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reluctant to comment. The recorded conversation on this subject conveys far more vividly than any succinctly minuted resolution the depth of feeling of those involved in making such a momentous decision.

Archivists, librarians and historians now recognise that oral history recordings, together with other sound recordings such as steam trains, industrial and agricultural machinery, ceremonies and events, all have a valid place in the field of archives and that these sound archives deserve to be preserved as well as the more conventional manuscript and printed archives. The B.B.C. Sound Archives are perhaps the best known national collection. In the north west of England negotiations are in progress for the formal establishment and development of a North West Sound Archive, which will collect, record and store tapes in permanent archive conditions and make them available for use by researchers. A basic collection of recordings of such items as interviews with craftsmen and elderly residents, folksongs, children's songs and games already exists and this will form the nucleus of the Archive. Until and even when there are sufficient official "Sound Archives" local history societies and individuals have a valuable contribution to make. Some are already busily collecting recordings for their own use and interest, and their collections could well become a major source of information on the locality and its people in the past. Time in this as in many activities is against us and there is some urgency if reminiscences of elderly people are to be recorded before it is too late. Those who have already involved themselves in the field of oral history will know how enjoyable it is and what a wealth of fascinating detail can be elicited. Those who have not yet considered oral history either as a source of information or as an activity should be encouraged to do so, for as well as being enjoyable it is, to use the words of Roger Cholmondeley's witnesses, "niedefull and meritoric".

EILEEN SIMPSON.

Reviews

The Ontology of Paul Tillich. Adrian Thatcher. O.U.P., 1978. 196 pp. £8.50.

This book is basically material presented for a research degree. It should be said that it is a valuable and encouraging example of a somewhat suspect genre. It does a job that needed doing and it does it with crystal clarity. Dr. Thatcher examines Tillich's ontology with care and seeks to lay bare at key points its historical roots. Being, Non-Being, New Being, Essence, Existence—all these key terms are subjected to scrutiny and their meaning(s) in the Tillichian system plotted. A brief closing discussion stakes out a necessary place for ontology within both the philosophical and the theological enterprises.

The reviewer should perhaps play fair and disclose an interest. It is nice to have one's prejudices confirmed. I have for long inclined to the view that philosophically Tillich perpetrated a gigantic hoax! Dr. Thatcher is too guarded to put it as cavalierly as that and surely would not be prepared to underwrite such a verdict. Nevertheless, he has provided some powerful ammunition; and I have to confess that his final fair and generous attempt to assess positively Tillich the philosopher left an inescapable impression of unintentional damning with faint praise. A slap-dash American reviewer of the theological scene a quarter of a century ago wrote: "There appear to be three inexhaustibilities in the universe, in the following order of importance: God, the world, and Paul Tillich . . . There are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamed of in his philosophy, but not many more". It sounds formidable! So what went wrong? Dr. Thatcher hits most of the nails squarely and ruthlessly on the head.

The major flaw is the eclecticism. Nothing wrong in that, unless and until you blithely juxtapose incompatibilities and shift your usage as the argument proceeds. No wonder there has been difficulty in locating Tillich's philosophical ancestor. His name is Legion—even if over the Systematic Theology broods predominantly the shadow of Schelling. The result is—in Dr. Thatcher's restrained style—"confusion". The strength of his probing study is that it so precisely maps that confusion. Why then Tillich's enormous influence? Probably it was not his ontology that captured disciples so much as a phenomenology of human existence that was sufficiently sensitive, evocative and of its time to speak powerfully to an era. In that respect he is still without rival. Even now, Christian practitioners of pastoral care have to search far and wide for a comparable undergirding.

On the negative side, it may be that the excessive time-lag between Systematic Theology Volume 2 and Volume 3 hindered understanding of what was really afoot. A reasoned claim can be made for the conclusion that it is Volume 3 that really controls the whole. Dr. Thatcher provides some support for this view in his tracing of the way in which Hegelian dialectic in Tillich seems to produce a phasing out of the Trinity in favour of Spirit.

All in all, this is a worthy treatment of a significant theme.

NEVILLE CLARK.

Committees for Repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts: Minutes 1786-90 and 1827-8. Edited by T. W. Davis. London: London Record Society, vol. 14, 1978. xxvi, 126 pp. £8.00.

1978 marks the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts. The London Record Society, which exists to publish primary sources relating to the capital, has chosen to commemorate the event by printing the minutes of the committees of Dissenters that pressed government for the measure. Repeal was the grand political aim of Dissenters in the 1820s, so that this volume lays

bare the political organization of the Dissenting community at the time. It also incorporates the minutes of a similar committee that sought repeal in the years 1787-90 but failed partly because the public mood in Britain became hostile to reform in the wake of the revolution in France. Why was repeal so eagerly desired?

The two statutes had formed part of the "Clarendon Code" that had been designed to exclude those who would not conform to the established church from enjoyment of public office in Restoration England. The Corporation Act (1661) provided that members of town corporations should have taken communion according to the rites of the Church of England within one year before their election. The Test Act (1673), directed primarily against Roman Catholics, laid down that anyone receiving office under the crown in a wide range of (largely unspecified) civil and military capacities should take anglican communion within three months after appointment. Dissenters under their terms could not become local leaders. By the later eighteenth century, the acts were not effective. In an increasingly tolerant atmosphere annual indemnity acts gave a measure of protection from prosecution to Dissenters who infringed the acts. Although there was a prosecution under the Corporation Acts as late as 1824, Nottingham corporation, for instance, in the century before 1828 included hardly any who were *not* Dissenters. In practice Dissenters were not punished for assuming public office, and were seldom even deterred by fear of prosecution. The question recurs: why then was repeal so eagerly desired?

The answer is essentially that Dissenters felt themselves to be the victims of social discrimination. Theoretical prohibition from honourable office was resented, as it was put in the 1820s, "because it affects all Dissenters unfavourably in public estimation, stigmatizing them with comparative disaffection, and thereby holding them forth to the ignorant, the bigoted, and the malevolent, as marks for obloquy and even persecution" (Address of the Dissenting Deputies to the Protestant Dissenters of England, *The Baptist Magazine*, August 1823, p. 340). They were branded as holding a lower station in society. Hence in practice there were few dissenting Justices of the Peace, not because of legal provisions but because of social prejudice. Dissenters felt that repeal of the acts would deal a blow to such prejudice. Their case was logically strong. Nonconformity was no longer a crime: why should penalties for it remain on the statute book? The age was increasingly liberal: why should coercive acts in matters of religion survive? Many Dissenters also objected to the debasement of the Lord's Supper implicit in making its observance a test for public office. And their increasing numbers (Baptist congregations alone went up from 432 in 1812 to 799 in 1827) made their theoretical exclusion from local leadership all the more anomalous.

The pressure exerted by deputations and petitions on liberal politicians worked. Lord John Russell in the Commons and Lord Holland in the Lords sponsored a repeal bill that received the royal assent in

June 1828. Baptists took a significant part: Henry Waymouth, a Baptist layman, was deputy chairman of the repeal committee; F. A. Cox, minister of Mare Street, Hackney, and secretary of the General Body of Protestant Dissenting Ministers, played a prominent role in the committee's proceedings. Even though some Baptists like Joseph Ivimey of Eagle Street, London, were fearful that the measure would form a precedent for the removal of Roman Catholic civil disabilities, most joined in the mood of exhilaration that a century and a half of degradation was over. From the minutes now published we learn that £3,000 was spent on the agitation as a whole, and over £1,000 on a banquet for 400 to celebrate the event. A century and a half further on it is good to be reminded by this helpfully edited volume that full religious liberty has a relatively short history in England.

D. W. BEBBINGTON.

The Welsh Baptists. T. M. Bassett. Swansea: Ilston House, 1977. 414 pp. £4.00.

T. M. Bassett has spent many years in teaching and studying the history of Wales, especially the history of the Baptist cause in Wales. The present volume can be regarded as the summation of his labours.

The real origin of the Baptist churches in Wales is with John Miles and his church at Ilston which is properly recalled in the name of the denominational publisher. Mr. Bassett pays tribute to the work of Miles and the founding of the early causes at Ilston, Llantrisant, Hay, Abergavenny and Carmarthen, a sterling achievement when one recalls the geographical distances between these places and realises the difficulties of travel in that time. However, the author does not flinch from emphasizing Miles' flight to America in 1663 and the fact that his will contained references to slaves. The most interesting chapter in the book is the one that follows Miles' flight, which describes those who kept the church alive during the years of persecution, most of them ordinary folk like the girl from Llanfihangel Brynpabuan who died excommunicate and was buried like a criminal at the crossroads. Such people saved the church during those years and enabled a new Welsh Association to be formed in 1700; they contributed thereby much to the strength of Welsh dissent.

One of the merits of this work is its emphasis on the people who made up the churches. We are shown how, during the eighteenth century, ministers maintained themselves by farming and keeping school. A change came when craftsmen joined the ministry and became the main force behind Baptist expansion. The Methodist revival led to the adoption of Methodist eloquence, hymn-singing and emotionalism. The French Revolution was not without its impact. Morgan John Rhys was a disciple of this revolution but the fear of reaction among his fellow-Baptists eventually made this great Welshman leave for America. It is sad to recall that his ideas about the Sunday school and missionary works failed to take root for some decades.

Conservatism won the day and theological debates became more

intense in the early decades of the nineteenth century. These were the years of the great preacher, Christmas Evans, the force of whose eloquence is well illustrated by the author. The churches prospered and entered into an age of chapel-building often with very little financial backing but great hope. Mr. Bassett points out that few chapels were full when the denomination was at its zenith. The decades of success were soon followed by those of decline. The author is very interesting on the coolness of Baptist leaders towards trade unions and their relationship with industrial society, while his final pages are a candid assessment of the church's rôle in the present century.

We have indicated only a little of the wealth in this book. We can but admire the numerous references from nineteenth-century periodicals, but deplore the failure to provide a map showing the location and spread of the Baptist churches in Wales. During recent years, a number of denominational histories have been published in Wales and this book, like the others, contributes to a greater understanding of the history of Christianity in Wales and to the history of the Welsh people. The fathers of the Baptist denomination would have been pleased to see that this work was first published in Welsh.

DAVID LEWIS JONES.

A History of the Hertfordshire Baptists. David Watts. 53 pp. £0.80. Available from the Rev. D. R. Watts, 58 Chandlers Way, Hertford.

Mr. Watts has done his Association great service in producing this comprehensive but very readable guide to the story of the Hertfordshire churches. He traces the formation and growth of both the Particular and the General Baptists in the county and their relationship with churches in neighbouring counties. He gives us some intriguing glimpses of the life and witness of these churches which leaves us wishing for more. We may well echo Dr. B. R. White's words in the Foreword, that Mr. Watts will be encouraged to go on and produce some more detailed studies of some of the churches in the county.

T. S. H. ELWYN.

Sheep Bell and Ploughshare: The Story of Two Village Families. Marjorie Reeves. Bradford-on-Avon: Moonraker Press, 1978. 180 pp. £4.95.

Ivimey in Vol. IV of his *History of the English Baptists* records the building of a meeting-house in the Wiltshire village of Bratton in 1734 and states that prior to its building, the pastor of the Westbury church preached "in the parlour of Mr. Jeffery Whitaker, who kept a boarding school". This was Jeffery Whitaker (1664-1737), who with his wife had been in the habit of walking through the fields to worship with the Baptists of Westbury. When he died, the school and the 14 beds for the boys passed to his bachelor son, another Jeffery Whitaker (1703-75). In 1740 on a visit to his elder brother in London, he heard

Dr. Andrew Gifford preach. A smallpox epidemic was one of the things he had to face when he got home. A substantial legacy of his to the chapel helped to support the minister, to provide an annual sermon on the dangers of Warminster Fair, to aid the poor of the village and to see that poor children learned to read and write. The dust-jacket of this attractive and important book carries a reproduction of a watercolour of "Yew Trees", the Whitaker home.

The book is important because we have so few detailed accounts of Baptist life in the 18th century. Dr. Marjorie Reeves is a distinguished historian and educationalist. Twenty years ago she provided the *Victoria County History of Wiltshire*, Vol. III with a fifty-page history of Nonconformity in the area, which has remained a challenge to those responsible for subsequent additions to that mammoth series. Dr. Reeves has now been able to give a vivid picture of life in Bratton, written around the Whitaker family, to which her mother belonged, and the family of her father. Both families have provided community and chapel stalwarts for two centuries or more.

By good fortune, Dr. Reeves's aunt treasured everything that had accumulated in "Yew Trees", where she was born, and took it with her, when she moved to a smaller house. It has proved a rich and valuable hoard of material—much of it now in the Trowbridge museum—household articles, needlework, letters, diaries, verses, books, farm accounts, all a joy to a historian. With love and skill Dr. Reeves has made out of it what I have elsewhere described as a "Baptist classic", though the denominational adjective can well be dropped, for there is so much here of general interest.

The Whitaker family was closely linked by marriage with the Safferys of Salisbury. John Saffery, the Brown Street minister, married Maria Grace Andrews (1772-1858), who by her poems and school won a place in the *D.N.B.* Her sister Anne married Philip Whitaker (1766-1847), of Bratton. Already through the Attwaters the Whitakers had been in contact with the circle around that other *D.N.B.* poetess and hymnwriter, Anne Steele, of Broughton. Here is further evidence in support of Professor Donald Davie's thesis in his Clark Lectures about classical Nonconformity's literary and cultural interests.

It is to be hoped that Dr. Reeves will work this vein farther and also, perhaps, provide us with a history of the Baptists of Wiltshire and neighbouring counties. Village chapels have had a difficult time of recent decades. Fortunate indeed are the few that have been as faithfully cared for as Bratton and that are so situated geographically that with proper fostering they may revive to serve yet other generations.

Two dozen illustrations and two genealogical trees add to the value of a book, which should not be missed.

ERNEST A. PAYNE.