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Notes and News

If the dates in the current Baptist Union Directory are to be relied on five of our churches will in 1977 be celebrating their 200th anniversary. Four of them are in Yorkshire—Farsley; Hope, Hebden Bridge; Bramley, Leeds, and Shore, Todmorden—which suggests that in 1777, when there was a good deal of general concern over the war with the American colonies, Baptists in the north were vigorously evangelising. The one other church celebrating two centuries of witness is Croes-y-Parc, in East Glamorgan.

Three churches in England, one in Guernsey, and seven in Wales will be marking their 150th anniversary. In 1827 the country was still suffering from the after-effects of the Napoleonic wars, though agitation for the reform of Parliament and much else was gaining strength. Fifty years later twenty new Baptist churches were formed. Eight were in the midlands and the north, two in Kent, two in London and one in Scotland.

Fifty years later, in 1927, when six new churches were formed, five of them were in the south. Facts like these indicate how important are trends in population, industrial development and social conditions for those concerned with church extension.

* * *

Few preachers and theologians do not at some time or other quote one of the sayings of Pascal, the 17th century Jansenist. "The heart has its reasons, which reason knows nothing of." "Thou wouldst not seek Me, if thou hadst not found Me."

There has recently appeared from the McGill-Queen's University Press, Montreal, a substantial and important volume on Pascal in England during the Age of Reason, entitled *Strange Contrarities*. It is the work of Dr. John Barker, now Associate Professor of History at Trent University, Peterborough, Ontario, the son of Mr. and Mrs. Claude Barker, of Watford, and married to a daughter of Dr. Clifford Allen, of the Southern Baptist Convention.

Among the things noted by Dr. Barker is the fact that two of the early 19th century English translations of the *Pensées* were the work of Baptists. In 1803 Thomas Chevalier, a surgeon of Huguenot ancestry and a member of a London Baptist church, published *Thoughts on Religion, and Other Important Subjects*, while in 1838 Dr. John Ryland's son, Jonathan Edwards Ryland, published in Glasgow *Thoughts on Religion and Philosophy*, with a memoir of Pascal,

and an introductory essay by Isaac Taylor. Ryland's interest may well have been stimulated by the references to Pascal by John Foster, the essayist. It is also interesting to read that Charlotte Ruhmohr, the frail Danish lady, whom Carey married in 1808, had been much influenced by the Frenchman.

* * *

In 1845 the B.M.S. sent to Haiti two young men, Ebenezer Joseph Francies (who after training at Stepney College had been for six years in Jamaica) and M. W. Flanders, together with a Miss Harris. There had been talk of a mission to the island in 1818, but Wilberforce was among those who advised against it. The 1845 venture was the result of visits by J. M. Phillippo and William Littlewood. Haiti proved a difficult sphere. Flanders returned to England almost at once. Francies died in 1846. However, W. H. Webley, of Bristol College, was in Haiti for more than twenty years, while Alexander Pappengouth worked there, after training at Spurgeon's, from 1879 to 1886. Following a visit by Dr. E. B. Underhill in 1860, Baptist evangelistic efforts passed gradually into the hands of the Jamaican B.M.S. and the American Baptist Home Missionary Society.

It was under the auspices of the latter that in 1923 Arthur Groves Wood (son of the Rev. A. W. Wood, of Agra and later Winchester) and his wife Alice (née Henderson, and a granddaughter of John Clark) left Jamaica and began more than thirty years devoted and notable service in the island. For his educational work Mr. Wood received a Haitian decoration and during World War II he acted as British Vice-Consul. His last years were spent back in Jamaica and there he died in 1974, aged 88. Both in Haiti and Jamaica he was visited by his sister, Ruth. Her vivid account of the island and Baptist witness there has been issued by her sister. Copies of this attractively duplicated work of 141 pages entitled *Pioneering in Haiti*, may be had, price £2.00, from Miss E. B. Wood, 4 New Park Road, Bournemouth BH6 5AB.

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The Annual General Meeting of the Baptist Historical Society will be held on Tuesday, 19th April 1977, at 4 p.m. in the Great Hall of the University of Nottingham. The speaker will be the Rev. Gordon A. Catherall, minister of the Hamlet Baptist Church, Liverpool, and his subject will be "George William Gordon: Saint or Sinner?"

congregations—at the Downs, and elsewhere—failed to realise what was going on around them.

It is sad to think of that imposing building now so inadequately used and of the brave group who worship there. It is difficult to believe that this type of building will again meet the needs of the neighbourhood. But let us remember all those influenced for good in the past; how lines have gone out into all the world and how many think gratefully of the witness and service of the Downs. Let us remember also that there are still causes in the growing districts on the outskirts of London that are fulfilling very much the function that the Downs fulfilled before World War I and are in effect repeating its successes. It will be for a later generation to record and preserve their story.

ERNEST A. PAYNE.

Ephemera—with more than a passing interest

Dr. J. T. Whitney (Head of Religious Studies, South East Essex Sixth Form College) is making a collection, partly for teaching purposes, of picture postcards with a religious theme. He is particularly interested in cards issued by missionary societies and cards reflecting aspects of the temperance movement (e.g. Band of Hope Motto series), and he would be glad to hear from any reader with information or examples which will reinforce his collection. His address is: 38 Hazlemere Road, Benfleet, Essex.

An article by Dr. Whitney, recently published in the *Picture Postcard Collectors' Gazette*, showed how postcards may be used as historical evidence. Entitled "Edwardian Religion", it analysed six early 20th-century card series which illustrated the clauses of the Lord's Prayer. The prevalence of other-worldly, banal and fatalistic interpretations made Dr. Whitney conclude: "It is hardly surprising that religion interpreted sentimentally could not stand in the decades of war and depression which followed". The evidence of the postcards thus confirms the impressions of popular attitudes which are revealed by other religious artifacts (e.g. memorials) and verse of the age.