

*Basel and the Church in England. 600 years of theological, cultural and political connections.* By Bryan Stone. Pp. 270. Frankfurt: Public Book Media Verlag, 2016.

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This book could almost be classed as biography as much as history, inasmuch as the city of Basel, like the Church of England, has over the centuries acquired a personality of its own. Its situation on the Rhine where that artery decides to head on its long journey northwards made it of strategic importance for European travel and trade from Roman times, if not before. Its profile has been shaped by geography, the influences of its neighbours, the development of its traditions of crafts, industries and scholarship, and often a civic generosity to foreigners, as well as in more recent times a determined Swiss neutrality. High on Basel's list of distinctives has been its role in the Christian history of Europe, especially in the sixteenth-century Reformation but also in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Bryan Stone, English-born, in his own words an 'amateur and lay historian', a Basel resident for nearly fifty years and now of Swiss citizenship, obviously has a deep love for his adoptive city. He provides a fascinating survey of its varied fates and fortunes down the ages but with a particular and original focus: the mutual relationships of Basel and the story of the English Church, by which he means mainly the Anglican Church of England as it has evolved into its present form. That means of course narrating a fair amount of the politics of both Britain and the European continent as well, which at times makes for a rather tangled tale. But, after a nod to the attractive if legendary figure of St Ursula, it is told well, onwards from the Celtic missionary monks of the seventh century and the (from an English standpoint) problematic Council of Basel (1431–49). But the British (or English) historical knot with Basel was most closely tied at the Reformation. Basel's significance lay in its capacity to receive thinkers and scholars in a creative mix of encounters between humanists, pre-Reformers and Reformers. Erasmus was equally at home in Basel and in Oxford. Hans Holbein the Younger made his artistic name in Basel before migrating to England. The German Simon Grynaeus counselled Cranmer and his associates, and concluded his life's work in Basel. A picture emerges of a kind of a rolling seminar up and down the Rhine and crossing the North Sea. But crucial among Basel's attractions were the numbers and skills of its renowned printers, above all Johann Froben who among much else printed Erasmus' Greek Testament. Indeed, with strict censorship and control of printing in sixteenth-century England, Stone suggests that 'at that time it was normal in England to think of Basel for publishing'. John Foxe worked for Froben for a time in Basel, and there wrote (in Latin) an early edition of his famous *Book of martyrs*. Basel indeed left its influence on Reformation England, if overall less dogmatically than either Frankfurt, Zurich or Geneva.

Thereafter the story of the relationship largely becomes one of individual travellers and visitors, until the early nineteenth century when with the burgeoning Evangelical and missionary interest there emerged a vital new sphere of cooperation. The Commonwealth and Continental Church Society (CCCS), founded in 1823, devoted much attention to Basel and the establishment of a series of Anglican 'seasonal chaplaincies' there as elsewhere, often holding services in the long-famous Three Kings Hotel. This was partly prompted by the growth in

British tourism to Switzerland. Moreover the British and Foreign Bible Society established a partnership with the Basel Mission, which had a particular interest in West Africa. It was not however until after the First World War that anything like a permanent Anglican chaplaincy in Basel was set up, with the arrival in 1928 of the Revd R. H. Courtenay who (though without official ICCS patronage) served in Basel until 1945; and not until the 1950s was a fully official and full-time chaplaincy installed.

During the Second World War Basel's location right on the borders of both France and Germany proved critical and often fragile. A most interesting and important chapter deals with Basel, the German Confessing Church and the crucial friendship between George Bell, bishop of Chichester, and Alphons Koechlin, President of the Basel Church Council: a relationship which was vital in keeping awareness of the German situation alive in the ecumenical fellowship both before and during the war. Stone's account however needs augmenting with the fact that even before its official inauguration in 1948 the World Council of Churches already existed 'in formation' in Geneva, and Koechlin from 1940 was a member of its executive committee. Karl Barth, Basel's chief theological figure since his enforced return there from Germany in 1935, also appears in the pages here, including his role in the awarding of an honorary DD to Bell. Given the theme of the book as a whole, some recognition would be appropriate of the reception of Barth's theology in Britain (where he notably lectured in 1937), admittedly perhaps less among Anglicans than Scottish Presbyterians and the English and Welsh Free Churches; not to mention his singular wartime gifts to Britain in the form of his resolute and morale-boosting contributions to J. H. Oldham's *Christian News-letter*.

Some small slips may be noted. The author of the hymn 'All people that on earth do dwell' (p. 73) was William Kethe (not Keble); and the archbishop of Canterbury in 1927 (p. 241) was Randall Davidson (not Thompson).

This book is a valuable contribution to church history. To the general reader it tells an absorbing story of faith amid continuity and change, while to the more specialised historian it will suggest some new avenues for research. Finally, one cannot emphasise too strongly that as the author himself states (p. 110) 'it is surely timely, at a point where in many places a European awareness, culturally and politically, is constantly being challenged, not always very thoughtfully, by sectional and national interests'.

CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN CHURCHES

KEITH CLEMENTS

*Basel als Zentrum des geistigen Austauschs in der frühen Reformationszeit.* Edited by Christine Christ-von Wedel, Sven Grosse and Berndt Hamm. (Spätmittelalter, Humanismus, Reformation, 81.) Pp. xi + 382 incl. 7 figs and 1 table. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014. €99. 978 3 16 153203 0; 1865 2840

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The centrality of Basel to sixteenth-century European culture is an accepted historical fact, as is testified in studies by scholars such as H. R. Guggisberg, C. Gilly, P. Bietenholz and M. Welti, by A. Berchtold's *Bâle et l'Europe* (Lausanne 1990)