



incorporating the Transactions of the
BAPTIST HISTORICAL SOCIETY
EDITORIAL

THE Annual Meeting of the Baptist Historical Society will be held in the Lounge at Bloomsbury Central Church on Monday, 29th April, immediately after the afternoon sessions of the B.U. Assembly. Following the transaction of business, an address will be given by the Rev. B. Grey Griffith, B.D. For the convenience of those attending tea will be served at a small charge before the meeting. It is hoped there will be a good attendance of members and interested friends of the Society.

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At least 130 of the early Anabaptists were hymn-writers. Their compositions appeared in several German and Dutch Anabaptist hymnals printed in the 1560s, while many others circulated in pamphlet or manuscript form. Of these early hymns many—such as those in the oldest section of the *Ausbund* (referred to in our January issue) were written by prisoners or martyrs. That so many of them were extremely lengthy and narrative, doctrinal or didactic in form is explained by the fact that they were intended for use in the home and in private devotions as well as for congregational praise. Soon after the middle of the sixteenth century two German and three Dutch printed hymnals made their appearance. Between 1582 and 1790 more than a hundred different hymnals were published in Holland alone. Few of the earlier hymns were included in the later Mennonite hymnals of Holland, Germany and Russia. Their place was taken by hymns from the books used in the respec-

tive State Churches, though the *Ausbund*, first printed in 1564, was reprinted many times, used until about 1900 in Europe, and is still in use among the 15,000 Amish members in the U.S.A. The considerable number of Dutch Mennonite hymnals were all displaced in 1944 by the *Doopsgezinde Bundel*, which the Remonstrant and Protestantbond congregations also use. Psalm singing was not at first favoured by the Anabaptists, but the example of Hans de Ries who, in his 1624 hymnal included rhymed versions of all the Psalms, was increasingly followed, but from the end of the eighteenth century, psalm singing fell out of favour again. In earlier times no more than two hymns were sung at a meeting or service but nowadays, among the Dutch Mennonites at any rate, as many as five are sung, with pipe organs—which began to appear in their churches from about 1770—to accompany the praises of the congregations. In the faith and worship of all Christian communities, hymns have played a significant part, and in this the prolific hymnology of the Anabaptists has been in no way exceptional.¹

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Was George Washington a Baptist? The question may not be of desperate importance but, through the years, it has often been argued in the U.S.A. That he was a Baptist has been asserted by many, while others have held that, although never a member of any Baptist church, he was in fact baptized by immersion. In response to a number of inquiries the editor of the American Baptist journal, *The Watchman Examiner*, recently reprinted an article, first published some years ago, by Dr. Lemuel Call Barnes. The strong tradition that Washington sought Believer's Baptism at the hands of Chaplain John Gano, says Dr. Barnes, is based on the testimony of officers in Washington's army and of members of Gano's family. But, he continues, Washington was an episcopalian, born, bred and buried in the Anglican fold. If he did submit to Baptism by immersion it was a purely private and personal affair, not uninfluenced by the fact that his own Rector believed immersion to be the correct method of baptizing and by Washington's personal friendship with Gano, whose personality and ideas he greatly admired. All that can be said, if Dr. Barnes is right, is that Washington was never a Baptist but may have been baptized by immersion privately by his friend Chaplain Gano.

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The name of John Howard Shakespeare will live in Baptist history. It is right, therefore, that at the Annual Assembly in London, time will be set apart to remember the greatness of the

¹ See "The Hymnology of the Anabaptists" by H. S. Bender and "The Hymnology of the Mennonites in the Netherlands," by N. van der Zijpp, *Mennonite Quarterly Review*, Jan. 1957.

man and his work and that at his birthplace, Malton in Yorkshire, a Commemoration service will be held in the Baptist church on 13th April. We are grateful to Sir Geoffrey Shakespeare and to the editor of the St. Mary's, Norwich, *Messenger*, for permission to reprint in our pages Sir Geoffrey's tribute to the memory of his father, whose genius made upon Baptist life and work in this country an unparalleled impact.

John Howard Shakespeare

The centenary of Dr. Shakespeare's birth falls on 16th April of this year. His son, Sir Geoffrey Shakespeare, Bart., P.C., here gives a short appreciation of his father's life and influence.

MY father was born at Malton in Yorkshire on 16th April, 1857. He was minister of St. Mary's, Norwich, from 1883 to 1898. St. Mary's was his only church. He went there in 1883 as a stop-gap preacher, while still a student of Regent's Park College, and made such a profound impression that he was invited to be their minister, though not yet ordained. Towards the end of that same year he married my mother. When she introduced my father to a friend, the latter exclaimed, "John Howard Shakespeare—love, philanthropy and genius—what a happy combination!"

My father's ministry at St. Mary's was brilliantly successful and fruitful, and St. Mary's was the centre of great influence and activity in the city and county.

My mother now lives at Cambridge. She is in her 96th year, and still retains her wonderful memory. She lately recounted to me how with the late Mr. Richard Jewson she started the first night-school for illiterate men in Norwich. She and Mr. Jewson visited public-houses and many dwelling houses in the neighbourhood of St. Mary's, and announced that classes in reading and writing would start in St. Mary's school-room at six o'clock on the following Tuesday. At this first session sixteen elderly pupils turned up. Within a few months there were sixty. Many a citizen who later played a prominent part in the civic life of the city learnt to read and write in my mother's night-school. But she would not let the class disperse until Mr. Jewson, or some other suitable person, had given them a ten-minute talk on a religious topic. She stood by the