

Editorial Notes

AS previously announced, Dr. Winthrop S. Hudson of New York will be the speaker at the Annual Meeting of the Baptist Historical Society at 4.30 p.m. on Monday, 3rd May, in the Lounge at Bloomsbury Central Church. His subject will be "Who were the Baptists?" We hope for a good attendance of members and friends to welcome this distinguished Baptist scholar who is Professor of Church History at the Colgate-Rochester Divinity School and President of the American Baptist Historical Society. It is hoped to arrange for tea to be served, and those who intend being present will help by notifying the Secretary well beforehand.

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The significance of the Building Society movement has largely been overlooked by social historians in spite of the fact that, in its modern form, it has existed for well over a century. In 1952 there were 755 permanent societies with assets amounting to the amazing total of £1,477,071,000. Of these one of the most enterprising and influential is the Temperance Permanent Building Society, founded in 1854 and having today assets totalling £30,250,000. In a handsome, illustrated volume, issued as a souvenir of the Society's centenary, its story has been recorded by one of its directors, Mr. Seymour J. Price who, among other offices he holds, is of course the President of the Baptist Historical Society. Entitled *From Queen to Queen*, the book is published by Franey & Co. For Baptists it has a special interest, in view of the fact that members of our denomination have prominently figured in the Society's affairs throughout its existence. Of the present eight directors five—Mr. C. W. Black, M.P., Mr. H. H. Collier, Mr. T. Lister, Mr. Price and its brilliant managing-director, Mr. Ronald Bell—are Baptists.

The story is told with the literary skill, historical knowledge and business acumen for which Mr. Price is well-known. Of absorbing interest, the narrative is illuminated by vivid pen portraits of those stalwarts who have been leaders of the Society and its management. Generally they were, as now, Nonconformists and, reading about them in these instructive pages, one realises afresh what solid virtues they and others like them embodied in themselves, in the purpose for which the Society was established and the spirit in which their work was

done. Typical Nonconformist qualities they were, regarded by many today as old-fashioned virtues yet, fortunately, still widely cherished. Who can deny that these qualities of hard work, thrift, sobriety, independence, integrity and love of home are as vital to the national character and the stability of our country now as ever they were? More of the "unmistakable puritanism . . . firmly grounded in principles based on the rock of Nonconformist integrity" and of the "stern Calvinist rectitude" which Mr. Price here ascribes to the pioneers of the Society, would elevate and strengthen social life today.

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Does the venerable language—now nearly 350 years old—of the Authorised Version make the Bible obscure to numerous people? Many experienced judges would say that it does. While various modern translations of at least parts of the Bible have been published, there is no complete version in good modern English embodying the best scholarship and commanding general acceptance. Soon after the war the Churches co-operated in setting up a Joint Committee to supervise the making of a new and authoritative version from the original languages. On this committee the Church of England, Church of Scotland, the major Free Churches, the Society of Friends, the Churches in Wales and Ireland together with the British and Scottish Bible Societies are represented. The chairman is the Bishop of Winchester, the Secretary, Professor J. K. S. Reid, and the General Director, Professor C. H. Dodd. The translation is being done by panels of scholars chosen for their qualifications in the field of Old Testament, Apocrypha or New Testament studies or as judges of English style and language. Individual translators make the first drafts of the books allotted to them and these are then criticised by the panels in the interests of accuracy and good English and are finished by a process of discussion and mutual agreement. Steady progress is being made. The Gospels of *Mark* and *John*, *Romans*, *1 Corinthians* and *Galatians*, and *Ruth*, *Ezekiel* and *Amos* with the first half of *Exodus* have gone through all their stages. It is hoped to have the New Testament ready for printing in 1958 and the Old Testament not until several years later. This may seem slow progress but the Joint Committee intend this to be an authoritative translation, backed by the best scholarship, suitable for private and public reading and fit to stand beside the great translations of the past.

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From 1913 until he retired in 1953, Dr. William Wright Barnes was teaching Church History in the South-western Baptist Theological Seminary at Louisville, Kentucky. He has crowned a

distinguished career by writing the first, comprehensive history of the Southern Baptist Convention. Through kindness the writer of these notes has received a copy of this new and important volume *The Southern Baptist Convention, 1845-1953*, which is published by the enterprising Broadman Press, at \$3.75. Our college libraries, as well as all British Baptists who wish to inform themselves on denominational history and progress, should obtain a copy. The story Dr. Barnes so ably tells is a remarkable one. When the Convention was formed in 1845, it comprised some 4,000 churches and 350,000 members. The figures for 1952 show nearly 29,000 churches and nearly 8,000,000 members who, in the year, raised more than \$248,000,000 and recorded 354,000 baptisms! The formation of this virile, powerful and expanding body grew out of differences among American Baptists in the field of home missions, later accentuated by disagreement on the slavery issue (and it is not always realised that there was opposition to slavery in the South as well as the North). Attempts at re-union failed and the Southern and Northern groups went their separate ways, though with the avowed determination to maintain fraternal relations and to co-operate wherever possible. One of the fields in which they have worked together is that of Negro ministerial education. But the principles of comity agreed by the two Conventions, as a result of meetings in 1911 and 1912, are likely to be strained in the immediate future for, as Dr. Barnes states, "The constitution of the Southern Baptist Convention specifies the United States as its field," while Northern Baptists have significantly renamed themselves The American Baptist Convention and there is already considerable overlapping of activity. That this will turn, in course of time, into a yet closer and deeper fellowship will be the confident hope of many. In the Baptist World Alliance the Southern Convention plays an active, leading part, but it has declined membership of the World Council of Churches (not, however, without protest from within its own ranks). By the publication of this timely volume—well documented, with useful indexes and bibliography—Dr. Barnes has met a real need and rendered notable service to Baptist history. Elsewhere, as well as in the United States, he will be congratulated upon telling with unique knowledge and devoted skill the amazing progress of what must be one of the most rapidly expanding Christian bodies in the world.

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If the Southern Convention is the largest of the world's Baptist groupings, among the smallest though by no means the least virile are the General Baptists of America. With these brethren we have recently made a welcome contact. General Baptists first made

their appearance in America in 1700 but the present General Association was formed in Indiana in 1870 on the basis of thirteen articles of faith. We look forward to the forthcoming publication of their history by one of their leaders, Dr. O. Latch, of Poplar Bluff, Missouri. From a reading of their official *General Baptist Doctrine and Usage* and their weekly journal, *The Messenger*, much may be learned. Rather conservative theologically and keenly evangelistic, the local churches are formed on the basis of a covenant and co-operate through, first, the district presbytery (comprised of ordained ministers, licenced preachers and deacons), then the local Association and finally the General Association. Home and foreign (in the Pacific islands) missions, publications, religious education, with a college at Oakland City, Indiana, are among the denominational activities. Deacons, we note, are solemnly ordained by the presbytery and the accepted practice is to regard that ordination as perpetual. Many General Baptists consider feet-washing to be one of the ordinances of the Church, and in a number of congregations it is practised in connection with the Communion service; others, while unable to accept it as an ordinance, view it as an example of humility worthy of being perpetuated in the Church. To our General Baptist friends across the Atlantic we send greetings, and wish for them a continued progress.

Essays in Orthodox Dissent, by Bernard Lord Manning. (Independent Press, 7s. 6d.)

A reprint of these stimulating essays by Bernard Manning is most welcome. First published in 1939, they offer a vigorous presentation of the Free Church position. For the most part they were addresses given to Congregational and other Free Church bodies in the immediate pre-war period. The addresses still have pungency and directness: the title reveals the two aspects which are emphasised—a defence of the Free Church attitude and a challenge (primarily to Congregationalists but indirectly to others) to loyalty to the fundamental spiritual ideas on which that attitude rests. The chapter, "Our Inheritance in Faith and Practice" is most stimulating. The re-reading of these essays has been refreshing and we realise anew what a loss Congregationalism and the Free Churches sustained by the early death of Bernard Manning.

W. S. DAVIES.