

BOOK REVIEW

G.W. Bromiley, *Baptism and the Anglican Reformers* (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co., 2023 [1953]), pp. xvi + 239. ISBN 978 0 227 17867 6 (paperback).
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Anglican priest Geoffrey W. Bromiley was professor of church history and historical theology at Fuller Theological Seminary from 1958 until his retirement in 1987. *Baptism and the Anglican Reformers*, originally published in 1953, is a work of historical theology intended to address issues of infant baptism and indiscriminate baptism as well as ecumenical questions of intercommunion (pp. xi-xii).

Bromiley divides his study into four chapters, first defining the sacrament, then considering in turn the participants (minister and baptizand), the rite, and the grace of the sacrament. He returns repeatedly to the question of infant baptism, with in-depth exploration of Anabaptist debates with other Reformers in the chapter on participants, a discussion of sponsors and vicarious faith in the chapter on the rite, and consideration of the effects of baptism on infants in his chapter on the grace of baptism.

Each chapter considers not only Anglican Reformers but also biblical and patristic roots, late medieval teaching, the Council of Trent, and other Reformation traditions. Bromiley shows the development of sixteenth-century Anglican thought from the Henrician period to the Elizabethan, with attention to the rites in the *Book of Common Prayer* and to the Articles of Religion. Gathering quotations from numerous primary sources, he carefully teases apart both similarities and differences, situating Anglican understandings in the context of sixteenth-century theological debates, including the Council of Trent as well as Lutheran, Reformed and Anabaptist schools. He adopts the label 'traditionalists' to refer to those in the sixteenth century who upheld historical teachings, particularly late medieval scholastic understandings.

In the final chapter, which considers the 'grace' of baptism, Bromiley's stance becomes clear. 'If a balanced and healthy doctrine of the sacrament is to be worked out today, it must surely be along the general lines of the Reformed understanding' (p. 206). Rejecting any possibility of ontological change in baptism, Bromiley argues that baptismal forgiveness and regeneration are already accomplished in Christ and

that the 'real work of baptism' is fulfilled only through 'true conversion' and 'continuance in the Christian life' (p. 206).

Bromiley concludes by acknowledging a breadth of understanding among sixteenth-century Anglican Reformers, with 'three permissible interpretations: the Lutheran, the Reformed and the embryonic High Anglican' (p. 222). He proposes that the Reformed interpretation that he advocates provides the basis for intercommunion with Lutheran and Reformed churches and the foundation for constructive theological work in the present day.

Throughout, Bromiley cites primary sources, with occasional reference to twentieth-century scholarship. He recognizes that the Holy Spirit is at work in baptism yet does not engage the protracted Anglican debate about the gift of the Spirit in baptism and confirmation. A focused discussion of the role of the Spirit in baptism as understood by the Anglican Reformers might have offered valuable historical perspective on that vexed question.

Republishing the book makes it available to twenty-first-century readers, many of whom may be unfamiliar with the original publication. Yet the motives for this edition are opaque. Bromiley attends to questions of infant baptism and indiscriminate baptism only by detailing sixteenth-century teaching; he leaves it to the reader to discern implications for the present day. Bromiley's advocacy for intercommunion with Lutheran and Reformed churches has long since been addressed, as many churches of the Anglican Communion allow communicant members of other churches to receive communion.

Though a 'select bibliography' is included, it has not been updated from the original edition, making it useful only as a companion to the footnotes.

The reader need not agree with Bromiley's conclusions to appreciate his in-depth study of sixteenth-century Anglican Reformers. His book will appeal to those interested in Anglican teachings in relation to other theologians, particularly those of the late medieval West and the sixteenth century.

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