

EDITORIAL

it increasingly difficult to uphold. In a dynamic situation a more complicated reading of the histories of the various western democracies, which were now seen as less certainly universal paradigms of what Christian civilization ought to offer, also impacted on mission as a process of social regeneration, as also on the idea that those who rightly read the great religious systems of the world would find in Christianity the true fulfilment of those hopes. The emergence of independently-organized African Churches was posing quite different questions about the relationship of church and culture.

Such an analysis leads Stanley to plead for a 'third way' between attempts to extend the boundaries of Christendom on the one hand, and a purely private Christianity on the other. Such a 'third way' will involve 'the construction within each society of a Christian counter-culture to exemplify the absolute values of the kingdom of God within that particular cultural context'. He goes on to emphasize that such a socialising of Christian commitment must indeed be a counter-culture and not just the reflection of any previously existing or socially-generated value system.

Attempting to develop a Biblical theology of power, Stanley weighs up the failings and the achievements of both imperial endeavour and protestant missions, showing proper concern that too often in the last century missionaries sacralised the secular empire, whilst in the twentieth century missionaries in the liberal tradition have been too inclined to deny Christianity's imperial character for, claims Stanley, 'Christianity is an inherently imperial religion in the sense that it claims that the revealed truth of God was incarnated uniquely in the person of Jesus Christ, that all men and women are called upon to respond in repentance and faith to that revelation, and that the kingdom of God inaugurated in the coming of Christ makes absolute demands upon all people and all cultures.'

BAPTIST HISTORICAL SOCIETY ANNUAL MEETING

This will take place on Monday, 27 April 1992, at 4.15 p.m. in the Westminster Room at Westminster Central Hall, with the Annual Lecture following at 4.45 p.m. This year's lecture is on

**Planting Self-Governing Churches:
British Baptist Ecclesiology in the Missionary Context**

by Dr Brian Stanley MA
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Baptist Missionary Society.*

THE BAPTIST QUARTERLY

date were generally declining Unitarian churches through to Strict Baptist churches of a decidedly exclusive outlook, with many churches in the middle ground. As elsewhere the tendency is to explain low attendance rather than to doctor the figures - the explanations here are bad weather conditions, nearly always associated with the gathering of a congregation from a wide area. The church at Rye, however, adds a new note by referring to the opening of the railway and travelling for pleasure on the Lord's Day. The return from Netherfield, Battle, sought to exploit a political opportunity by remarking, 'We believe that Evangelical religion and genuine piety would flourish and prevail more extensively than it does now were the voluntary principle universally acted on and also that legislation would be less difficult were religion in every form severed from the state'. This statement was signed by the minister and two deacons on behalf of both the Battle and Netherfield congregations who had also planted a congregation at neighbouring Dallington, for cottage meetings emerge from the returns as a clear part of Baptist church planting strategy in the mid-century. It is interesting that the recently founded Baptist chapel in Eastbourne attracted less than 50 to each of its services. By contrast with the Worthing district which had no Baptist presence at all, the three Baptist chapels in Hailsham could muster attendances in excess of 900 for the best service of the day, or Wadhurst's two chapels more than 700, locations where Baptists clearly attracted larger numbers of worshippers than the parish churches. Integrity secures testimony from the Dormansland return where a larger than normal afternoon service (435) was explained by a baptism. Brighton, in addition to four strong chapels, also had Clarence Chapel which though practising believer's baptism did not require it as a condition of membership, noting 'it is deemed expedient to add that they are not of any body or bodies called the "Brethren" or "Plymouth Brethren"'. Baptists, like other dissenters, were stronger in East than West Sussex and had with the exception of Brighton and possibly Hastings yet to develop a strategy for exploiting the emerging coastal resorts. The standard of literacy of the officers making these returns seems higher than those for Staffordshire. The publication of these records is highly desirable and it is to be hoped that other counties will follow the examples of Sussex, here noted, and Lincolnshire and Bedfordshire earlier.

JHYB

FORTHCOMING PUBLICATIONS

The Baptist Historical Society is pleased to announce that two new books should be published in time for the Annual Meeting. The exact price is not known as this issue of the *Quarterly* goes to press, but we hope members will come to the meeting eager to view and purchase the Society's latest offerings:

Michael Walker, Baptists at the Table: The Theology of the Lord's Supper amongst English Baptists of the Nineteenth Century

Mike Nicholls, C. H. Spurgeon: The Pastor Evangelist