

DATE OF 'DEATHLESS SERMON'

In his article, 'Carey's Catalytic Watchword' (*Baptist Quarterly*, XXXIII, 5, January 1990) A. Christopher Smith says: 'Evidence remains to be brought forward to establish beyond reasonable doubt whether it was the 30th or 31st May that Carey preached so memorably.....'. My intention is to give such evidence.

Rippon's *Annual Register* states on page 375: 'At the next annual meeting of the association at Nottingham, May 31st 1792, the subject was revived, and a resolution made, That a plan be prepared against the next ministers' meeting.....'. When the 'Periodical Accounts' refers to the Annual Meeting, it assumes that Carey preached on the same day: 'At the Annual Meeting of the Association at Nottingham, May 31st, 1792, brother Carey preached a very animating discourse from Isa. 54,2 in which he pressed two things in particular

It is difficult to understand why this mistake should have been made, because on pages 418f. in Rippon's *Register* a full account of the three days programme is given in the minutes of the Northamptonshire Association assembled at Nottingham, May 29, 30 and 31, 1792. This follows the usual pattern of association gatherings of that time, as Samuel Pearce would well know.

'Tuesday evening six o'clock. The ministers and messengers being assembled

The letters from churches were read. Brother Burton of Foxton concluded in prayer. Wednesday Morning six o'clock. Met for prayer

At ten o'clock, Brother Morris prayed, Brother Sutcliff introduced the work of the day and prayed, Brother Carey preached from Isa

Thursday Morning six o'clock. After prayer

the ministers related their experiences as usual

Resolved, that a plan be prepared against the next Ministers' meeting at Kettering.

I have various biographies and publications of the Baptist Missionary Society and Baptist Union and of these sixteen give either Wednesday 31st May or just 31st May, six give Wednesday 30th May 1792. They all agree that Carey preached on the last Wednesday in May of 1792. On the calendar for May 1792, the last Wednesday is the 30th.

All the evidence points to the fact that in the *Periodical Accounts* the date is wrong, an unintentional mistake which has been followed by far too many others. Rippon has made it plain on page 418 that the sermon was preached on the Wednesday and the resolution was made on the Thursday morning. The plaque on the wall in Maid Marian subway in Nottingham (originally on the wall of the Theosophical Hall and unveiled in 1934 by Dr S. Pearce Carey) tells the truth:

UPON THIS SITE FORMERLY STOOD
THE FRIAR LANE BAPTIST CHAPEL IN WHICH
WILLIAM CAREY
PREACHED HIS MEMORABLE MISSIONARY SERMON
WEDNESDAY MAY 30TH. 1892

THOS. J. BUDGE *Former archivist to the East Midland Baptist Association*