

substantiate the findings of the book, some readers may think they are overdone. However, considering its many merits, such a criticism is trivial. This volume is essential reading for anyone interested in the social and religious history of nineteenth-century England.

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My People: The History of Those Christians Sometimes Called Plymouth Brethren. By ROBERT BAYLIS. Wheaton, Ill.: Harold Shaw Publishers, 1995. xviii + 336 pp. \$19.99.

In the firmament of nineteenth-century Christian denominations, the Plymouth Brethren were analogous to a dwarf star. Although barely visible, they exerted an undeniable gravitational pull on everything close to them. It is this coterie—a group possessing influence beyond its numbers—that is the focus of Robert Baylis's book.

The Brethren emerged from Irish Anglicanism as a restorationist group that sought to recapture the simplicity of the apostolic church. By 1827–1828, J. G. Bellett, Edward Cronin, Francis Hutchinson, and John Nelson Darby were gathering regularly in Dublin “to meet together and break bread” without the presence of ordained clergy (p. 6). In less than twenty years, the “Brethren,” who preferred to be called simply “Christians,” were a noticeable force in British religious life. Thanks to the irenic influence of Anthony Norris Groves, who led an unsuccessful Brethren mission to the Muslims of Persia in the early 1830s, George Müller, and the brilliant yet erratic Darby, the Brethren were firmly established in Britain, Ireland, and the European continent.

Traditionally the bittersweet history of the Brethren has been told through personalities and conflicts. The archetypal conflict for the Brethren occurred from 1845 to 1848 and was waged largely between Benjamin Wills Newton, leader of the largest Brethren assembly at Plymouth, and Darby, a religious antihero if there ever was one, who had developed a comprehensive interpretive scheme of the Scriptures known as dispensationalism. The result of this struggle, which was personal as much as doctrinal, was to divide permanently the Brethren into two major factions: the strict “Exclusives” (or Darbyites) and the looser “Open (later “Independent”) Brethren.” This tragic internecine warfare crippled the Brethren in Britain, reducing them to the eccentric sect portrayed in Edmund Gosse's *Father and Son* (1907).

All of this Baylis paints with strokes that avoid the polemicism that has characterized previous histories of the Brethren. What the author seems most interested in, however, is Brethren history “from below.” Hence, while traditional figures of Brethrenism including Groves, Darby, Müller, F. W. Grant, Harry Ironside, and Jim Elliot receive mention, such “anonymous saints” as

Donald Ross, J. K. McEwen, J. J. Rouse, Minnie Armerding, and others dominate Baylis's very readable narrative.

Baylis states succinctly in his preface: "The Brethren are my people. Through a lifetime of association with the assemblies, I know them well, both the strengths and their weaknesses" (p. x). Reconstructing their story from wealth of periodicals and records, Baylis captures the impulse that pushed the Brethren across North America and into church planting, evangelization, education, publication, and foreign missions.

I highly recommend this book as the best introduction to the Brethren movement to date. Some might be tempted to dismiss the work as an insider account, but the evenhandedness of the author is clearly evident. Thus, Baylis succeeds in advancing Brethren historiography beyond the traditional bipolar conflict between "Exclusives" and "Independents." Finally the movement can be appreciated, on its own merits, for the sizable contributions it has made to modern evangelicalism.

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German and Scandinavian Protestantism, 1700–1918. By NICHOLAS HOPE. Oxford Clarendon Press, 1995. xiii + 685 pp. \$120.00.

My mentor at the University of Chicago used to talk about the role of "idea and steam" in telling the story of the Christian church in the modern world. In the present volume of the Oxford History of the Christian Church, neither "ideas" nor "steam" play a prominent part in describing the Protestant church on the European continent. Rather, an investigation of the evolving national church orders, local liturgies, canon law, and ecclesiastical structure within modern German and Scandinavian Protestantism holds central place. Lest one think, however, that the author is merely interested in the evolution of ecclesiastical machinery, this central focus is repeatedly related to the ongoing need for upgrading pastoral care and the practice of ministry.

Theology and political movements in modern Europe are seen by the author as playing a lesser role in changing average Protestant churchmanship. The structure and ethos of Reformation church order was more influential in shaping Protestantism than "the convenient keywords 'Orthodoxy', 'Pietism', and 'Enlightenment'." Thus one will find chapters on the "Consolidation of a Protestant Canon of Prayer," "Government of the Church-State," "The Parish and the Office of the Clergy," and "Numbers of Clergy and the Pastoral Care," but none of the three aforementioned "keywords." Nevertheless, Pietism and the Enlightenment are surprisingly seen in positive terms largely because they championed change, each in their own way, in their attempts to reform the Protestant church, while orthodoxy and its accompanying nineteenth-century