provided, but the funds of the denomination have been substantially helped from grants made by the Company. It is a story of repeated endeavour to harness business acumen for the work of the churches, and Mr Colvin has written it well and attractively.

K. W. CLEMENTS

The Gospel According To St. John (Volume 2), by R. Schnackenburg. Burns & Oates. £22.50.

Happily for English readers rumours that the translation of Schnackenburg's great three volume commentary on John had been discontinued have proved baseless, and now volume two has appeared - the exegesis of chapters 5 - 12 with seven excursuses on various theological themes (e.g. ego eimi; the Son; truth; life; exaltation and glorification; eschatology).

Schnackenburg accepts the order chapters 6; 5; 7.15 - 24, 1 ff (in contrast to post-war British scholarship which has been content with our canonical order).

While textual, literary critical and grammatical issues are dealt with where necessary, the main emphasis is on a theological exegesis and, as such, this commentary cannot fail to be rewarding for anyone prepared to sit down and work through it.

The approach is that, while in places there is sound historical tradition, these chapters bear the imprint of the Johannine kerygma and the Johannine church(es)' struggle and breach with the synagogue towards the end of the first century. There is no literary dependence on the Synoptics, though they may have had some influence at the oral stage of the Johannine tradition.

No preacher or student could read this without having a firmer grasp of the fourth evangelist's thought and being stimulated in his own thinking and preaching.

I have one moan - and I think that it ought to be made loudly. There are an incredibly high number of misprints. My list came to 56 in 534 pages (commentary and notes). This is just not good enough, especially at such a high price. It is a pity such a great work was not proof-checked before printing.

J. E. MORGAN-WYNNE

PRINTING OF THE QUARTERLY

As announced at the recent Annual General Meeting of the Baptist Historical Society, conventional printing has become financially prohibitive for this journal. From this issue on, therefore, the *Quarterly* will be produced by the Rank Xerox method. This will not affect the content in any way, nor the capacity of the journal to meet the detailed requirements of academic writing. Writers are asked to follow the "Editor's requests and suggestions to contributors" (available from the Editor) in preparing their material for submission. Intending contributors should, as far as possible, ensure that their copy is in its final form when submitted, since even small revisions (especially additions) are difficult at proof stage.

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