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# The BAPTIST QUARTERLY

*The Journal of the Baptist Historical Society*

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## Editorial

ALL who cherish the Free Church tradition in our country's history will be glad to know of a simple ceremony held on 23rd July in Bunhill Fields. Closed for burials in 1862 this famous burial ground opposite Wesley's Chapel in the City Road was put under the responsibility of the City of London just one hundred years ago. During the war it suffered bomb damage and since then has worn a dilapidated and neglected appearance. However, certain improvements were put in hand earlier this year and the occasion in July was to mark their completion. Representatives of the Corporation and of the Free Churches stood together on the newly paved walk between the tombs of John Bunyan and Daniel Defoe while the architect, Mr. Peter Shepherd, explained the steps taken. The worst damaged area has been laid out as a garden which, when suitably planted and matured, will form a pleasant retreat from the busy streets surrounding the cemetery. The main pathway has been repaved and the many remaining tombs protected by new railings.

Dr. E. A. Payne, expressing the gratitude of Free Churchmen, recalled the high historic interest of the cemetery. In addition to Bunyan and Defoe other distinguished and honoured persons were buried there, including such as Isaac Watts, members of the Cromwell family, William Blake the poet and painter, and many who had shared in the struggle for civil and religious liberty. Through the skill of the architect and others concerned it had now been

made more attractive. He urged that a suitable notice-board should be erected near the entrance to give passers-by some idea of the historic significance of the places. It is very desirable that this should be done. Should not the Free Churches also consider the joint production of a simple brochure which could be made available for distribution to visitors?

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Those responsible for the planning of the two series of booklets now being issued from Baptist Church House deserve warm congratulations. One is the "Living Issues" series, the title of which is self-explanatory. Typical of its relevance and usefulness is Dr. G. R. Beasley-Murray's *Reflections on the Ecumenical Movement*. The other series is entitled "Christian Education Books" and the latest of these, Dr. J. R. C. Perkin's *Divine Encounter*, is exceptionally helpful. Any minister who would like to tackle his baptismal classes in a fresh and more exciting manner would be well advised to see it. Perhaps it is not too far out of context if we mention also the valuable "Kingsgate Pamphlets" being issued by the Carey Kingsgate Press. Here again one notes the fine quality as, for example, in M. F. Williams' *Life in Christ*. All these booklets are cheap and readable and their production is a real service to the denomination. They are invaluable aids to a teaching ministry and ought to be circulating widely in our churches. Yet ministers and members often seem to be unaware of their existence. They are of course mentioned from time to time in publicity from headquarters but they really need to be "talked up" in ministers' fraternals, association meetings and the like. It would not then take people long to discover that they are on to a good thing.

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The care of Baptist materials is one of the major concerns of our society and we warmly commend the initiative of the East Midland Association, described in this issue by their officially appointed Custodian of Historical Documents. Members of the society would do an important service if they were to use his account to promote similar action in their own Associations. By coincidence Mr. Budge's report reached us shortly after the committee had been discussing the possibility of enlisting the help of friends willing to do liaison work between their Association and the society. Their special function would be to keep us in touch with steps being taken for the care of documents and to supply the society with information on the whereabouts of important materials and the discovery of any fresh finds. Anyone willing to act in this capacity is asked to get in touch with Dr. B. R. White, Regents Park College, Oxford.