

Editorial Notes.

The Annual Meeting of the Baptist Historical Society was held in the Dr. Williams Library, 14 Gordon Square, London, W.C.1., on Thursday, April 29th. There was a good attendance of members, who enjoyed the opportunity for fellowship at the tea which preceded the meeting. The Annual Report of the Secretary and the Financial Statement of the Treasurer were adopted and will be published in our next issue. The death of Dr. W. T. Whitley necessitated, all too soon, further changes in the leadership of the Society. Mr. Seymour J. Price, who in 1935 succeeded Dr. Whitley as Secretary of the Society and shortly after became sole editor of the *Baptist Quarterly*, was elected President, and Revs. A. S. Langley, F.R.Hist.S., and Ernest A. Payne, M.A., B.D., B.Litt. Vice-Presidents, in addition to Drs. Dakin and Evans who were re-elected. The Revs. Ernest A. Payne, Graham W. Hughes, B.A., B.D., and Mr. Price were appointed Editorial Board as from the present issue. They will mutually help one another, but, in general, Mr. Payne will be responsible for editorials and reviews, Mr. Hughes for modern articles and Mr. Price for historical.

After the Annual Meeting, Mr. Stephen Jones, librarian, spoke interestingly and authoritatively of the valuable collection of manuscripts, tracts, pictures and books comprised in the Library. He had placed us further in his debt by arranging a display of old books and manuscripts which were likely to be of particular interest to our members. Considerable time was spent in the handling and perusal of these.

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As stated above an Editorial Board has been appointed, and it is hoped that the next number of the *Baptist Quarterly* will be published during October. Arrangements have been made for the resumption of regular quarterly publication as from January 1st, 1949. Mr. Price, who has been responsible for the present number much regrets its late publication through circumstances beyond his control.

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We referred in our last issue to the attempt shortly to be made, under Dr. Sidney Berry's leadership, to transform the International Congregational Council into a kind of Congrega-

tionalist World Alliance. At the instance of the I.C.C. a statement on Congregationalism has recently been issued to all the national Congregational Unions with a view to its further discussion and formal adoption at an I.C.C. meeting in Boston in 1949. The statement is naturally of interest to Baptists, whose tradition and polity have been so similar to those of the Congregationalists. The document has this added importance: if it is made the basis of a Congregationalist Alliance, the absence of any reference to the practice of paedobaptism would apparently make it possible for a Baptist Union organised in the manner suggested to apply for membership!

The statement begins by defining a Congregational Church as "in principle a covenant fellowship, binding the members to God and to one another through Christ, the Head of the Church." This is followed by a quotation from Richard Mather, the Lancashire-born compiler of the famous Bay Psalm Book, whose "Cambridge Platform" repudiating New England Presbyterianism appeared just three hundred years ago. Five supplementary points are then made. (1) Whilst standing for religious liberty and refraining from credal subscription, Congregationalists "have never differed from other Christian communions in respect of the great doctrines of the Christian faith." (2) "The distinctive element in the Congregational polity has been the local church in which each member has his spiritual responsibility The instrument whereby Christ rules in the local church is the Church Meeting. . . ." (3) Unions of Congregational churches have been on the principle that wider synods and courts should have the same sort of authority as the Church Meeting, with all authority spiritual, "not legislative, coercive and magisterial." This principle of government, it is said, is the essential contribution of Congregationalists to the Universal Church. (4) The ultimate human authority in the church is the whole fellowship which may call out any member to preach or administer the sacraments. (5) Churchmanship of this type is based on respect for the individual and this leads Congregationalists to stand for "political and religious freedom, for economic justice, for racial equality and for equality of the sexes."

There is little here that Baptists are likely to quarrel with except, perhaps, the references to the Church Meeting. If "*the* instrument whereby Christ rules in the local church is the Church Meeting," then He is being given little opportunity to rule in many modern Baptist and Congregationalist churches. Moreover, this statement surely exalts order to the level of faith, and appears to limit the channel of Christ's rule, just as an episcopal or synodal system does, if insisted on as *the* instrument. The truth, of course, is that the Church Meeting is one of the ways in

which Christ has ruled and may rule in His Church. Dare we say more than that?

The full text of the Congregationalist statement appeared in the *Christian World* for January 1st, 1948. It deserves careful comparison with the Statement on the Doctrine of the Church recently approved by the Baptist Union Council and printed in full elsewhere in this issue.

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We understand that in the United States the Evangelical and Reformed Church (which has 700,000 members and is of non-Lutheran German antecedents) is likely to unite with the Congregational Christian Church (that is, the Congregationalists, as we should call them, who number 1,150,000). Considerable progress has also been made in discussion between representatives of the Northern Baptist Convention and of the Disciples of Christ, and renewed formal negotiations between the two bodies are now likely. Although in origin an offshoot of Presbyterianism, after 1827 the Disciples in America drew many recruits from Baptist circles. They are said now to number 1,700,000 members, which is slightly more than the membership associated with the Northern Baptist Convention.

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The announcement that Dr. Arnold T. Ohrn, of Norway, has accepted an invitation to become General Secretary of the Baptist World Alliance has given widespread satisfaction. Born while his father was in ministerial service in the United States, Dr. Ohrn grew to manhood in Norway, graduated at Oslo University and has rendered most able service to the Baptist Union of Norway and the Baptist Theological Seminary. At the Atlanta World Congress by his sermon, and at Copenhagen by his outstanding gifts as a translator, Dr. Ohrn became well known and trusted by representative Baptists from every part of the world. It will be a particular satisfaction to those in Britain that, at a time when inevitably much of the work and support of the Alliance must find their centre in America, one so knowledgeable and well-equipped as regards the life of Europe is to be General Secretary. It is welcome news, too, that Dr. W. O. Lewis will be continuing for another year at least his services to the Alliance.

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Plans for the first Assembly of the World Council of Churches are now well advanced. It is due to meet in Amsterdam from August 22nd to September 4th. The delegates of the Baptist Union are to be the Rev. M. E. Aubrey, Principal P. W. Evans, Mr. C. T. LeQuesne, K.C., and the Rev. E. A. Payne, with Dr.

Hugh Martin and Dr. Dunning as alternates. The Rt. Hon. Ernest Brown has been asked to represent the Baptist Union of New Zealand, so that he also will be present. For many months past, strong international commissions have been at work, and before the Assembly opens four important volumes of essays will be issued under the titles *The Universal Church in God's Design*, *God's Design and Man's Witness*, *The Church and the Disorder of Society* and *The Church and International Affairs*. It may safely be affirmed that so elaborate and sustained a piece of co-operative Christian thinking has never before been attempted. It is not going to be easy to establish the World Council on a basis firm enough to sustain it, and yet satisfactory to those of varying ecclesiastical tradition and varying views of the nature of the Church. The guidance and blessing of God should be earnestly invoked by all Christian people. Some commentators have ventured to link the Amsterdam meeting with the Council of Nicaea in 325. It is significant that the forthcoming Assembly was not summoned by any Emperor or secular authority and that it has not to settle theological or ecclesiastical controversies; it is the voluntary coming together of Christian representatives desirous of demonstrating their fellowship in Christ and anxious to discover and serve the will of God.

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The Study Department of the World Council of Churches has issued a valuable report entitled *From the Bible to the Modern World*, (Geneva); 3s. 6d. from Miss S. Morden, World Council of Churches, 7, Kensington Church Court, London, W.8. It contains papers read at two conferences, one in London and one at Bossey, and summarises the discussions upon them. C. H. Dodd, W. M. Horton, Karl Barth, A. Nygren and W. Eichrodt are among the contributors. The object of the conferences was to discover "the Biblical Authority for the Church's Social and Political Message today." They afforded important evidence of some of the newer theological trends both on the Continent and in America and Britain. We note with some surprise and disappointment that of the fifty scholars who took part in the Conferences not one was a Baptist.