

BAPTIST HISTORIANS IN CONFERENCE

Thirty-five members who met at the Northern Baptist College from 11th-14th July for the Society's third summer school enjoyed a varied and ambitious programme. David Bebbington's opening paper on W. E. Gladstone and the Baptists launched the conference on a thoughtful and spirited exchange of ideas and knowledge, to which other speakers made equally creative contributions. Morris West spoke on John Hooper, Bishop of Gloucester, B. R. White gave a revised view of Thomas Crosby as historian, and Douglas Sparkes surveyed myths and facts relating to the Test Act and, in particular, Baptist involvement in the struggle over the City of London shrievalty. Other aspects of Baptist attitudes to civil authority were revealed by Keith Clements, who dealt with Baptists and the First World War, and by Basil Amey, whose paper on missionary policy was illustrated by the careers of three B.M.S. "radicals", Jacob Grigg, John Fountain and Lee Comper. F. M. W. Harrison brought the early Nottinghamshire Baptists to life in an unusually rich social context, and E. A. Payne provided a vivid and sympathetic study of the Rev. Abraham Booth.

The Society was fortunate in having as its guest speaker Dr. Clyde Binfield of Sheffield University and the United Reformed Church History Society. Dr. Binfield, discussing the activities of three late Victorian churches (Queen's Road, Coventry, Bloomsbury, and Pembroke, Liverpool) let in a refreshing breeze by asking what was specifically Baptist about them. Three members reported on work in progress: Sidney Hall on the Alcester and Netherton churches, Peter Wortley on the Bromsgrove records, and Christopher Stell on the survey of nonconformist chapels which he is making for the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments. Slides of pre-1850 chapel buildings were shown by Mr. Stell and Sister Bessie Sellwood. Roger Hayden organised a delightful coach tour of the Rossendale Valley, which included a glimpse of records of the Bacup Baptist churches, tea in the fine new buildings of Sion, Burnley, and a visit to the 18th-century Goodshaw Chapel. Among many other shared experiences of the summer school, the communion service in the college chapel, led by Michael Taylor, was particularly fitting and memorable. The harvest of careful research gathered up in the lectures and discussion was of more than academic interest, as it deepened our understanding of the life of the church.

R.T.