

somewhat critical of Luther's role in the Peasants' War, but he underestimates how much he was viewed as rejecting the common person while too easily agreeing with the princes. I find the treatment of the Zwinglian position, and especially the reasons for Zwingli's disagreement with Luther, to be less than satisfactory.

The translation is splendid and only occasionally slips into German language structure. James Schaaf also cites the English translations of Luther whenever possible. It is unfortunate that he omitted readily available translations of Zwingli's writings. Scholars owe a debt of gratitude to Schaaf for making this work available in English. The third volume will be a welcome conclusion to a valuable set on this most important of Protestant Reformers.

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Carden, Allen. *Puritan Christianity in America: Religion and Life in Seventeenth-Century Massachusetts*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1990. ix + 237 pp. \$16.95.

Most people, in every society and in every period of history, expect religion to be relevant for morality and life. Indeed this was particularly the case in 17th-century America. American Puritanism provided a system of ultimate meaning and interpretation that could hardly avoid being linked to spiritual experiences and prescriptions of ethical conduct. Morality, theology, and ethics provided the framework by means of which American Christianity gave finite expression to its system of ultimate meaning. Through this framework and the quality of commitment to their particular form of Christianity, the Puritans hoped that their faith or system of alternate meaning would become more visible and therefore more accessible to others and certainly more enduring.

Puritan Christianity in America claims: "Although the Puritans have been the focus of hundreds of journal articles and monographs within the past century, historians have often minimized or misunderstood the spiritual dimension of the Puritan experience. Most recent studies have betrayed a limited perspective, dealing with a particular town, individual, family, or issue. It is hoped that this volume will provide a concise, yet thorough synthesis of the Puritan's own ideas and recent scholarship in order to provide the reader with an overall perspective encompassing the multifaceted experiences of Puritan Christianity in America" (12). The subject matter of the book is precisely a history of the interpretation of the religious experience of the Puritans, embodied in their notions of the "Holy Commonwealth" and "God's errand in the wilderness."

Beginning with the Reformation in England as the immediate preparation for the rise of Puritanism, Allen Carden focuses on the historical background of the causes and influences that led to dissatisfaction and discontent within the established Church. Quite correctly he notices that the influence and work of the returning exiles during Elizabeth's reign (1558-1603) provided the leadership that was needed to carry reformation forward in a thorough fashion. The issues that led to dissatisfaction and discontent were doctrine, liturgy, and ecclesiastical government. The influence of the "returning exiles" on the interpretation of these issues was particularly striking. In the remaining chapters of the book, the author focuses on an evaluation of Puritan theology, ethics, family life, liturgy, and politics. Carden exercises great care and accuracy in presenting these teachings of the Puritans. Wherever necessary he points out the variations in Puritan beliefs.

Carden's perception and analysis of seventeenth-century Puritan ideas reflect his mastery of the material and his ability to present it in a lively, attractive, and clear style. With close attention to the original writings, Carden makes it easy for the reader to grasp the main points of the Puritan's understanding and practice of Christianity.

Although Carden has established his thesis that "the spiritual dimension of the Puritan experience" cannot be minimized in any attempt to understand and explain Puritan Christianity in seventeenth-century America, one must not think that this book has only historical interest. Indeed the forcefulness and relevance of his study lie precisely in his gallant effort to deal with a problem that is of critical importance in our contemporary society.

The Puritan legacy to American Protestant culture is beyond dispute. Carden claims that "the sweep of American history, modern American culture, and especially evangelical subculture can be more fully understood as we recognize the legacy we have received from our Puritan forebears" (211).

Perhaps the major weakness in this study is its failure to give more focused attention to the role of the Holy Spirit in the Puritan experience. This is a subject much neglected by recent scholarship. It seems inconceivable that Carden would not address this in a book that seeks to highlight "the spiritual dimension of the Puritan experience" (12).

Altogether, *Puritan Christianity in America* has the distinction of giving a new dimension to the discussion of Puritanism and has profound implications and insights for our age.