

## BOOK REVIEWS

Ball, Bryan W. *The English Connection: The Puritan Roots of Seventh-day Adventist Belief*. Cambridge, Eng.: James Clarke/Greenwood, S.C.: Attic Press. 1981. 252 pp. \$15.95 (in England, £7.50).

*The English Connection* is an excellent analysis of "Puritan religious thought, in its broadest sense," which Ball believes "gave to the English-speaking world all the essentials of contemporary Adventist belief" (p. 3). Although treating a complex subject in an encyclopedic fashion, it is a very well-organized and lucid work that not only allows the Puritans of the late sixteenth through early eighteenth century to speak for themselves by drawing upon numerous quotations from Puritan divines, preachers, and polemicists, but also synthesizes and interprets for the general reader the more difficult aspects of Puritan theology.

After a brief survey of the history of Puritanism, the study concentrates on specific key doctrines, each discussed thematically rather than chronologically, in the light of specific Puritan writings and in association with related beliefs. These key beliefs are encapsulated in the book's chapter titles: "The Sufficiency of Scripture," "This Incomparable Jesus," "The Lord Our Righteousness," "The New Man," "Believer's Baptism," "A High Priest in Heaven," "Gospel Obedience," "The Seventh-Day Sabbath," "The Whole Man," "The Return of Christ," "The Great Almanack of Prophecy," and "The World to Come."

In his introduction, Ball states that his purpose is "to examine specific doctrines" that show how "in its essentials, Seventh-day Adventist belief had been preached and practised in England during the Puritan era" (p. 2). A related purpose is to disprove those who see Adventism as "deviant" and to "demonstrate Adventism's essential affinity with historic, biblical Protestantism as opposed to any superficial relationship to nineteenth-century pseudo-Christian sectarianism" (p. 3). These worthy goals, unfortunately, raise certain difficulties.

It is clear from his choice of doctrines that, in this study at least, Ball interprets Puritanism in light of its later contribution to Adventism. Is it fair, however, to perceive Adventist belief in the past rather than to trace the means and extent of Adventist borrowing from the past? Can looking at the seventeenth century from the point of view of the nineteenth century

lead to certain distortions of emphasis? Such questions must have troubled the author, for he acknowledges that "many Puritans did not hold any of the doctrines which would later become distinctive tenets of Adventism, with the exception perhaps of belief in the literal second coming of Christ at the end of the age" (p. 3). If such is the case, then to what extent can one really argue that Seventh-day Adventists are the heirs of Puritanism? The problem is evident, for example, in the recognition that although some Puritans taught both the doctrine of scriptural primacy and the seventh-day sabbath, both doctrines did not gain equal acceptance. In fact, it is difficult to accept the key doctrine of the sabbath as "Puritan," since some of the most prominent Puritan divines—including Richard Baxter, John Bunyan, and John Owen, as Ball notes—opposed Christian observance of the seventh-day sabbath.

Other problems are the result not so much of the book's purpose as the author's methodology. For example, Ball does not delineate the "essentials" of Seventh-day Adventism, yet assumes that the reader will recognize the Puritan doctrines as the basis of later belief. He does not compare specific Puritan doctrines with official Adventist belief and practice, but at the beginning of each chapter only juxtaposes quotations "from representative Adventist authors" and "typical statements from Puritan spokesmen" to suggest their relationship (p. 4). Ball defends this approach by arguing that presenting official Adventist doctrine "would have necessitated a reduced and inevitably superficial treatment of the original source material" and by suggesting that interested readers may learn of contemporary Adventist belief by consulting denomination publications (see *ibid.*). Thus, many readers will be forced either to accept the author's analysis of Puritanism as representing "the Adventist position" on the doctrines he examines, or will need to read in other sources, intermixing various works in order to draw conclusions. This is unfortunate, given the polemical nature of some studies on Adventism and the fact that Adventist doctrine is neither static nor consistently presented even in official publications. The author's argument would have been greatly strengthened by even a short conclusion relating Puritanism to specific Adventist doctrine and suggesting how Adventism developed or modified particular beliefs.

The book, therefore, is not so much a study of the relationship between Puritanism and Seventh-day Adventism as it is a well-researched, careful, and sympathetic examination of select Puritan doctrines. Moreover, Ball speaks against the caricatured view that has given Puritan religious experience a negative image, and attempts to place the vivid and often overstated language of Puritan polemics within its historical context.

This study is packed with fascinating and thought-provoking information that is not simply of historical interest but touches on contemporary issues. Ball notes, for example, that Puritans did not believe in "verbal inspiration" and were greatly concerned about exegetical method. He also

discusses the Puritan concept of righteousness and justification, the "critical" relationship between justification and sanctification, and the Puritan opposition to perfectionism. Commenting on the understanding of Christ's role as high priest and the heavenly sanctuary, Ball makes clear that while the reality of that sanctuary is not to be doubted, "many seventeenth-century interpreters, if not most, stopped short of requiring a sanctuary in heaven which corresponded in exact substance to the sanctuary that had existed on earth" (p. 110).

Particularly interesting is Ball's analysis of the Puritan understanding of biblical prophecy. Puritans were convinced that Christ would return soon, but they avoided "capricious date-setting or the subjective and irresponsible interpretation of prophecy" (p. 182). Puritan expositors in general were neither fanatics nor extremists. They saw prophecy, not "as a basis for speculation concerning the course of future events," but as "given to substantiate faith by the verification of its fulfilment in events which can be demonstrated to have taken place" (p. 195). Noting that Richard Bernard believed that prophecy should be interpreted only in the context of its fulfillment in history, Ball rightly concludes, "Had all would-be interpreters of prophecy in the seventeenth century, and later, heeded this principle, Christ's Church might have been spared much embarrassment in the realm of prophetic interpretation, and, what is fundamentally more important, might not in later times have turned away so consistently from the legitimate and necessary study of biblical prophecy" (pp. 195-196).

I must take issue, however, with a few minor statements concerning prophetic interpretation. Ball describes the historicist approach to prophecy as "the norm of prophetic interpretation through Christian history" (p. 204). Such an understanding—based upon Froom's *Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers*—is not accurate for the vast majority of Christian interpreters. The historicist position, although having its roots in twelfth-century commentaries, did not fully develop until the seventeenth century, and then only among Protestant writers. It cannot be fairly called "the norm." This misunderstanding, furthermore, results in a second error. In his description of the "futurist" interpretation of prophecy associated with the two Jesuits, Ribera and Bellarmine, Ball accurately describes their position as "the projection of the Antichrist to the future, as a Jew who would arise at the end of time, and in whom would dwell all the powers of the Devil" (p. 205). He is mistaken, however, in his conclusion: "It was under these circumstances that this futurist concept of the Antichrist first appeared in Christian thought" (ibid.). The concept of Antichrist he describes, in fact, represents the norm for the majority of Christian thinkers until the Reformation, a point I establish in my *Antichrist in the Middle Ages: A Study of Medieval Apocalypticism, Art, and Literature* (Seattle, Washington, 1981). The Jesuit writers of the Catholic Reformation were not developing a new interpretation, but restating the traditional medieval

understanding of Antichrist and the last days. Finally, one should note that although Augustine did understand the Millennium to represent the period between Christ's first and second comings, he did not expect, as Ball states, that "the Last Judgement would take place in the year A.D. 1000 or thereabouts" (pp. 214-215). In fact, Augustine repeatedly argued against interpretations attempting to date the last days.

These blemishes, related as they are to the discussion of non-Puritan theology, do not depreciate several major contributions of *The English Connection*. First, the book brings together in manageable form a vast amount of information concerning the Puritan tradition, including the thought of learned theologians, more radical spokesmen, and even literary figures such as Milton and Bunyan. In the past, studies have concentrated on the more radical political and millenarian aspects of Puritanism in the early seventeenth century and have generally concluded after the Restoration of the Stuarts in 1660. However, Ball also examines the work of later Puritan writers not often studied, and he synthesizes a vast amount of original source material, drawing out the significant points and showing relationships.

The book makes two other significant contributions, particularly in light of contemporary Adventism. Even while wishing for more detailed comparison of specific Puritan and Adventist doctrines, one applauds Ball's choice of doctrines to examine, for these include the very basics of Christian belief (e.g., the authority of Scripture and the nature of man and of Christ). Similarly helpful is the book's reminder that Adventism derives from an essentially radical—rather than Lutheran—branch of the Protestant Reformation. The roots of Adventism go back to those who believed that early Protestantism had not completed the necessary re-formation of Christian doctrine. Thus, in its analysis of Puritanism, *The English Connection* directs our attention further back into history, to the ideals of the apostolic church.

Walla Walla College  
College Place, Washington 99324

RICHARD KENNETH EMMERSON

Edwards, Mark U., Jr. *Luther's Last Battles: Polemics and Politics, 1531-46*. Ithaca, N.Y., and London, Eng.: Cornell University Press, 1983. 250 pp. \$27.75.

In recent years, Luther scholars have begun to focus at last on the less dramatic years of the Reformer's life and work. Gerald Strauss, for example, has investigated the attempt to educate the masses into the Reformation and shown the disappointment that Luther and his followers