

Editorial Notes.

THE Baptist Theological College of Scotland has this autumn celebrated its jubilee. Its roots run much farther back into history than a mere half-century, but it was in Glasgow, on September 25th, 1894, that the present institution was launched, with Professor Joseph Coats, then occupying the Chair of Pathology in Glasgow University, as President. During the past five decades the College has grown in standing and influence, and has played an important part in denominational life in Scotland and far beyond. A distinguished succession of teachers—including Dr. Jervis Coats, Dr. T. H. Martin and Dr. J. T. Forbes—have helped in the equipping of well over a hundred men now serving in varied spheres at home and abroad. The establishment and maintenance of a College is no easy task. The Scottish Baptist College has been faithfully served and generously supported by Scottish Baptists, and has increasing opportunities of usefulness before it. All Baptists will join in congratulations and good wishes to the present Principal, Dr. W. Holms Coats, to his staff, the Rev. James Hair and Dr. A. B. Miller, and to the officers and committee of the College. May its second half-century prove as beneficial to Scottish Baptist life and to us all as has the first.

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The Report of the Social and Industrial Commission of the Church Assembly issued under the title *The Church and the Planning of Britain* (S.P.C.K., 2/-) is an important and timely document. It presents a valuable Christian commentary on the famous trio of government reports associated with the names of Barlow, Scott and Uthwatt. It sums up "the points to which the Church and Church folk generally, should direct keen and continuous attention." It also indicates useful practical lines of action in localities—a matter of urgent moment in view of the development and rebuilding plans now being made by many local authorities. A reading of the report, however, provokes a number of questions. There is nothing in it distinctively Anglican (save the word "altar" in the last paragraph). Indeed, it strikes notes which for generations were characteristic of the Free Church pioneers of social uplift, more than once referring to the work of Ebenezer Howard and others. Why did not this report come from the British Council of Churches? Why has there been no similar document from the Federal Free Church Council? Is there one on the way? Or, alternatively, cannot the Federal

Council swiftly, and with adequate publicity, indicate that Free Churchmen strongly endorse the main lines of this report and are equally concerned for the Christian values it enshrines?

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Another recent document worth the attention of Baptists is *Confirmation To-day* (Press & Publications Board of the Church Assembly, 2/-). It is the interim report of joint committees set up by the Convocations of Canterbury and York, and it presents material for consideration and discussion on vital issues which face all branches of the Christian Church. The statistics given tell their own tale. It is stated that the approximate number of confirmed members of the Church of England at the present time is over 7,000,000, of whom about 2½ millions, or thirty-five per cent., are communicants at Easter. Of every 100 children born in this country, sixty-seven are baptised at Church of England fonts, thirty-four join Church of England Sunday Schools or kindred groups, twenty-six are confirmed, but only nine continue as Easter communicants. (What are the parallel figures showing the relative numbers of Baptist Sunday School scholars and candidates for baptism, and of the latter how many remain regular, or even annual, attendants at the Lord's Table?) The report is instructive, interesting and candid; it does not present final conclusions or recommendations, but so far as its general tendency can be discerned, it is somewhat disturbing. It makes a welcome plea for experiment. It admits that "it has been said with some force that it is infant baptism rather than adult Confirmation which needs justification." It interprets the latter, in very suggestive fashion, as "ordination into the general priesthood of the faithful," and would have its positive character as the "sacrament of warriors" stressed.

Nevertheless, the framers of the report fail to see how some at least of their problems come from the separation of Baptism and Confirmation and the way the former has been evacuated of much of its New Testament significance by administering it to infants. Many of the members of the committee seem inclined to think that the order Baptism, Confirmation, Communion might well be varied to Baptism, Communion, Confirmation—the first taking place in infancy, the second beginning at the age of eleven or twelve, and the third taking place usually at about the age of seventeen. Whilst this would give added reality to Confirmation, it would remove the necessity of personal faith in the case of participation in the communion service. This would surely be a very dangerous and retrograde step. Baptists will, however, find in this report much to stimulate their own thought about the rite of Baptism, particularly in regard to the age of those to whom it should be administered and the interpretation of its significance.

Some few years ago in the Huntington Library, San Marino, California, Dr. Albert Peel discovered the original notebook of John Penry, the eager young Welsh Puritan and Separatist, who was suspected of having had a hand in the Marprelate Tracts, and who for this and other provocative writings and activities was hanged in 1593. In his lectures, *The Christian Basis of Democracy*, published last year, Dr. Peel made use of some of the material in the Notebook. He has now edited the full text for the Royal Historical Society, and it has been issued in the Camden Third Series, Vol. LXVII, together with a useful introduction. Penry, in the Notebook, denies that he was the author of the Marprelate Tracts, but Dr. Peel, after a careful reconsideration of the very intricate matters involved, thinks he may yet have had some hand in them, and that perhaps Sir Roger Williams, the soldier, was also implicated. The Notebook contains many other matters of interest for an understanding of Elizabethan Puritanism and Separatism. It is good news to hear that, on a recent visit to America, Dr. Peel has also discovered a number of extracts from the sermons of John Smyth, preached perhaps while he was at Lincoln. It is to be hoped that Dr. Peel will have opportunity of editing these and making them available for us without delay.

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News of these finds leads us to point out how valuable and important, not only for the purposes of historical research, but on account of much wider and urgent contemporary issues, have been the visits which Dr. Peel and other religious leaders have paid to the United States and Canada during the past five years. The need for the maintenance of personal contacts between those in this country and the American Continent is patent to all, and political and military leaders have been compelled to make frequent journeys across the Atlantic. The closest understanding and co-operation is essential also in the religious sphere. Under the auspices of the Ministry of Information and the British Council of Churches, and of the kindred bodies in America, not a few personal missions have been arranged both from and to this country for the purposes of mutual interpretation and friendship. We believe we are right, however, in saying that apart from the visits paid to America by Dr. Rushbrooke, as President of the World Alliance, one by Dr. Hugh Martin while he was in charge of the Religions Division of the Ministry of Information, and the recent brief visit of Dr. Williamson for consultations with the A.B.F.M.S.—all of them “official” visits in a special and restricted sense—no British Baptist leaders have been among the travellers. This is somewhat surprising in view of the strength of the Baptist community in America, and their very generous gifts to the B.M.S. and to the sufferers from bombing. It is also

regrettable, for those in this country with any wide or intimate knowledge of American Baptist life are now very few. The creation of an international Christian leadership is one of the most urgent tasks confronting the churches, our own in particular. It cannot be accomplished overnight.

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In our last issue we made reference to the illness of Dr. Wheeler Robinson, the honoured President of the Baptist Historical Society. It is a satisfaction to report that he has been able to give a further series of Speaker's Lectures, though his activities continue much restricted. We regret now to have to note the serious illness of our distinguished Vice-President, Dr. W. T. Whitley. Dr. Whitley has had to spend some weeks in hospital. We are glad to learn that he is somewhat better and in good spirits. The Treasurer of the Historical Society (Mr. Allan H. Calder, 36, Marshalswick Lane, St. Albans) invites ordinary members to become Honorary Members at a subscription of one guinea per annum. They will thus further the important work of the Society, and in return receive from time to time special publications in which the Society is interested. During the term of office of Mr. Seymour Price as President of the Baptist Union, editorial responsibility for this journal is in the hands of the Rev. E. A. Payne. Communications should be addressed to him at Regent's Park College, Pusey Street, Oxford.