

A Free Church Walk.

THE Annual Meeting of the Society was devised on somewhat novel lines, which were quite successful. So popular did the programme prove, that had it not been for the friendly co-operation of the rain, which kept down the numbers of pilgrims to ninety, the preparations might have been inadequate. As it was, the surprised officials of the Southern Railway wondered whether a special train was wanted, and the City Police marvelled what unheralded procession was disturbing their traffic. Next year we must probably arrange two such walks in different localities round London; and in 1934 concentrate on Spurgeon sites, after a change to the Clyde in 1933.

Dr. Ewing led us first to Snow Hill, where Bunyan was nursed after his wet ride from Reading, whither he had gone to reconcile a father and son; John Strudwick, a grocer, took him to his four-storeyed gabled house, the Star, where he died. A few yards east is the site of the New Gate, marked by a blue tablet on the walls of the Old Bailey; in the arch of the gate were confined many prisoners, and at one time it was hallowed by the presence of John Murton, perhaps also of Thomas Halwys, the first two Baptist leaders in England. From that prison went forth the first reasoned claim for religious liberty.

Northward the road led past Bartholomew's Hospital, founded in 1123 by Rahere, the king's jester, in connection with a priory; at the dissolution the hospital was closed for a time, but re-founded by Henry VIII. Beyond is Smithfield, once the tournament-ground, outside the city wall, used later for Bartholomew's Fair. It was often employed for executions, and a tablet on the wall commemorates the burning of John Rogers, John Bradford and Stephen Philpot. There were three brothers Legat in James's reign; Walter was drowned in a baptism at the Old Ford, Thomas was in Newgate with Murton, Bartholomew was the last man burned in Smithfield.

The path lay by Bartholomew Close, which has housed Milton, Hogarth, Benjamin Franklin and Washington Irving; by Little Britain where Charles Wesley was converted in 1738, to Aldersgate Street, where his brother John had the same experience three weeks later. Another tablet tells of this, showing how catholic are the antiquarians of the City in their marking historic sites.

Milton lived in many houses round here, the sites of several being noted; a garden-house in Maidenhead Court, another in Jewin Street, and Bunhill Row, where he finished *Paradise Lost*. Outside the church of St. Giles at Cripplegate is the statue to our great poet. A long time was spent within, for here Cromwell was married in 1620, and Milton buried; while John Foxe and Daniel Defoe are also entered in the death register, and the walls of the church abound in historic monuments. Outside the church, a fragment of the medieval walls, on the foundation of the original Roman wall round London, attracted much attention.

Bunhill Fields contain memorials of the Free Churches in great abundance, and it was with difficulty that many could tear themselves away from the graves of Thomas Bradbury, John Bunyan, Susannah Wesley, Henry Cromwell, Daniel Defoe, Isaac Watts, Daniel Williams and William Blake. Reference was made to the grave of Dan Taylor, the Yorkshire mason who inspired the New Connection of General Baptists. Many were amazed to hear of Thomas Newcomen, the Baptist minister of Dartmouth, the first man to make the steam engine really useful in draining mines, to whom a statue has been erected for his invention.

Crossing the road, we were welcomed by the Rev. George McNeal to Wesley's chapel, where the formal business was quickly despatched, all officers and committee being re-elected. Mr. McNeal then guided his guests round the historic chapel and graveyard, while band after band visited the Museum, with its wealth of early Methodist association. This was a pleasant anticlimax to a pilgrimage which had been mainly concerned with Baptist historic sites. Another year it may be possible to go into similar relations with another of the Free Churches.

THE BAPTIST HISTORICAL SOCIETY of America spends about £600 every year. If British Baptists will entrust our Committee with as much, it can be wisely used.

THE HOME MISSIONARY SOCIETY in America began its work in 1931, with two missionaries and a covered waggon to go on the pioneer trails. *Vanguard of the Caravans* is about to appear, giving the life of John M. Peck, best known of these evangelists.

Apostolic Succession or Apostolic Success?