

# Baptist Historical Society.

## I. ANNUAL MEETING AT CLOUGHFOLD.

**I**T was very rainy weather when, at the recent Baptist Union Assembly in Manchester, the Historical Society and its friends set out in two comfortable motor coaches for their annual trip, this year to the Sion Baptist Church, Cloughfold. For those of us to whom Lancashire was a strange land there were expectations of grim and forbidding industrialised areas for the whole length of our journey. These, of course, were not absent, but we found also green plains and ridges which, so far as the mist would allow us to see, revealed to us that the Industrial Revolution had not been complete in its desolating of the countryside.

After passing through Bury (where, by the way, our own Manchester College started), we stopped for a while to view in the distance Peel's monument, erected to commemorate that statesman's part in the repeal of the Corn Laws. Leaving Ramsbottom, we made the steep and winding climb to Edenfield, passing thereafter along a pleasant road with an upstanding green ridge upon our right and an expansive valley upon our left, until we descended the steep hill through grim and grey Rawtenstall. Soon we reached the Rossendale Valley, and as our vehicles drew up at the Cloughfold Baptist Church we were impressed by its imposing stone structure, and with the spacious turreted schools that lay behind. Not less impressive was the church's interior. In our Baptist sanctuaries antiquity has seldom been the handmaid of inspiring impressiveness. Perhaps that was because our fathers held fast to a plain and utterly unromantic architecture. But inside this church we readily sensed something of that awe—the subdued light, the mellow, comfortable closed pews, the rich rosewood pulpit upstanding in the centre, and the manifest sense of warmth. Here, most of us must have felt, was the venerated home of many Christian families, a sacred kinship stretching down the long years, nurtured upon the ministry of the Word, and bound together by a simple, common love of Christ.

In a very few moments our company, some seventy strong, were very much at home. The proceedings that followed showed that even in an Historical Society an Annual Meeting can have more than an agenda. That meeting had a warm and reverent spirit. That was due in part to the happy chairmanship of Dr. Townley Lord, who expressed our appreciation and pride

at being present at the Cloughfold Church. After the presentation of the reports (and a special tribute of appreciation of the Secretary's splendid work), the Rev. E. A. Payne, B.A., B.D., B.Lit., moved a particularly interesting resolution authorising Mr. Seymour J. Price, upon his coming visit to Jamaica, to convey our happy greetings upon the centenary of the ending of the apprenticeship system there, and recalling thereby a chapter in Baptist history in which Knibb and Burchell championed the slaves prior to and during their struggle for freedom, and Phillipo was their friend in their newly-acquired liberty. The Rev. S. Pearce Carey, M.A., also reminded us that the coming year would mark the centenary of the death of Carey's stalwart colleague, Joshua Marshman.

At this stage Mr. J. S. Hardman, senior deacon, entered the pulpit to give us the story of the Cloughfold Church. His lucid and detailed account was made absorbingly interesting by the sheer joy and pride that he himself possessed in this, the church of himself and his forebears. After mentioning that the church was at one time known as "The Church in Rossendale," he made clear the central geographical position of the church by saying that when asked by a delegate to the Assembly if Rossendale was near Cloughfold, he replied, "Yes, all round it!". Although a history of the Cloughfold Church had been written by Dr. Parry in 1876, that author had worked under sore limitations regarding his sources, and himself concluded that the early records had been burned, a fact which was later definitely established. The early history, therefore, was to be gathered mostly from tradition and external evidence.

Mr. Hardman traced the roots of Protestantism in Rossendale back to 1641, when one John Hardman, of Greens, Stacksteads, who lived about three miles away from the spot where we were assembled, signed a "Protestation against Popish Practices". This man later became one of the Captains in Cromwell's army, and in the Civil War of 1642-5 raised a company of Rossendale men to follow him. His brother, Robert Hardman, remained a Royalist, with the result that the estate became divided, and the subsequent history has been two branches of the family, the Royalist section of which has remained Church of England, while John Hardman's descendants have been largely Nonconformists, and at that, mainly Baptists. It was of incidental interest to us that a descendant of John Hardman, Miss Ethel Lord, of Waterfoot, was present in our meeting, and the speaker then disclosed to us that this lady had, in the last few days, discovered that he also was of the lineage of John Hardman. The actual link between the John Hardman family and the church itself was traceable to a granddaughter

who entered its membership after being baptised on September 25th, 1732.

The next traceable sign of Nonconformity in the district was an open-air meeting place and burial ground held by the Friends in 1663 about a mile from the present chapel. Here were buried many who had suffered imprisonment for conscience' sake, and at that sacred place an open-air service is still held once a year.

So far as "the Church in Rossendale" is concerned, no exact date for its founding can be given, although Mr. Hardman claims it to be the original church in Rossendale. Everything depends upon whether or not there was a Vicar at Newchurch of the name of Kippax, who was one of the evicted clergy who came out from his living under the Act of Uniformity in 1662. Against this Mr. Hardman pointed out that they had the view of Dr. W. T. Whitley, who stated that there was no record of that name in the books of the Newchurch Parish Church. Support is also given to this latter view in a quotation by Dr. Parry from Dr. Halley's *History of Protestantism and Nonconformity in Lancashire*, in which Halley, while giving the names of the more noted men who suffered eviction, does not mention the name of Kippax. On the other hand, Mr. Hardman pointed out that Edmund Calamy, the earliest authority, in his list of the evicted clergy published in 1702, included the name Kippax at Newchurch. The same writer in a later edition, published in 1727, added the names of those vicars who afterwards conformed, and Kippax was not included in those. Significant, too, was the fact that whereas the ejection of the clergy took place in August 1662, in December of that year a new incumbent was appointed at the Newchurch Parish Church. Moreover, there was a Kippax vicar of Haslingden who certainly had conformed.

The significance of all this was that in those days the Newchurch vicarage stood quite near to the present Baptist Chapel, and would have been Kippax's home. While no direct link between Kippax himself and the Baptist Chapel can be found, the first meeting place of the chapel may well have been an old barn attached to his vicarage, for that is possibly the barn mentioned in a licence on October 28, 1672, granted to "The Barne of John Pickops, of Dedwinclough, in Lancash. Indpt." for use as a meeting place under the Declaration of Indulgence granted by Charles II.

The first building actually to be erected was put up for the use of William Mitchell and David Crosley, and was opened at Bacup in 1692, being known as the "Church in Rossendale." As yet it was not Baptist, but with both the leaders becoming

Baptist (David Crosley was baptised at Bromsgrove in 1692), the Church made a gradual transition. Differences of opinion led to the removal of William Mitchell to Rawdon in 1699. In the year 1705 the Church received the gift of the house of Robert Litchford, which stood on the actual spot of the present chapel. This deed of transfer is the oldest document possessed by the Church, and provides that the building be given—"For the use of all Protestant Dissenters called Anabaptists, or Independents, within the Forest of Rossendale . . . when the same shall be made fit and commodious for a chapel or a meeting place." Upon Litchford's death in 1710 he left a legacy of £150 to the Church, and the house served as their chapel until 1837.

William Mitchell's successor was Richard Ashworth, a trustee under Litchford's will, and his ministry of forty-five years was the longest in the history of the church. He was the father of Caleb Ashworth, who became the Principal of the Northampton Academy upon its removal to Daventry. For the last twelve years of his ministry Richard Ashworth was blind. Next came Robert Hyde, who was baptised in the River Calder in 1781 by John Stutterd. That day was a wintry one, and the ice had to be broken to enable the ceremony to take place. Hyde removed from Cloughfold to Yorkshire, where from 1815 he exercised a long ministry at Salendine Nook. Hyde was followed by Robert Heyworth, who commenced his ministry there at sixty-three years of age, and stayed from 1815 till 1838. He was the only minister of the church to be buried in their burial ground. In the later days of Heyworth's ministry the building, after one hundred and thirty-three years of service, was pulled down, and another was erected upon the site. The first minister of the new church was David Griffiths, who, after a short stay, went to Accrington. In 1845 the pastorate was undertaken by W. E. Jackson. Mr. Hardman told us that Jackson was the first minister of Cloughfold whom he could remember, although his recollection was not of his ministry itself, but of occasional preaching visits after his retirement. He remained until 1853.

By this time the second building had become too small for their needs, and it was agreed, at a cost of £700, to enlarge it, a third of that amount being promised by one of the deacons, John Ashworth. When the work was commenced it began to grow, and instead of the modest £700 the final expenditure was £2,000, and the completed building was much as it is to-day. Part of the stonework of the 1838 building still remained in the present chapel.

Mr. Hardman then told us the interesting story of the

imposing pulpit to which I have already referred. Connected with the chapel were two Priestleys, father and son, and both called Robert. The elder was buried in the Sion graveyard. The son went to America, and was at Rio at the time that the chapel was being rebuilt. There he bought a rosewood tree and returned with it to his old home. The pulpit, also inlaid with Carrara marble, was made from that tree. The opening services of this rebuilt church were held on Good Friday, 1854. At much the same time a friend gave the organ, one of the first in Rossendale. But the advent of music was received with caution. At these opening services the choir requested a part, but this was granted only upon the condition that they "did not sing any music of a demoralising character". A little later on there is a record that the choir rendered Haydn's "Messiah". Mr. Hardman humorously added that he supposed they made it right afterwards by giving Handel's "Creation"! The first sermon to be preached from the new pulpit was by a former minister, the Rev. David Griffiths, then at Accrington, and the organist at the opening services was Dr. Hopkins, who was the organist of the Temple Church in London.

In 1859 the Rev. W. H. C. Anson became the minister. His father had been in the Navy, and was a descendant of Sir George Anson, who in 1743 captured two French men-of-war off Cape Finisterre. The son himself had been at Dartmouth College, intended for the Navy. His mother, however, an Italian, and converted from Roman Catholicism finally to become a Baptist, conceived the idea that her son ought to become a Baptist minister, and so he was duly transferred from Dartmouth to Rawdon! Cloughfold was his first Church, but through an unfortunate dissension he and thirty-five of the members formed a rival church on the main road, about three-quarters of a mile away. After a brief ministry by a man named Paterson, son of Dr. Paterson, of Glasgow, came the Rev. A. J. Parry, afterwards Dr. Parry, who wrote the history of the church.

Mr. Hardman then told us that the mother of Mr. Lloyd George was a member of Sion Church for several years, and in the minute book there was a letter of transfer from the church that she attended in Wales to the Cloughfold Church. It was actually only three months after her departure from Rossendale that the great statesman himself was born! After ministries by the Rev. W. L. Giles and the Rev. James Smith came the Rev. W. Collins Davies, who ministered there for thirteen years. He was followed by the last of their ministers, the Rev. J. Barton Turner, who seven and a half years ago concluded a ministry of twenty-eight years there, and who was actually present in our party.

After recalling eminent men who had preached at Sion—Christmas Evans, John B. Gough, Dr. George Lorrimer and others, Mr. Hardman recalled with pride two scholars of their school. First, Dr. H. McLachlan, foremost among Unitarian Church historians; and the Rev. R. Birch Hoyle, whose contributions to theological literature are so widely known, and who was present at the meeting and later made a very happy speech. Mr. Hardman concluded his intensely interesting address by an appeal for the encouragement, particularly among our young people, of an interest in Baptist history, and especially of their own local church.

Upon adjourning to the schoolroom we sat down to a real Lancashire tea. It was a great spread! Our indebtedness to the Church, and especially to Mr. Hardman himself, was expressed with intimate reminiscences by the Rev. J. O. Hagger, B.D., who himself has ministered in the vicinity of Cloughfold. We were then able to view the many interesting historic exhibits that had been arranged for our inspection, which included a copy of the will of Robert Litchford; the deed of transfer of his house; a photographic reproduction of the licence for worship in the barn of John Pickops; a minute book of Goodshaw Chapel of 1764; a letter in the handwriting of the Rev. Robert Hyde, dated May 1787; the church minute book from 1853 to 1893; photographs of the Rev. W. C. H. Anson, and of the Cawl Terrace Church, 1865-70; an historical record book compiled by Mr. Hardman; and a photograph of the Lodge Fold Farm, built in 1629 and demolished 1935, formerly the old Newchurch Rectory, and probably the first meeting place of the Sion Church.

For all of us who were present the visit to Cloughfold will be one of the outstanding memories of the Manchester Assembly. Dr. Townley Lord said that he could not recall an Historical Society trip that had been more interesting and enjoyable. It is certain that nothing makes our Baptist history so living and romantic as to spend an afternoon as we did at Sion, Cloughfold.

F. G. HASTINGS.

## II. REPORT FOR THE YEAR 1936.

Twelve months ago for our Annual Meeting we enjoyed the gracious hospitality of the British and Foreign Bible Society. Members were fascinated as they inspected some of the treasures of the Library of 19,000 volumes, and listened to the thrilling story of Bible translation. Once again we were reminded that Joseph Hughes, the minister of our Battersea Church, was the first Secretary of the Bible Society; and that, during the

succeeding years, Baptists have taken a prominent part in Bible translation.

To-day we are proud to meet in the historic Cloughfold Church, where we enjoy the equally gracious hospitality of our keen and devoted member, Mr. J. S. Hardman, and his fellow officers.

There is little doubt that interest in Baptist history and principles has quickened during recent years. The early spade-work of this Society is yielding its harvest; and the Reunion suggestions of Lambeth, and elsewhere, have caused men to think out and examine their position. Moreover, churches, in increasing numbers, are celebrating Jubilees; Centenaries, Bicentenaries and even Ter-centenaries, and these occasions produce more or less reliable historical souvenirs. Baptist Libraries have been enriched by these volumes, and by other works, notably Dr. Smithson's *Anabaptists*, which is still receiving appreciative reviews in foreign journals. The outstanding literary event, of course, was the republication by our Society of Thomas Helwys' *Mystery of Iniquity*, for which thanks have been received from many representative quarters, at home and abroad. We shall hear from our treasurer the gratifying news that the cost of this has been defrayed in two years.

During the past year historical enquiries have reached us from Baptists in Australia, Canada, France, Germany and the United States, in addition to many from England and Wales, and in all cases the desired information has been supplied.

Four numbers of the *Baptist Quarterly* were issued, that in January 1936 being considerably enlarged in order to reprint the whole of the Minutes of the Yorks and Lancs Association at Halifax in 1764. Friends in the two Counties contributed financial assistance for this.

Some of our articles attracted wide attention. Dr. Dingley's article on the "Minister in the Sickroom" greatly impressed Dr. Peel, Editor of the *Congregational Quarterly*, and other editors, and they asked for permission to reprint the whole or part, a permission which we readily gave. Miss Wood's delightful article on "The Presidential Year from the Driving Wheel" so appealed to the Editor of the *Baptist Times* that he honoured us by forthwith reproducing it in his columns.

We are indebted to all contributors, on both the historical and modern sides, who so ably and gratuitously render service to the Society, and relieve the anxieties of the Editor.

We were indebted to Mr. Hardman for the practical suggestion that, in the same way that an individual can become a Life Member of our Society, it should be possible for a Church

to become a permanent member. Such a Church would in the course of time build up a Library of Baptist History, of use particularly to the minister and to any young people who were interested. The Committee gladly adopted the suggestion, and the Church at Cloughfold has had the honour of being the first to pay £15 15s. 0d. to secure this privilege.

It has been a pleasure to enrol many new members, so that the membership list now stands higher than for some years past. This increase has enabled us to add eight pages to the *Baptist Quarterly*, which will now appear with fifty-six pages instead of forty-eight. The membership list is always open for additions, and we appeal to the present members to use their endeavours to secure new recruits, whether as ordinary members at 10s. 0d. or honorary members at £1 1s. 0d. We further hope that among our new members some will give the necessary time and thought to prepare contributions of permanent value for the pages of our journal.

SEYMOUR J. PRICE, *Secretary*.

### III. FINANCIAL STATEMENT.

(For the year ended 31st December, 1936.)

					£	s.	d.
INCOME							
Balance from 1935	...	...	...	...	12	6	11
— do. — for Subscriptions paid in advance					3	3	0
Subscriptions	...	...	...	...	96	16	6
Donations for special January issue			...	...	13	2	6
Sales of Publications	...	...	...	...	29	15	10
Life Membership: Cloughfold Church	...	...	...	...	15	15	0
					£170 19 9		
EXPENDITURE							
Printing and Publishing <i>Baptist Quarterly</i>	...			...	89	19	0
Printing, Insurance and Expenses	...	...		...	7	18	11
<i>Baptists of Towcester</i>	...	...	...	...	2	18	0
<i>Mystery of Iniquity—Helwys:</i>							
Balance of Printing Account	...	...	...	...	53	15	6
					154 11 5		
Reserve—Life Membership Subscription	...			...	15	15	0
Balance to 1937	...	...	...	...	13	4	
					£170 19 9		

A. H. CALDER, *Treasurer*.