

Reviews.

THE STORY OF THE SUFFOLK BAPTISTS, by Rev. A. J. Klaiber, M.C., B.D. (The Kingsgate Press, 5s. net.)

HERE is a volume which is admirably arranged, pleasantly printed, and well illustrated. Its whole get-up is extremely creditable to the Kingsgate Press. On the day of its arrival a young Baptist who knows the author took it up, glanced through its pages with approval, and pronounced, "A very nice book; and not too long." Exactly so!

Suffolk Baptists are fortunate in having a chronicler so nimble in research, so accurate in statement, and so attractive in style as Mr. Klaiber proves himself to be. Although but a seven years sojourner in the county he shows an understanding of Suffolk character and affairs that would do justice to a native. And although so different in outlook from the stern old Calvinists about whom he has to write, his sympathy with them, and even with their point of view, is everywhere conspicuous. Indeed, without some such fellow feeling these annals could never have been worthily written. For to this day the majority of Baptist Churches in Suffolk, especially in the villages, belong to the "Strict and Particular" order of our denomination. But their story, as well as that of "the more progressive section," is told with the utmost impartiality. And who can say that it is not well worth telling?

Anyone who is acquainted with East Anglia and has an interest in its Baptist folk may read Mr. Klaiber's narrative from first to last with sheer enjoyment. Even to a sympathetic stranger it should make its appeal. And obviously this book is meant for all; not for the student of history alone, but for the work-a-day Baptist who desires to know more about the men and movements of the past. This is no dry-as-dust disquisition, but essentially, as the title proclaims, a story. And a very readable one at that!

The foreword is by Rev. H. Tydeman Chilvers, whose portrait appears as the frontispiece. Though Essex-born, the pastor of the Metropolitan Tabernacle enshrines in himself many of the sturdy qualities claimed for the Suffolk Baptists, with whom he has formed an intimate acquaintance.

Mr. Klaiber's story is in two main parts: "Sowing and Reaping," "Conserving and Extending." Part I. traces the Baptist movement up to the dawning of the nineteenth century, and has seven chapters, each with an apt heading of its own.

To glance at the present list of our Churches in Suffolk, some sixty of them, and to note that only six were formed before the year 1800, might suggest that there is little material to work upon for the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Yet items of interest relating to that period throng each other in these pages. To some of us this is the most fascinating portion of the whole story. The author has doubtless given enormous time and trouble to research and has been able to unearth some most significant facts; but further discoveries on the same lines are surely not beyond hope. How we should delight to have a few fresh particulars about Laurence Clarkson, the tailor who went throughout the two counties "preaching and dipping." Or about Andrew Wyke, "a mechanic, but turned a great preacher and dipper." Or concerning what happened to Mr. Tredwell after the Rector had been duly "rectified and corrected" by Benjamin Keach. And how good it would be to know if other of the early Congregational Churches were like that seventeenth-century Church at Bury St. Edmund's, where the members were all in agreement upon "the baptism of believers."

Before the first part closes, a moving account is given of a wave of evangelical zeal which swept over the county from 1795 onward. In forty years no fewer than thirty-six Churches were founded, and thousands of people baptized. Preachers like George Hall, Charles Farmery, John Thompson, and Cornelius Elven found the fields white unto harvest, and were able by God's grace to reap abundantly.

In the second part of the chronicle a good deal of attention is wisely devoted to the Woolverstone Church, the precursor of Stoke Green, Ipswich, and the mother Church for all that neighbourhood. Besides its Declaration of Faith and its Covenant, printed in full, we have well-chosen glimpses of Church life a hundred and fifty years ago.

The story of the Associations is somewhat involved, and in other hands it might have become a tedious tale. But Mr. Klaiber keeps the interest alive by grouping most of the events around certain leading personalities. The Old Association broke upon the rocks of "duty faith" and "mixt communion." A testimony against "Fullerism" was drawn up as early as 1806, but it was over twenty years later that the actual separation took place. Then was formed what is now the Suffolk and Norfolk Association of Strict Baptist Churches, whose centenary was celebrated last year. Though conservative in spirit, and perhaps narrow in outlook, many a stalwart character has been bred within its borders.

The Suffolk Baptist Union, whose smoother history calls for less space, was founded on a broad, evangelical basis, and

its record is seen to be one of steady advance. While stressing the work of Home Missions and supporting to its utmost the struggling village Churches, it has given more generously than the sister Association of time and means and precious life to the cause of overseas missions. This noble enterprise gets a chapter to itself; so do "Activities in Ipswich," and sundry achievements of Suffolk Baptists in "Citizenship."

Four helpful appendixes, together with a list of sources, are added to complete the story; that is, until Mr. Klaiber's second volume appears. "And when he next doth ride abroad, may I be there to see!"

What a wealth of useful and even romantic information might be placed in our possession, and what a valuable store laid up for days to come, if every county could produce a history as trustworthy and well-written as "The Story of the Suffolk Baptists."

H. R.

THE NATURAL AND THE SUPERNATURAL, by John Oman. (Cambridge University Press, 18s.)

DR. JOHN OMAN'S work *Grace and Personality*, which created such a fine impression upon the religious world, is here succeeded by a massive volume which gives us Dr. Oman at the height of his creative powers. Here we have a volume in which the creative and the critical are harmoniously blended. He does not set out, as the title would lead one to suppose, to say in precise terms, what the natural is or indeed what the Supernatural is, but the whole exposition of this volume is aimed at revealing how the Supernatural works. Although it is impossible to say where the natural has its boundaries, it is also impossible to eliminate the Supernatural from the natural. The spacious and spiritual majesty of the Supernatural, the affirmation of the Transcendent is the main thesis of this rich and inspiring volume.

It is a timely and effective protest, calm and discriminating, against that Immanentism which has dominated theology, perhaps too much, since the days of Schleiermacher.

This work is divided into three main sections, the headings and sub-headings of which are but crystals into which we gaze expecting to see greater realities than at first appear. In this expectation we are not disappointed, for the deep recesses of the soul and the still deeper things of God become much clearer as the argument proceeds. In the first section Dr. Oman outlines the vastness and scope of his inquiry. Religion, we are informed, possesses four main aspects. 1. It is an attitude of the spirit consisting of reverence and trust. 2. It is a cult consisting of

adoration and worship. 3. It is an organising force. 4. It is a concern with the supernatural . . . a theology. These aspects never exist in isolation. In religion the soul functions as a unity. One aspect may be more dominant than another at any particular moment in the religious consciousness, but Dr. Oman firmly insists upon the unity of the soul's activity in all human experience. Religion is never mere feeling, although feeling is essential to religion. "Sensitiveness of feeling, nevertheless, is the only gateway to reality; and the higher the reality, the greater must be the sensitiveness which responds to it. To be obtuse in feeling is merely to be wall-eyed before every kind of reality." Such a sentence is worth its weight in gold; but it is not to be supposed that Dr. Oman overlooks the rational and aesthetic elements in religious experience as they lead to the Supernatural. Both Hegel with his emphasis on Thought, and Kant with his morality "complex," would indeed be included in the expression of man's capacity for the Supernatural. We do not cringe in abject fear, nor is the awesome holy of Otto and his wholly other quite a true idea of the Supernatural. It is confidence in the Supernatural, which is the crux of religion, a firm conviction that our mortal strivings after truth, beauty, and goodness are backed up by the Supernatural. The criticism of Otto is one of the best one has seen. Schleiermacher, with his emphasis on feeling, cannot exclude Hegel with his stress on thought, by calling Hegel's philosophy "an ill-stitched patchwork of metaphysic and ethic." Comprehensiveness is a necessity for faith and Dr. Oman, although healthily criticising those who emphasise emotion, or thought, or will, clearly points out the need of all these emphases if the Supernatural is to be experienced.

The second part of the volume deals with knowing and knowledge. It is necessary, right at the beginning of human inquiry, to ascertain whether, in human knowing, we know reality, or whether, as Bergson affirms, human knowing distorts reality. Oman rightly points out that if we know our knowledge is "illusion" to know so much would be valid knowledge. Epistemology is the necessary precondition of the sciences as well as of faith. The instrument of knowledge must be trusted or all our efforts, both theoretical and practical, are but mushrooms growing in the night of sceptical outer darkness to perish unseen because no daylight is to appear.

The third part of this excellent volume deals with the Evanescence and the Eternal. The growth of religion, the value of mysticism, the prophetic elements of faith, are discussed with a charming lucidity and a penetrating insight. The appendixes at the end of the volume are of great value in themselves. The one on Kant to Hegel is particularly good. It is clearly im-

possible to do justice to the wealth of material contained in this large and important work. Perhaps it is Dr. Oman's "Magnum opus," but no one can read its stimulating pages without being a bigger man as a consequence. Here is the full bloom of ripe philosophical theology. The affirmation of the Transcendent in Barth is not so helpfully expressed as in this lucid work.

E. C. B.

DANTE. *The Divine Comedy: its essential significance.* By Arthur H. Norway. (Student Christian Movement Press, 5s. net.)

THE author of this book believes that Dante's message is to all men and women, to the unscholarly as well as to the learned, and he has set out to make clear the mediaeval poet's simple and clear guidance in the way of life. This is a task well worth attempting, for no one can claim to understand the thought of the Middle Ages who does not pay some attention to Dante's interpretations. He stands at a turning point in the history of the world, "the last poet of the Middle Ages and the first of the modern world." He is among the poets what Aquinas is among the theologians, and by his reverence for what he believed to be divine authority, and his impassioned search for the righteousness that leads to peace, he still claims the attention of a world that has not yet outgrown the problems that harassed the mediaeval world. Mr. Norway sets the poet in his historic setting, probes with sure finger into the problems that stirred the poet's soul, and leads us through the majestic unfolding of the poet's vision. Not the least of the attractions of this book is its beautiful style. Mr. Norway writes with a grace that has not been corrupted by literary modernism.

ANGLO-CATHOLIC IDEALS, by Kenneth D. Mackenzie. (Student Christian Movement Press, 3/6 net.)

THIS volume seeks to set forth the standpoint which is generally called Anglo-Catholic, and in the course of 120 pages the author discusses Public Worship, Ceremonial, Reservation of the Sacrament, The Ministry, The Confessional and other apposite themes. Anyone desirous of knowing what is embraced in the term "Anglo-Catholicism" will find the book a useful introduction. He will also find much that is entirely foreign to the Baptist outlook and temperament; and he would probably agree with the *Church Times* that Reunion between Baptists and Episcopalians "would be an unreal alliance, based on ambiguity and compromise and dishonest pretence."