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BOOK REVIEWS

A Social History of the Nonconformist Ministry in England and Wales, 1800-1930. by Kenneth D. Brown. (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1988, ppxi + 244, £25. ISBN: 0-19-822763-9)

Nonconformity in the nineteenth century claimed the allegiance of approaching half the churchgoing population, of whom most belonged to the Baptist, Congregationalist and various Methodist denominations. Yet we have hitherto known very little of the men who led their respective flocks in the Bethels, Bethesdas, Providences and other chapels of England and Wales between the close of the first great generation of evangelical revivalists at the end of the eighteenth century and the retirements and deaths of the last generation of Victorians in about 1930. Dr. Brown has set out to remedy this situation with a prosopographical study of some 2,554 individuals in five main denominations - Baptist, Congregationalist, Wesleyan, Primitive and United Methodist (as defined in 1907). His major source is the obituary notices in the various official publications of the denominations, supplemented by ministerial college archives, autobiographies, personal correspondence and biographical works of reference.

Remarkably, Dr. Brown has hit upon one of those rare areas in Methodist history in which the official statistics - even those of the Wesleyans! - are deficient. He is nevertheless able to construct statistical profiles of denominational ministries which, whilst sometimes rather thin, nevertheless suggest an overall picture of comparative characteristics and trends which is both informative and important to an understanding of Nonconformity. In particular, he brings out the way in which itinerancy set the Methodist experience apart from that of the other denominations. Though he does not specifically refer to the "Worn-Out Preachers' Fund", he certainly shows the validity of the name. In forty-two separate tables of figures he approaches the lives of his nonconformist ministers from every possible angle: social structure by previous and paternal occupation; geographical origin; conversion age; proportion formally trained; student drop-out rates; experience of higher education; pay scales; length of pastorate; marriage rates; number of children; premature retirements and deaths; other activities in the community; and overall age profile of the profession. College principals are given special attention.

This bombardment with figures is both necessary and well-done, although it can sometimes be confusing to the reader - and perhaps also to the author when he writes (p. 44), "Wales made a disproportionately large contribution to the Wesleyan ministry. It produced rather more than a tenth of the connexion's ministers over a period when Welsh Wesleyan membership represented only about a sixth of the total." Despite this slip, the strength of the book generally lies in the judicious use of sometimes inadequate statistics and the carefully interpreted conclusions which are derived from them. One of the most interesting topics approached by this method concerns the private lives of these public men and the effect of their ministries on their families. To be a minister's wife was both a vocation and a life sentence. How good to see them rescued from obscurity!

The overall conclusion is rather sad. The nonconformist clergy were not particularly intellectually distinguished, well-trained or adequately paid. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, with the social base of recruitment narrowing,

the average age of the ministry rising and its public esteem falling, Nonconformity was looking increasingly vulnerable to decline. The late-Victorians and Edwardians did not read the signs but the First World War dealt all the denominations a severe blow which exacerbated the trends. The passionate evangelist of 1800 was becoming - in words written by the freethinker, J. M. Robertson and apt to Dr. Brown's conclusion although not quoted by him: "The average cleric, it is avowed, is neither an intellectual nor a typically religious man. He is a 'social organizer,' a manager of gatherings and 'collections,' often a diligent visitor of the sick, but at the same time a promoter of whist drives." That so much faith and energy should have resulted so often in so little must give pause for thought.

EDWARD ROYLE

A Methodist Pilgrimage in France. The Journal of Matthew Gallienne. 1877. ed. John Waller (Loughborough: University of Technology, Ashby Road, Loughborough, LE11 3TU. pp.vii + 96, £4.95 post free, ISBN: 0-902761-21-8)

This book is essentially the journal of a six-week "Holiday" of travel, undertaken by Gallienne and his wife in 1877, primarily to visit their two sons Matthew and Edward, both ministers in the south of France, and to revisit places where Matthew senior had ministered from 1835 to 1847 and from 1852 to 1859.

Dedicated to his wife, Gallienne's journal is thus in part an exercise in free-flowing nostalgia, in which personal and place names play a vital part. On May 31st, for example, he writes:

Reminded on the way of my first walks, in 1836, and remembered every turning of the roads and lanes visited at Codognan; Benoit, Dumas, Sagnier, Cotton, Morin - and the girl who first taught Matthew his letters - Delphine Benoit (p.41).

He is of course particularly interested in the spiritual and material state of the Methodist churches which he visits; most of them have financial crises, some aggravated by one of the periodic attacks of vine-destroying phylloxera. His "Holiday" includes preaching (3rd June "on Philip and the Ethiopian with some liberty and great perspiration", p.44), scripture distribution, and keen observation of the world around him, both in its negative aspects:

Sunday 10th June. This is the Lord's day; but how different to [*sic*] one in our favoured England ... Shops open, business going on and the streets being swept; no appearance in them of rest or of worship ... [In an outdoor mass for the feast of Corpus Christi] at the elevation of the host, a band - struck up an opera air, and at this sound, people fell down to worship the wafer-God! pp.48f.)

- but also with appreciation of the creature comforts which France had to offer, "a capital 'diner' ... at 2, with wines to correspond" p.47): "the 'diner' (of 6 courses) over-abundant; the kindness of our hosts adding to the tastiness of the meal", followed by a service at 3 with a storm brewing, but "not one sleeping!" p.55).

It is easier to begin quoting than to know where to stop; but space must be kept to acknowledge the editor's labour of love in rescuing the journal from obscurity, and in providing a comprehensive range of "reader's helps", including illustrations, maps and plans; a biographical sketch; a note on Britain, France and the Channel Islands in 1877; Gallienne's own foot-notes, printed as addenda, the editor's own invaluable "foot-notes" (unfortunately endnotes); and a bibliographical note. A not so little gem.

PAUL ELLINGWORTH

The Bedford Moravian Church in the Eighteenth Century ed. Edwin Welch (Bedfordshire Historical Record Society, 68, 1989, pp 283, £12, BHRS Publications, c/o County Record Office, County Hall, Bedford MK42 9AP).

Comparatively little has been published in English about the eighteenth-century Moravian Church, and much of it is very inadequate, creating and perpetuating a misleading picture. The publication of this collection of documents from the Bedford Congregation Archive is therefore particularly important, since it allows English Moravians of the 1740s and 1750s to speak for themselves.

Those familiar with the uniquely voluminous Moravian archives will appreciate the magnitude of Edwin Welch's achievement in selecting and transcribing these documents. The book provides samples of most of the wide range of types of material preserved in a typical Moravian congregation archive. Together with a full set of illustrations, they convey something of life in a Moravian congregation. Some individual letters and memoirs are of considerable significance for the wider history of the English Moravians and of the Evangelical Revival.

For those who will need to refer to this book regularly, replacement of the German day symbols with M, T, W, etc (rather than simple omission) and a list of the individual letters and papers would have been helpful. The opportunity might have been taken to re-unite parts of documents separated when bound according to page size. Fuller notes might have explained to non-specialists the significance of cryptic or seemingly unimportant entries.

Edwin Welch's introduction successfully supplies the general reader with the context in the history of the Moravian Church and the Revival. If his presentation of 'Moravianism' is dominated by its prehistory in the Church of the Bohemian Brethren - Zinzendorf, for example, was not 'converted ... to Moravianism by 1727' (p.2) - in this he merely reflects the mistaken perception fostered by most of the English literature.

The introduction also contributes helpful new information about the origins of the Bedford revival, which, amongst other things, casts doubt upon the 'legend of the smallpox epidemic'. False as it may be, however, the statement that over sixty people died in one week is not a fantasy of later historians, but occurs in a report written by one of the leading Moravians in England just four years after the events. The later supposition that Benjamin Ingham was summoned to help because of an exodus of ministers' is rightly dismissed, but for both the 1742 report and the memoir of Ann Okely the significance of the epidemic was that by it 'all the Town and Country were divinely prepared to be serious' (p.219). The latter document, incidentally, does *not* state that Ingham's first contact with Bedford was in the summer of 1738 (when he was in Germany); his visit actually took place in late December.

Unfortunately the Introduction contains a number of errors. Bedford was one of the few early congregations and settlements in England, and provides a very good example of Moravian life, but it was neither England's second Moravian congregation, nor its first Moravian settlement, and did not provide 'a pattern for future developments'. Its archive is not the most extensive in England. Nevertheless, this is a very useful publication of an important collection of documents, which should do much to increase understanding of the Moravians in England at the time of the Revival.

Evangelicalism in Modern Britain. A history from the 1730s to the 1980s by D. W. Bebbington (Unwin Hyman, 1988, pp xi + 364, £35 hardback, £11.95 paperback, ISBN:0-04-941018-0)

How does one attempt a history of British Evangelicalism over the past 250 years? A movement which bestraddles denominational barriers, whose adherents have varying degrees of loyalty to their respective churches, a swirling mass of the theological pressure groups, Conventions, Leagues, Unions, Alliances and study circles, some quietist, some mightily belligerent, dying old sects and thriving new ones, quickly becomes the church historian's nightmare. How for example does he embrace the likes of Wesley and Toplady, Archbishop Sumner and Hugh Bourne, Hugh Price Hughes and Hudson Taylor, all of them most decidedly evangelicals, within the pages of a single volume? David Bebbington believes it is just about possible, and uses two guiding themes to hold these disparate tendencies, groups and individuals together. One is what he defines as the four evangelical fundamentals to which all who claim the name must adhere: biblicism, crucicentrism, conversionism and activism. The other is his own distinctive (some would say obtrusive) philosophy of history which is a species of cultural determinism, for he sees eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth century evangelicalism as successive expressions of the Enlightenment, Romantic and (with apologies for not being able to find a less confusing word) Modernist ideologies of the times. Even so it soon becomes apparent that David is giving his readers not a chronological history but a series of thematic studies, which treatment is the only feasible one in the circumstances but suggests that a more appropriate title for his book could have been *Essays in Modern British Evangelicalism*. As one would expect from the quality of the author's previous works these are all of a high order. Particularly thorough and enlightening are the accounts of the influences moulding John Wesley's spirituality, the roots and fruits of Irvingism, the various strands of nineteenth century millenarian speculation, the origins and impact of Keswick holiness teaching, the diverging of liberal and conservative evangelicalism in the present century and the background to the charismatic movement. To have all these themes treated so learnedly within the compass of a single volume makes this book essential reading for the church historian: it will be particularly useful for undergraduate courses and in ministerial training.

If the reader soon becomes aware that there are significant omissions in the present volume, that is not so much grounds for complaint as for suggesting that a complementary book of essays would help to redress the balance. First there is a marked preoccupation here with the upper echelons of society: popular evangelicalism is virtually excluded. The Primitive Methodists are hardly mentioned at all (and even then only to show how rapidly they underwent embourgeoisement), nor are the Churches of Christ, the Salvation Army and, perhaps most surprisingly of all in view of the space devoted to the charismatic movement, the classical Pentecostals. Second, there is little mention of that most characteristic feature of evangelicalism, its hymnody, yet David's time span begins with Wesley's and Watts' hymnic expressions of the great doctrines of the faith and ends with contemporary Anglican evangelicalism's like endeavours in the lyrics of Dudley-Smith, Baughen, Saward *et al.* Third, in David's haste to get to grips with Renewal and Restorationism, the Calvinist revival of the twentieth century is seriously underplayed: from the decades after 1914 when the Sovereign Grace Union (not mentioned here) was the sole focus

in England of Calvinist sentiment to the burgeoning of hard-line Calvinism in the 50s and 60s. Baptists were particularly affected, yet the author, himself a Baptist, does not mention the severe tensions within the denomination (which others have not experienced to the same extent) between the sterner conservatives ('Reformed Baptists') and the bubblier charismatics. Finally when David dons the prophet's mantle and predicts (p247) that charismatic Christianity will become the 'prevailing form of Protestantism in twenty first century Britain', a prospect which will thrill or chill according to one's own predilections, he should really try to assess the strength of conservative sentiment within the main-line churches. This cannot be gleaned in regard to Methodism from scanty references to MRF or CEIM (Headway is not mentioned at all), nor in respect of the URC from a single reference to the Group for Evangelism and Renewal (GEAR). Yet it is, strangely, in this most liberalised of all the denominations, 'the great desert with an occasional oasis', as one evangelical unkindly described it in the 70s, that the current leadership is most acutely aware of the growing challenge from the religious right. Another essay (it would be a controversial one) seems to be called for. *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain* is wonderfully informative and provocative in that readers are left asking for more. The author, whose own conservative commitment is enlivened by a nice sense of humour and strengthened by a remarkably wide grasp of his source material is clearly the man to provide a second helping.

IAN SELLERS

The Unacceptable Face. The Modern Church in the Eyes of the Historian, by J.H.S.Kent (SCM Press, 1987 pp.256, £12.50 ISBN: 0-334-01712-2).

This intriguingly titled work is really a revised and expanded version of the author's contribution to Volume Two of the *Pelican Guide to Modern Theology* published in 1969. The latter has been a boon to teachers and students alike: the new book will be no less useful. The present reviewer has already found the summaries of recent writing on German pietism and its political attitudes, the origins of Methodism, Victorian Catholicism and Catholic Modernism particularly succinct and enlightening. This is vintage Kent—irreverent, cynical, humorous and acerbic in turn, and with many a pithy summing-up. 'Was there *anything* like the English Reformation?' Was there indeed? As for the now notorious apocalyptic final paragraph where the author looks out over a darkening Christian Europe with the enemies gathering at the gates, the identity of these latter-day barbarians is a conundrum for us all: are they soulless secularisers or assorted fundamentalist fanatics? At this point the smile on John's face becomes even more wry: he enjoys our puzzlement and he is not telling.

I.SELLERS

Chosen by God: A list of the Female Travelling Preachers of Early Primitive Methodism by E. Dorothy Graham (W.H.S. Publishing Office, pp. iv + 31, 1989, £3, ISBN: 0-900798-12-2)

Readers will no doubt be familiar with the photographs in the older Primitive Methodist histories of a few of the women itinerants who served the connexion in its early decades - the formidable Elizabeth Bultitude in her poke bonnet, the

kindly Mary Porteous (looking rather like a favourite aunt), and the arthritic and drooping Sarah Kirkland. These photographs can mislead us. They show their subjects in advanced years, not in their splendid prime; and they may suggest that there was only a handful of P.M. full time women itinerants, like themselves. However Wesley Swift pointed out as long ago as 1953 that he had identified something like forty but felt there must be many more, and now our Secretary has put us all in her debt by producing this biographical list containing the names of ninety-three women itinerants whose names appeared on the stations printed in the *P.M. Minutes*, with a supplementary list of another thirty - one who worked as itinerants before stationing lists were published, or who worked full time but locally as hired local preachers or some such arrangement.

Perhaps Dr. Graham has been too strict in her distinction between the two groups, as Sarah Kirkland and Mary Hawkesley (the first two of all the female travelling preachers employed by the Primitive Methodists), are confined to the Additional List when surely they should be in among their fellow pioneers in the major grouping. This is a small quibble in what is a very valuable tool. Dr. Graham has gone to very considerable pains to track down and identify her subjects who, because of the sparseness of evidence, are often the most shadowy and fleeting of figures. She sets down in brief what is known of them, lists the circuits in which they served, and quotes all the references in each case. The descriptive accounts sometimes run to fairly substantial paragraphs with colourful detail, but in many cases can only tell us that nothing is known of a preacher beyond the bare stationing details or, for example, that she did not receive her full stipend, or (in one or two cases) that she caused trouble!

Behind all this summarised data there lies a fascinating story of how and why the P.Ms came to use women as travelling preachers, what their impact was, and why they were no longer welcomed as the Connexion ran into its middle years and settled down into a more institutional form. Dr Graham told this story in her doctoral thesis, and we look forward to having it made widely known in published form at some future date.

G. E. MILBURN

The Cocker Connection by Mark Dalby (London: Regency Press, 1989, pp 160, £4.95. ISBN:0-7212-0784-7)

The author, an Anglican priest, has produced a readable history of an 'ordinary' Methodist family who became established in widely scattered locations. Benjamin Cocker (1785-1867), an Almondbury weaver and Wesleyan preacher typifies in many ways the early nineteenth-century West Riding Methodist. In the next generation four of the five sons emigrated - Benjamin II settled in Michigan, becoming an Episcopal Methodist minister and university professor; in Tasmania, David became an active Methodist and businessman; Joshua was the first British Consul in Tonga (did his Methodism help?) and William, after a banking career and membership of the Vancouver House of Assembly, vanished in Mexico, possibly murdered. Only Joseph stayed at home, becoming a bank manager in Dewsbury, where he was a member of Centenary chapel and active in public life. More than thirty family letters are reproduced, two of which provide useful comments on the fortunes of the Wesleyan Reformers around Huddersfield.

D. C. DEWS