

# Baptist Historical Society.

## 1. THIRTIETH ANNUAL MEETING.

TWICE at least in recent years our Society's Annual Meeting has been felicitously precluded by a tour of visits to the sites of historic Baptist churches in London. But the shift of population has led to the extinction of some churches, and the transference of others to more outlying neighbourhoods; and even apart from this, it is obvious that the material for such an excursion must soon be exhausted. Yet it seemed a pity to have nothing in its place, for the tours have certainly brought more people to the Annual Meeting. In this connection the happy idea of holding the meeting of 1938 at "Upton" Chapel, Lambeth, and prefacing it with an inspection of Lambeth Palace, occurred to the resourceful brain of—was it our energetic Secretary, or the Secretary *emeritus*? No matter which: for if one had not thought of it, we may be sure the other would!

Accordingly, necessary permission having been sought and graciously accorded, we assembled at the main gateway at 2.30 on Thursday, April 28th. We were conducted first to the Library, where we were received by the Archbishop's Librarian, Dr. Irene Churchill, and later by the Archbishop's Chaplain, Dr. Alan C. Don. Dr. Churchill had put out in the showcases some of the treasures of the Library which she thought would be of special interest to us, notably many early editions of the English Bible or New Testament, and after a rapid outline of the history of the various Palace buildings, she gave us an interesting and instructive account of these. On the centre table she had set out nine volumes which had a more direct bearing on the history of English Dissent, and respecting these she gracefully handed over the task of exposition to Dr. Whitley, who was able to show that they provided a series of landmarks reaching from the rise of Separatism under Elizabeth to its substantial emancipation under William the Third.

Our thanks to Dr. Churchill were suitably expressed by our President, who asked her acceptance of the Society's facsimile reprint of Helwys' *Mystery of Iniquity*.

We were next taken in hand by the genial porter who, as he showed us over the state apartments, chapel and garden, proved himself a well-informed and enthusiastic conductor. We saw, among other things, the long series of portraits of Archbishops of Canterbury, down to the very beautiful painting of the present Archbishop by the President of the Royal Academy. But the building which would probably have been of the greatest interest to most of us—the Lollard's Tower—could

unfortunately not be shown, owing to the obstacles presented by steep stairs and very confined chambers.

In the garden the flower beds (the soil for which, we were told, had been brought from Edenbridge) were gay with wall flowers and tulips. We were shown a postern gate into it which is sacred to the use of the nurses from St. Thomas's Hospital hard by, so that they can enjoy its beauty and quiet whenever they are free and so disposed: and also a plot of ground which was once a paddock for cows, but is now fenced off as a playground for local school children. But we scarcely needed this evidence to convince us of the public spirit of Dr. Lang.

Thence we adjourned to "Upton" Chapel for the Annual Meeting. The rapidity with which the necessary business could be transacted is an index of the prosperous state of the Society. The Treasurer was indeed able to report that it had doubled its membership in the last four years, and that a reserve fund was being built up.

Finally we were entertained to a most liberal tea by the "Upton" Church, to whom our thanks were warmly paid by the President.

A. J. D. FARRER.

## II. REPORT FOR THE YEAR 1937.

Thirty years ago, on the 30th April, 1908, at the fourth session of its Annual Assembly in Bloomsbury, the Baptist Union resolved unanimously:

"That the members of the Assembly of the Baptist Union cordially approve of the proposal to form a Baptist Historical Society, and trust that this important denominational work will receive practical and general support."

At the close of the session circulars signed by the Secretary of the Union were issued to the ministers and delegates inviting them to attend the inaugural meeting of the Society that afternoon.

The first resolution was proposed by Dr. J. H. Shakespeare, who remained a warm friend of the Society throughout his secretariat of the Union. The need for the Society had long been obvious. Many of our records were in danger of being lost: the absence of modern historical works created difficulties when legal issues were involved: there was need to appreciate afresh the heritage into which Baptists had entered. 65 ministers and delegates joined at this inaugural meeting, and of those foundation members Drs. J. C. Carlile, J. W. Ewing, J. H. Rushbrooke and W. T. Whitley, the Rev. A. S. Langley and

Mr. H. Ernest Wood have continued their membership throughout the thirty years.

The Society's aims were stated to be :

1. To gather all Records of British and Irish Baptists.
2. To hold Meetings to Discuss Obscure Points.
3. To publish "Transactions" read at these Meetings, and other papers.
4. To promote County and Other Histories.
5. To provide Safe Custody for Ancient Minutes, &c.
6. To encourage Young Students of History.

Now, at the end of three decades, the Society has a record of which it may be proud. It has published seven volumes of *Transactions* and eight of the *Baptist Quarterly*, into which the *Transactions* were merged in 1922, reprinted several historical volumes, and inspired and subsidised others. Many inquiries, world-wide in their origin, have been answered, and valued guidance has been given to research students.

The Society has also furnished the Baptist Union and individual Churches with historical material which has aided the settlement of legal questions, and Churches have been encouraged to preserve their ancient records and publish centenary and other volumes.

No one can review these 30 years without reference to the outstanding service rendered from the outset by Dr. Whitley, who, for so many years, was the Society's Secretary and Editor.

Twelve months ago our Annual Meeting was held at the historic church at Cloughfold, which has the distinction of being the first church to enter into permanent membership of our Society. The welcome was typically warm-hearted, and the hospitality bounteous. Deeds and other historic records of the church were on exhibition, and the Secretary, Mr. J. S. Hardman, who had generously provided charabancs from Manchester, delivered an instructive and entertaining address on the past of the church.

At that meeting it was reported that the *Baptist Quarterly* would be enlarged to fifty-six pages, and we are glad to report that as a result of the continued increase in our membership it has been possible to enlarge it further as from January to sixty-four pages. The four issues of 1937 included articles of interest and permanent value, and re-prints of various original letters and records. We are indebted to an increasing band of contributors who gladly and gratuitously help the Society.

Our Library has been enriched by various gifts, including the Minute Book of the London Strict Baptist Association, 1846-1853, by Mr. A. R. Woollacot, and the Treasurer's book of

the Melbourne Church with photographs and letters, by Mr. B. B. Granger. Various churches which have published centenary or other records have presented copies, and we invite all such churches, and all Baptist authors, to present copies of their works to the Society for incorporation into its permanent library.

Looking to the future, we are privileged to state that Dr. Whitley is engaged on the preparation of a third volume of his *Bibliography*, which will probably cover the fifty years 1837-1887. The earlier volumes have been invaluable, and students for all time will be debtors to Dr. Whitley's industry and research.

SEYMOUR J. PRICE, *Secretary*.

### III. FINANCIAL STATEMENT.

(For the year ended 31st December, 1937.)

INCOME									
			£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	
Balance from 1936	...	...	...	...	...		13	4	
Subscriptions—									
Annual for 1937	...	...	124	16	2				
Annual for 1938	...	...	8	6	0				
Two Life Members	...	...	21	0	0				
							154	2	2
Sale of Publications	...	...	...	...	...		11	1	3
							£165	16	9
EXPENDITURE									
<i>Baptist Quarterly</i> , four issues	...	...	...	...	...		95	18	3
Stationery, postages, insurance etc.	...	...	...	...	...		13	9	0
Transfer to Reserve	...	...	...	...	...		44	5	0
Balance in hand	...	...	3	18	6				
Subscriptions paid in advance	...	...	8	6	0				
							12	4	6
							£165	16	9
RESERVE FUND									
Deposit Account for Life Subscriptions	...	...	...	...	...		50	0	0
Balance	...	...	...	...	...		10	0	0
							£60	0	0

A. H. CALDER, *Treasurer*.