

congregations we call the Brethren, and how they located themselves (and still do) in the ever-changing built environment of Britain. It is thrilling to study the diverse and sometimes idiosyncratic evidence of how they made the best of their resources in attempting to reconcile 'commodity, firmness and delight' in the service of their God. As we know from our personal experiences, it was from these, often humble, structures that incalculable good has emanated. This book is a fine, fitting tribute.

Sam McKinstry

John Nelson Darby: A Biography

Max S. Weremchuk

El Cajon, CA: Southern California Seminary Press, 2021

xiv + 214 pp. pbk ISBN-13: 978-0-986-44426-5 £12.37

This is described as an 'updated and expanded' version of the author's work of the same title published by Loiseaux Brothers in 1992, and one can only have admiration for Mr Weremchuk's courageous tenacity in revisiting a subject that has occasioned, during the last thirty years, an immense quantity of published work including a review written by myself in 1997, which the author describes in his new introduction as 'scathing'. Having subsequently corresponded intermittently for about twenty years with Mr Weremchuk, I count it as one of the more useful things done in my life, that in 2003, when he announced to me that he was 'backing out. . . [and] giving up', I persuaded him *not* to abandon his Darby researches and (in his words) 'rekindled the flame' of his enthusiasm. To have rewritten his biography, abandoning some cherished myths and providing detailed references explaining his revisions, is a singular achievement, which we can only applaud.

However, like its predecessor, the book is not without its problems. It claims to be a biography, but only deals with the first thirty-five years of a man who lived to be over eighty. There are no details of the controversies and travels which played such an important part in Darby's later life. On the other hand, Mr Weremchuk has immersed himself in Darby's copious writings which he quotes at length, even though the vast majority of them were written long after the part of his

life which is covered in the book. This results in some strangely anachronistic anomalies of which one example must suffice: in a book which gives no details of Darby's role in the Bethesda or any other Brethren divisions after 1835, there is a lengthy footnote (pp.58–9) concerned with the excommunication of the Sheffield assembly in 1864, supposedly explaining Darby's desire for unity in 1830.

Another difficulty is the author's continued dependence on some earlier unreliable accounts. He repeats W. G. Turner's reference to William Gladstone as an 'Oxford clerical writer', and quotes at length Turner's misleading account of the Established clergy, not realizing that Turner was using, word for word, George Eliot's description of the Reverend Adolphus Irwine in her early novel, *Adam Bede*. (pp.17–18). For JND's early life, William Kelly's testimony should similarly be used with more discretion, bearing in mind that he only met Darby for the first time in 1845, ten years and more after the events under discussion in this book—which helps to explain his ignorance about the death of Darby's mother.

Mr Weremchuk's approach to history is both devotional and didactic and he uses Darby's beliefs as a useful peg on which to hang some of his own edifying thoughts. Thus, writers who were quite unknown to Darby—G.K. Chesterton, Martyn Lloyd-Jones, C. S. Lewis, Jay E. Adams, and even Christopher Milne—are all cited in approving footnotes, in support of what are really the author's application of Darby's thinking. In fact, the author's commentary takes up quite a bit of space that could have been usefully devoted to unconsidered queries about (for example) JND's encounter with Charles Simeon in Cambridge or his debt to continental expositors of prophecy like Lacunza and Lambert.

To be fair, on the other hand, we must remember that this is an expansion of an earlier work and the author cannot be expected to tackle new questions. His bibliography doesn't include Dr Tim Grass's definitive history of the Brethren nor the works of Professor Donald Akenson whose radically fresh approach to Darby's early years has called in question many previous 'certainties', but we understand that Mr Weremchuk has a forthcoming publication *Becoming JND*.

Perhaps this will address some of the queries raised by this fascinating man.

Timothy C F Stunt

The Life and Times of Samuel Prideaux Tregelles: A Forgotten Scholar

Timothy C. F. Stunt

Series: Christianities in the Trans-Atlantic World

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281 pp. ISBN: 978-3030322656 £64.99

For an outsider who enters the rewarding field of Brethren history, even if only on a short visit, there are many happy surprises and one of the finest is to discover the scholarship of Dr. Timothy C. F. Stunt. There is so much of it to discover, running from articles that correct tiny pieces of the historical record to larger essays that are think-pieces to books of substantial size and import. It has been a pleasure as well to come to know Timothy personally and to learn directly from him and also to argue with him about things that are interesting, but above all for the civility and generosity that is the hallmark of real scholarship in the humanities.

Samuel Prideaux Tregelles (1813–75) is one of the few Brethren (or once-Brethren) biblical textual scholars whose work has made an impression on the outside world: another major figure is F. F. Bruce. So Tregelles is well worth the time and attention. One is not speaking here solely of his writings that are directly doctrinally inflected, but also of those that are academic in the complimentary meaning of the term: solid, evidence-based, and open to both proof and disproof. I suspect most Brethren readers will know Tregelles more for his position in the great schism of the 1840s than for his pioneering scholarship in improving the accuracy of the New Testament by relating it to then-known ancient texts. Actually, he is worth knowing on both counts.

Timothy Stunt is an old pro, so he knows (and most serious readers should know as well) that authors in most commercial contracts do not control the title of their works. They can suggest, cajole, scream, and threaten, but if an editor (or more likely the marketing manager) wants