

their starting point from the modern man's mentality they have revised the gospel to meet the dilemmas in which the church has found itself in the face of wholesale indifference and hostility". Once again these are challenging words of rebuke for evangelicals: "we have not esteemed and prized the perfection of Scripture and its finality ... we have resorted to other techniques, expedients, and methods of dealing with the dilemma that confronts us ..." (p21). Here then are the words and concerns of a theologian rooted in the Word of God and concerned that the message of God should not be "derived FROM the modern mentality, but declared TO the modern mentality in all the desperateness of its anxiety and misery" (p22).

These four volumes then are refreshingly contemporary, outstandingly biblical and profoundly practical. The reviewer heartily concurs with the statement by Ian H. Murray, the editor, in his Preface to Volume 2 (p.ix): "The twentieth century may be remembered by the church of the future as an age in which theology and Christianity, learning and piety, had parted company, save in the testimony of a few. Prominent among the few was the author of these pages and we do not doubt that they will be read with deep enrichment by the redeemed until the Advent of the Saviour." Buy and then read these volumes soon!

### 'MEMOIR OF THE WESTMINSTER DIVINES'

Review by Rev Gilbert Evans, (Flint, Clwyd)

James Reid. Banner of Truth. 2 volumes in one binding. pp768.  
published January 1983. £7.95

Another considerable work from the Banner of Truth has been published containing valuable historical and theological material concerned with the individuals who took part in the Westminster Assembly.

For those familiar with Puritan literature a mere glance at the index of names reveals a galaxy of stars in the firmament, some more luminous than others, perhaps because their writings have prevented distance making dim? This book rescues many great and good men from unmerited oblivion. (p24 preface).

James Reid evidently held these divines in the highest admiration and spent much time and energy on collecting information about them in

order to counter historical calumnies and to exhibit the religious principles and correspondent practices of these reformers. Such men resisted the excessive powers of prelacy and kingly absolutism and took part in a great parliamentary revolution which changed the course of British history.

The preface extols the value of history and specifically biography as a vademecum for all who study divinity (p1). "The lives of good men should often be in the hands of students of divinity" (p4). The author's design is not to lavish ecomiums, but to hold up for imitation eminently learned and spiritual characters, who were indefatigably diligent in propagating the spiritual kingdom of Christ".

An account is given of their birth, descent, education, religious convictions, character, choice sayings and remarkable actions, calibre, achievements, afflictions, deaths, literary remains etc.

Reid's fervour is coaxing, though his style is a little prolix. Perhaps readers will share in the reviewer's regret over the passing of an age of elegant use of language such as Reid displays. We must also lament the difference in stature between the divines of this day and that of the subjects of this memoir. "There were giants in those days"!

There is a great disparity in the length of each subject depending on availability of material at such a remove in time and dependent too on the fame or literary/ecclesiastical accomplishments of individual men. Not all took to the pen so perhaps their value was not perceived by their own and succeeding generations, for example: Thomas Micklethwait (Vol.2 p86) and John Philips (Vol.2 p120). Others are better known, such as William Twisse the Assembly's Prolocuter, John Arrowsmith, Jeremiah Burroughs, Edmund Calamy, Joseph Caryl, Thomas Gataker, Thomas Goodwin, William Gouge, John Lightfoot, Stephen Marshall, Philip Nye and the four illustrious Scottish Commissioners - Robert Baillie, George Gillespie, Alexander Henderson and saintly Samuel Rutherford. Such men were at the heart of the great national deliverance from Laudinism and were providentially placed for the on-going of Reformation principles when these were endangered by the equivocation of the Stuarts.

An account is given of the historical antecedents and occasions of

the conflict between Throne and Parliament, and between Erastian and Laudian power-lust, on the one hand and Reformation principles and liberty of conscience on the other. The struggle was intense, as these kings, who desired absolutist powers, encouraged and elevated bishops to aggregate power under the maxim "No Bishop, no king". They attempted to raise the power of the crown above the authority of the law and strove to suppress those opinions and institutions peculiar to Calvinism employing tyrannical courts of High Commission and like repressive measures to achieve their designs (preface pp11-13).

The power of their convictions was supportive to these men during these troubled times and abundant afflictions. To quote a choice saying of Simeon Ashe when dying, "The comforts of a holy life are real and soul supporting. I feel the reality of them and you may know by me that it is not in vain to serve God" (Vol.1 p125). Another saying "Without Me, said Christ, you can do nothing; neither without Him can we endure any thing".

Another godly divine, well known through his writings, particularly "A lifting up for the Down-cast" is William Bridge who also has some of his choice sayings recorded e.g. "Let your company be always such as you may get good from and do good unto". "When you are alone, think of good things; and when you are in company, speak of good things". "Keep the truth, and the truth will keep you". (Vol.1 p144).

Reid's task was an arduous one in a busy life and he was able to proceed in the collection and recording of his materials only at intervals. He mourns the lamentable scarcity of biographical information despite all his efforts and expense, consequently of so many great men we know only enough to wish that we knew more.

The reviewer recognises that the author had great admiration for the subjects of these memoirs, he also sees the important place these men had in the struggle for the Reformed faith in these islands. One must however, be prepared to exercise patience and perseverance with regard to the prolixity and repetitiousness of such a collection - reading it through does call for sympathy and a taste for antiquity. Nevertheless, it is a collection which brings those who contributed so much to the Reformed faith so much nearer, and provides unique information to balance the distortions or neglect of prejudiced minds.

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