

BOOK REVIEWS

Chronological and Background Charts of Church History, by Robert C. Walton. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1986. 84 charts plus indices and table of contents. \$11.95.

According to its author, this rather unique spiral bound book was published for the dual purposes of providing "accessibility [to] the factual information involved in the study of church history," and of "presenting to students an interpretive overview of a particular trend or pattern" in the history of the church. The book fulfils these purposes admirably and should find satisfied users not only among "professional" students of church history, but also among pastors and interested church members.

The plan of the book is to present charts which trace the development of church history viewed from a variety of perspectives. The charts are grouped according to the standard chronological division of church history into Ancient, Medieval, Reformation and Modern eras. The Modern era is further divided into European and American sections. Each section contains a number of charts by means of which personalities, doctrinal development, or specific movements may be traced. For example, among the eighteen charts in the section on the Ancient church, are ones which deal with the Early Symbols of Christianity, the Apostolic Fathers, the Second-Century Apologists, the Arguments of the Apologists, Books Debated for Inclusion in the New Testament Canon, Ante-Nicene Heresies, the Pelagian Controversy, and the Ecumenical Councils of the Early Church. Thus the purpose of providing a number of interpretive approaches to the factual information is well fulfilled.

In addition to the sections of charts dealing with eras of church history, there is a final section labeled "Miscellaneous," just to pick up some things that were missed in the other charts. Here we find, for example, charts on the Parallel Structures of Systematic Theology and Church History, on the Pendulum Effect in Church History, on the Popes Recognized by the Roman Catholic Church, and even one on Notable Protestant Historians of the Church. Mr. Walton has made a real effort to be thorough and the results are gratifying.

Beyond the above description of content it is notable that while most of the charts are in tabular form, a number are in the form of a genealogical tree, particularly those which trace the history and developments in the various denominational systems. We find presented this way the family trees of the American Presbyterian, Baptist, Lutheran, Reformed, Congregational, Pentecostal, Methodist, Episcopal, Mennonite and even Mormon and Adventist churches.

In a work of this nature, the theological stance of the writer is of some importance because this will bear directly on the choice and organization of material. Mr. Walton was student at Westminster Theological Seminary under professor Claire Davis and so comes to church history from a Presbyterian-Reformed and conservative background. This reviewer, who teaches church history at a Reformed seminary and who studied at Westminster Seminary with the first generation professor of church history, Mr. Paul Woolley, finds the choice of materials and the approach to them to be very good. It is doubtful that any orthodox evangelical will find great problems with Mr. Walton's choices and approach.

In this kind of work it is almost impossible that one would not have some quibbles about the inclusion or exclusion of certain facts or ideas. However, this reviewer finds this book remarkably free of even such small problems. We do note, on the one hand, that mention of some of the earlier monastic developments would have made the chart on monastic orders more instructive. On the other hand, the opposition of Rev. Asahel Nettleton, one of the usually un-

known but real heroes of Calvinism, to the "new measures" of Charles Finney's evangelism are duly noted in the chart on the Second Great Awakening.

As the author points out, knowledge of church history is not optional for those who wish not to live as helpless children in the face of developments in their own time. *Chronological and Background Charts of Church History* is a very helpful tool for knowing and understanding this important subject. It belongs on the shelves and in the regular use of serious Reformed pastors and church members.

Robert E. Grossmann

By His Grace and for His Glory: A Historical, Theological and Practical Study of the Doctrines of Grace in Baptist Life, by Thomas J. Nettles. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1986. Pp. 442 including indices. \$12.95.

Thomas J. Nettles is the professor of Church History at the Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary in Memphis, Tennessee. In this volume he shows the reader what are the Calvinist roots of the Southern Baptists in the United States.

The book is divided into three main sections. In the first section, which this reviewer found to be the most interesting, he gives the history of the Baptist churches in England and here in America. The history is not a dry recitation of facts but a living recital of the contributions of many of the leaders in the Baptist churches. He leaves no room for doubt that the early Baptists were Calvinists through and through. Men such as Charles Spurgeon and John Bunyan, who are widely known outside of Baptist circles, are but two of the many leaders who led the churches in the Calvinistic path. Not only did they emphasize the five points of Calvinism, but they went into detail in setting forth such doctrines as election and reprobation. So it was in the early days of the Baptist movement in England.

Many of the Baptists who came to America in the early years became members of Congregational churches. It was always difficult to ascertain the precise doctrinal position of

these churches because of the fact that they were *congregationalists*! Yet, many of these churches held firmly to the teachings of John Calvin.

Deism and Socinianism in England in the eighteenth century began to have a definitely negative effect on the Baptist churches. They began to embrace the more modern teachings. Today, though they have by no means disappeared, the Baptist churches are no longer Calvinistic.

The second main division of the book deals with doctrinal exposition. Much of this material is not new for those who read this journal because it is a restating of our Reformed position. It is interesting, though, to hear the Baptists speak of *infra-* and *supra-lapsarianism*! It is also interesting to read a discussion of divine sovereignty and human responsibility and the relationship between the two. According to the author, the break with infant baptism came about 1611. It sounds strange to many of us that one can be Reformed or Calvinistic and deny infant baptism! To many it sounds like a contradiction in terms. Is Calvinism not the five points plus the covenant? Not much is made in the doctrinal exposition concerning the covenant.

The author bemoans the fact that liberalism has also crept into the Baptist churches. There are theologians who use the terminology of a by-gone day but have placed a different content into the terms. There were those who sought to stem this liberal tide but were themselves too ambiguous to make any impact on the church.

The third main part of the book deals with practical exhortations. Some very interesting things are mentioned in this section. The author speaks of a "hyper" *supralapsarian* Calvinism which really has no room for evangelism. On the other hand, the author maintains that God's sovereignty is the only consistent basis for evangelism. This truth is well argued. He deals with evangelism at some length and concludes that the "altar call" or "the invitation" are not biblical precepts for evangelism. These means came into the Baptist churches in the latter part of the 18th century. Charles Finney introduced the "altar call." He believed that

regeneration was the work of man! Asahel Nettleton spoke scathingly of Finney's methods "as exceedingly calamitous to the cause of revival." Yet, these methods have become common among Baptists.

During the first 275 years of their history the Baptists were Reformed. Reformed Baptists are therefore not of a late date, as is often thought.

This is a valuable book in the library of any minister, theological student or professor of theology. Here in one volume is a fine history of the Baptist churches, along with a demonstration of the beauty of the Reformed faith and the disaster of its loss. Baker Book House has enriched the theological world by publishing this fine book.

Henry Vander Kam

Worldly Saints: the Puritans as they really were, by Leland Ryken. Academie Books. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1986. Pp. xx + 281. \$14.95.

The Puritans: Their Origins and Successors. Addresses delivered at the Puritan and Westminster Conferences, 1959-1978, by D. M. Lloyd-Jones. Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1987. Pp. xiii + 421. \$25.95.

While both of these books focus on the Puritans, each has a different purpose. Ryken's volume is an introduction to the thought and life of these important people. Lloyd-Jones' volume is a collection of lectures given over nineteen years at the annual conference on Puritan studies held in London's Westminster Chapel. Thus there is not the same cohesiveness in this book as that which characterizes Ryken's. Lloyd-Jones focused on various men, movements and theological concepts of Puritanism.

In his introduction to *Worldly Saints*, Dr. James I. Packer commends Ryken on his "fine presentation of the Puritan outlook (p. xvi)." Ryken writes,

My purpose in writing this book has been threefold: (1) to correct an almost universal misunderstanding of what Puritans really stood for, (2) to bring together into a

convenient synthesis the best that Puritans thought and said on selected topics, and (3) to recover the Christian wisdom of the Puritans for today (p. xvii).

He has done exactly what he set out to do. By means of quotations from the Puritans themselves, he has dispelled many of the grotesque myths which have been nurtured about them through the years. He has brought us to see their profile in such a way that we gain a new appreciation for their ideas and ways. Of course, Ryken is aware that the Puritans were imperfect men and thus had their faults. These he has also placed before the reader.

Perhaps the most valuable section of the book is the author's analysis of the Puritan view of war, marriage and sexuality, money, the family, preaching, church and worship, the Bible, education, and social action. Each chapter is full of quotations from Puritan writings and, since the material presented is meant to be an introduction, the chapter is concluded by a fine bibliography for further study. The book itself is supplemented with a fine eight-page bibliography and more than forty pages of bibliographic notes. Further, it is enhanced by many fine illustrations.

If there are any weaknesses, two might be noted. First, while a distinction is indeed made between the Puritanism of England and New England, little attempt is made to distinguish between the varieties of Puritans as Knappen did in *Tudor Puritanism*. Admittedly, this is not easy since the categories are not always airtight. However, it is not true that all Puritan thinking was alike. Of course, Ryken knows this. Second, the fine quotations are often taken from works in which they, too, were quotations. This, however, does not diminish the value of this fine introductory work.

As has already been stated, Lloyd-Jones' work is very different in nature. Whereas Ryken uses a "wide-angle lens" (to use his words) to view the Puritans, Lloyd-Jones focuses very carefully on certain aspects.

Anyone who has ever heard "the Doctor" lecture on Puritan history can testify of his breadth and depth of

knowledge in the field. Customarily he would speak at Westminster Chapel without notes. Although there are several times in these lectures where notes might have allowed more precision in detail, the value of this publication is not marred by lack of them.

Lloyd-Jones never saw history as a mere intellectual pursuit. For him this would mean that history had no value. He saw history as being helpful for us to understand the church as it was *and* is. Again and again he made this point in these lectures.

In "Puritanism and Its Origins" Lloyd-Jones tackled the long debated question of when Puritanism began. He believed that to date its inception with the first use of the term in 1567 misses the important fact that the spirit of Puritanism was present already in 1524 in William Tyndale. He saw this spirit of Puritanism already present in the first generation English reformers. Perhaps this lecture, presented in 1971, is among the finest in the book because it gives an historical introduction that is more than a general explanation.

Lloyd-Jones also believed that whereas the *spirit* of Puritanism began with Tyndale, "from the standpoint of an organized body of thought and organization" John Knox was the founder. His lecture "John Knox--The Founder of Puritanism" (1972) substantiates this thesis.

In his 1962 presentation "Puritan Perplexities--Some Lessons from 1640-1662," he laid out his analysis of why Puritanism as a movement disappeared and a form of denominationalism developed in England. He listed 1) "the admixture of religion and politics"; 2) "the unfortunate and most regrettable divisions in the ranks of the Puritans"; and 3) "the State-Church idea."

Some of the other topics dealt with include: "Henry Jacobs and the First Congregational Church," "Jonathan Edwards and the Crucial Importance of Revival," "The Christian and the State in Revolutionary Times: The French Revolution and After" (in which there is a discussion of Abraham Kuyper), "Preaching" (an analysis of Puritan preaching), "John Calvin and George Whitefield," and

“John Owen on Schism”--a thorough analysis of Owen’s dogmatic writings on this subject.

Although no bibliography appears, there are many references to writings--both primary and secondary.

Certainly “the Doctor” was well qualified in the subject area. This work cannot be dismissed. Thankfully, these essays, many of which are long out of print, have been made available in a more permanent form.

Anyone interested in learning about this significant part of church history will go a long way by perusing these notable volumes.

Jerome M. Julien

The Orthodox Presbyterian Church, 1936-1986, ed. Charles G. Dennison. Philadelphia: Orthodox Presbyterian Church, 1986. Pp. 357. \$18.95.

The subject of this review is an official historical publication of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC) which seeks to provide a broad range of information on the denomination’s first fifty years, as well as a fairly detailed introduction to the church as it exists today. As such, it is a particular kind of book directed to a particular kind of audience, an audience one might well presume to include mostly Orthodox Presbyterians. At the same time it is a very valuable resource for anyone who might have a special interest in the OPC or in the course of Reformed Christianity in the United States, or even simply of Christianity more broadly conceived.

It might be well to mention at the outset that this reviewer is of the second category just mentioned. As a pastor of the Reformed Church in the United States which has had fraternal relations with the OPC for more than half of its history, it has been my privilege to know personally a large number of the pastors and congregations of the OPC and to work closely with their Committee on Foreign Missions for some fifteen years during the 26-year partnership of our denominations in the support of missionaries Harvie

Conn and Lendal Smith. I have also participated fully in the congregational lives of OPC Churches in San Francisco and Glenside, Pennsylvania during residences in those cities.

The book before us is the product of many minds and many pens. Nevertheless it has been edited into a very cohesive and well-rounded picture of the OPC by editor Dennison and his helpers. The book is organized into chapters dealing with the work of each of the major denominational committees, with each of the presbyteries, with several areas of interest within the OPC. It concludes with a register of each of the pastors who has served in the denomination.

The opening chapter is somewhat ambiguously entitled "Introduction," a brief historical overview of the whole denomination which is mixed with a theological apology for its existence and an exhortation to continue in the spirit in which it was founded. Such a chapter is fitting for a book of this nature and does serve as a useful introduction for readers who are Orthodox Presbyterian, although it might sound somewhat like ax-grinding to a non-sympathetic reader who has had little previous exposure to the OPC.

Dealing with areas of special interest within the OPC are chapters on Orthodox Presbyterian women, OPC statistics, the Center for Urban Theological Studies, and Westminster Theological Seminary. Of these, the one on Westminster Seminary has the most to offer beyond obligatory mention in a book of this nature. The statistics given amount to a total of four numbers giving the approximate membership of the denomination at its beginning, and at the times it consisted of about 10,00, 15,000 and 18,000 (presently) members. Of course, a number of the founders of Westminster Seminary were also founders of the OPC. Thus from its very beginning there has been a symbiotic relationship between the two, which has not, however, always proceeded on as solid ground as that between the bees and the flowers. About this the book is open and honest, although more laudatory than critical.

The bulk of material in the book consists of brief but thorough histories and descriptions of each congregation of the OPC. Each congregation is treated in the chapter on the presbytery of which it is a part. Thus the main order of the book is geographical rather than chronological. This would seem almost necessary in a book of this nature; however, a great deal of attention has been paid also to the chronological order of events as well, and this is very helpful to the reader.

Before closing this review it might be useful to accept the editor's prefatory invitation to reflect on the history of Reformed denominations. In his opening sentence Mr. Dennison recalls that Westminster Seminary professor Paul Woolley estimated the useful life of a modern denomination to be about fifty years. Mr. Dennison does this to raise the question of "whither the OPC?" This is not a facetious question, either for the OPC or for others of us who think that Reformed Christianity is truly Christianity in its most biblical form. Running the risk of doing this from a glass house, one does wonder where the OPC is headed. This question arises particularly in light of its recent consideration of entrance into the theologically broader Presbyterian Church in America, a move that was considered not on the basis of negotiated merger, but on that of simply joining the PCA. Furthermore, one wonders what the old stalwarts of the OPC would think of a denomination where six-day creation is a minority position and where the practice of infant-communion has gained a significant following. No one who is committed to biblical fidelity expects that the biblical church should remain static; the OPC has shown real growth in numbers and works over the years, growth that is an inspiration to others of us in the Reformed community. Nevertheless, the developments mentioned do evidence real doctrinal change, the kind of change that the OPC of the past had been a leader in fighting, in our opinion rightly, because the foundation for Reformed doctrine is the unchangeable Word of God.

In sum, *The Orthodox Presbyterian Church: 1936-1986* is a well-produced book, one that perhaps should be required reading for pastors and elders outside of that honored

MID-AMERICA JOURNAL OF THEOLOGY

denomination more so than for those who are inside of it. It has a “captive” audience; it deserves a broader one. It also deserves an index.

Robert E. Grossmann