

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](https://paypal.me/robbradshaw)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *The Baptist Quarterly* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_bq_01.php

Reviews.

The Anabaptists, Their contribution to our Protestant Heritage, by R. J. Smithson, B.Th., Ph.D. (James Clarke & Co., Ltd., 5s. net.)

For three hundred years this inoffensive people was regarded with horror because of one episode of a few months at Münster. The actual misdeeds of a few hundred people there, less shocking in themselves than the vengeance taken on them, or than many sieges in the Thirty Years' War, have fouled the mind of the average reader, who has imagined that all Anabaptists were tarred with the same brush. It was useless to tell him that within a year, a great congress of Anabaptists repudiated the men of Münster; and that in a short time the whole community was avowedly Pacifist.

Still less does the average man know that the Anabaptists have an unbroken history from 1523, that they have plenty of records, and fine old hymn-books; and that to-day they may be met both in their original homes, Switzerland, Holland and Germany, but also in France, Russia, Canada, the United States, Mexico and Paraguay. A people of such tenacity of life, with such tenacity of conviction, is a people that deserves study.

Dr. Smithson does not profess to tell the full story of the Anabaptists and of the Church's indebtedness to them. That has yet to be written. But the story so far known is full of interest, and has attracted Communists, Socialists, Pacifists, who discern a kinship—even though to many of them it is tainted by being mixed up with religion! The purpose of the Scottish student is to estimate their governing principles, to recognise what was common to the groups which arose in Central Europe. They had no spectacular head; their policy hardly allowed any one to stand out; as against leaders of the calibre of Zwingli, Luther, Calvin, they could set only Denck, Hubmaier, Marbeck, Hutter, Menno. There is a most valuable chapter on their character and principles, the very core of the work; we could have welcomed an expansion, with definite illustrations. For concrete facts are still needed to smother the legend that Anabaptists were anarchists, polygamists, adventists.

The whole system of their real faith and order is here reviewed under seventeen heads. The result is to show that they were and are essentially evangelical; that they believe firmly in the freedom of the will; the responsibility of each man for following the inner light and interpreting the Scriptures; in precise obedience to Christ as to taking no oath, never fighting.

At one time they were the majority of all the evangelicals in the Netherlands; but the awful persecutions of Alva both reduced their numbers, and brought to the front other bodies

who did not believe in passive resistance, but who fought—strange to say, the people who blamed Jan of Leyden for fighting did not blame William of Orange and all his Calvinist supporters. Calvin they regarded as gravely mistaken when he sided with Luther on the bondage of the will.

Dr. Smithson has produced a book of real service to those who want an up-to-date study. We hope that he will continue his researches and face two questions which are hardly touched on in this volume but which press for solution: One, the relation between the Anabaptists and the so-called anti-hierarchical sects of the Middle Ages—whether or in what ways the Anabaptists were indebted to the latter as their spiritual forerunners. This investigation involves a careful, critical comparison of the information discoverable concerning both in extant contemporary documents or local legends. Two, the relation, if any, between Continental Anabaptists and English Baptists, involving a similar enquiry.

The author has abstained from pointing his moral. But even since he published, Europe has been scandalised by the vast warlike preparation of some rulers and their refusal to believe in peaceful negotiation. We saw in 1914 that non-religious Socialists promptly abandoned their principle of no war. The events of the next few years made Europe a most difficult home for all Anabaptists—Mennonites or Hutterites, as they often call themselves. And now the tendency is to leave Europe, which America regards as bewitched with war. Have not the humble Anabaptists their age-long message for the world to-day?

Two errors of the press have escaped notice on p. 26. "*Petrobrusians*" should be "*Petrobrusianos*," and "*Cluniacens*" should be "*Cluniacensis*."

A Handbook to the Baptist Church Hymnal (Revised). By Carey Bonner and W. T. Whitley. (Psalms and Hymns Trust, 2s. 6d. net.)

For ministers, choirmasters and organists this little book will add considerably to the value of the Revised Baptist Church Hymnal. Biographical notes on the authors of hymns and of tunes, a classification of hymn-writers according to their period, indexes of Bible characters, places and texts supply valuable information. The editors suggest a selection of hymns for the seasons and the major events of the ecclesiastical year, and Dr. Wheeler Robinson contributes a classification based on such topics as the Life of Man, the Revelation of God, the New Life in the Holy Spirit, the Praise and Worship of God. The subdivisions of these topics are in themselves most suggestive, and

might well serve not only as a guide in hymn selection but also as a guide to preaching. There is a chapter headed, "The Church's Growth in Devotion." The skill with which this theme is handled suggests the amazing erudition of Dr. Whitley, and its necessary brevity does not prevent the author from illuminating many a hymn by a deft reference to the circumstances of its origin. The practical value of this book is nowhere shown more than in the opening chapter, with its suggestions for variety in worship in relation to the introduction of new tunes and the development of hymn-services.

Epochs in the Life of the Apostle John, by the late A. T. Robertson, of Louisville. (Oliphants, \$2.)

Professor Robertson's last book! He has done much for exact scholarship in New Testament study; but this does not bristle with Greek. His own judgment is valued so well, that an eleven-page bibliography of other writers was hardly needed, and might have been replaced by an index. Indeed, we would rather have had his own opinions than constant summaries of what others have thought. On some points he did not make up his mind finally; but he practically takes the Sunday-School view that John was the disciple whom Jesus loved, that when relieved from the personality of Peter, he settled in Ephesus, evangelised and guided the neighbourhood, wrote his epistle and two notes, interpreted the work of Jesus in his Gospel, was banished to Patmos and there saw the Revelation. All these points are discussed fully and repeatedly. There is nothing about John's influence on the next generation, Papias, Ignatius, &c.; or on the developments due to Marcion and Montanus: the title of the volume does not promise these, but does well describe its scope.

The Employment Exchange Service of Great Britain, by T. S. Chegwiddden and G. Myrddin-Evans. (Macmillan, 14s. net.)

In a foreword, Mr. Winston Churchill reminds us that twenty-two years have passed since the first Employment Exchanges were established. This study of them was written at the request of Industrial Relations Counsellors, Incorporated, of New York, and it is likely for many years to remain the standard work on the subject. Our particular interest at the moment is that the joint author, Mr. G. Myrddin-Evans, is the secretary of our Bloomsbury Central Church. In a forthcoming issue we hope to have an article on Unemployment Insurance, and further reference to this volume will then be made, but meanwhile we heartily commend it to all students of economic and social affairs.