

Editorial Notes

NEXT year Dr. Winthrop S. Hudson, of the Colgate-Rochester Divinity School, New York, who is President of the American Baptist Historical Society, is to pay a visit to Britain. We have pleasure in announcing that Dr. Hudson has accepted an invitation to address our own Historical Society at its Annual Meeting on 3rd May next. His subject will be "Order in the Church." Although May seems rather distant, we hope that readers in this country will make a note of the date and that there will be an exceptionally large audience to welcome our distinguished American visitor.

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In an address entitled "The Conception of our Fathers regarding the Church,"¹ delivered last year at the Mennonite World Conference, the Dutch Mennonite historian, Pastor N. van der Zijpp, declared that Anabaptist views of the Church could be broadly divided into two main concepts, which he terms the "congregationalist" and the "spiritualist." The former, represented by Conrad Grebel, Michael Sattler, Menno Simons and others, laid greater stress upon the corporate aspect of the Church. For them, not personal faith but the Church was primary, and among many of them baptism came to be regarded as an essential rite of initiation. Some eventually merged into one or other of the Protestant State churches, while the danger in which most of them stood was that of becoming formalistic or rationalist. The other, among whose representatives were Hans Denk and Hans die Ries, regarded the working of the Spirit in the heart of the individual as primary and the Church as of secondary importance. Here everything was much more subjective, the guidance of the Spirit was stressed and baptism was of little more than symbolic significance. The peril in this case was that of excessive individualism. This "spiritualist" type was most influential in Holland. Elsewhere the "congregationalist" attitude prevailed and has largely continued to do so throughout Mennonite history. Could it be said that modern Baptists may be broadly divided in a similar way? Certainly, as Pastor van der Zijpp observed in his address, the important thing is ever to act on the principle: in what we agree, unity; in what we differ, tolerance; in everything, love.

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The Standing Conference of Theological and Philosophical Libraries in London—which, among its 22 member libraries, includes the Dr. Williams' Library, the Biblical Study Library, the Westminster Abbey Library and five municipal libraries—is a voluntary association which seeks to assist students and research workers in the fields of theology and philosophy. It holds meetings, has published a directory of its member libraries and has this year issued a joint reader's ticket. Now it offers, for a fee of 3s. 6d., a short term research ticket which entitles its holder to visit any or all of the co-operating libraries to consult their catalogues and reference works. Available for one month, its purpose is to enable students to locate the books or materials they wish to find. Full information may be obtained from the Hon. Secretary, Miss Joan Ferrier, C.M.S. Library, 6, Salisbury Square, London, E.C.4.

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By the kindness of one of our esteemed retired missionaries, Rev. Gordon S. Wilkins, thirteen original letters written between 1796 and 1812 by William Burgess of Fleet, Lincs. to John Taylor of Queenshead, nr. Halifax, have been presented to the Historical Society. Burgess (1755-1813) and Taylor (1743-1818) were both General Baptist ministers, the latter being the brother of the famous Dan Taylor and father of James and Adam (the G.B. historian). Elizabeth, the daughter of James—the first G.B. minister in Derby—married William Wilkins and was thus the Rev. Gordon Wilkins' grandmother. It is of further interest that Mr. Gordon Wilkins married the great-grand-daughter of John Gregory Pike, who succeeded Taylor in the Derby pastorate, was secretary of the G.B. Missionary Society and among whose descendants there has been a remarkable record of missionary service, continued in our time by Mr. and Mrs. Wilkins and their children.

Baptists in the West Country, by Douglas Jackman. (Western Baptist Association, 2s.)

For the Western Baptist Association, 1953 marks its tercentenary, though Mr. Douglas Jackman, M.B.E., J.P.—who has served as its Secretary and Treasurer and possesses unrivalled knowledge of the subject—maintains there are good reasons for believing the date of formation to have been earlier than 1653. Here he outlines the Association's history and provides valuable notes on its member churches. The booklet is informative and interesting. We hope it will be widely read, and that it will stimulate further research into the history of Western Baptists, for one of our present needs is for more county and regional histories.