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The Baptist Historical Society

Sixty Years' Achievement

THE BAPTIST Historical Society has been described, not without reason, as the Cinderella of Baptist organisations. Even Cinderella, however, had her day of glory. It is fitting, therefore, that in this Diamond Jubilee year, the story of the Society's sixty years of work and witness should be told, and the value of its contribution to our denominational life recognised.

It should not be thought that this was the first time anyone had attempted to foster a general interest in the origins and development of Baptist witness. During the 1860s, for instance, fourteen volumes were published in the "Bunyan Library", a series for "the publication and republication of standard works by eminent Baptist authors". Earlier still, in 1845, the Hanserd Knollys Society had been formed, with the object of furthering the study of Baptist history. That Society, which owed much to the initiative and scholarly interests of E. B. Underhill, published some ten volumes of Baptist source material, between 1846 and 1854, including the *Broadmead Records* (also issued in the "Bunyan Library" series), Roger Williams' *Bloudy Tenent of Persecution*, John Canne's *Necessity of Separation*, the *Works of Charles Du Veil*, and *Baptist Confessions of Faith*.

The comparatively short existence of the Hanserd Knollys Society should not be regarded as an indication of the irrelevance of Baptist history to our modern situation. "Those who seek for a practical solution of present problems can never safely ignore the lessons of the past, nor have the presumption to say that the bygone ages have nothing to teach them."¹ So far as Baptists are concerned, it was inevitable that sooner or latter someone would again catch the vision of men like Underhill, Benjamin Davies and George Offor. The virtual "founder and driving force"² of the Baptist Historical Society was W. T. Whitley, the gifted minister of the Fishergate church, Preston, who for nearly forty years was to give himself unsparingly to the Society and its work, and whose contribution to the study of Baptist history can hardly be measured.

The Society was formed at a meeting held in the Council Chamber at Baptist Church House, at 2 o'clock, on Thursday April 30th, 1908, Whitley having on behalf of the Publication Committee, and with the approval of the Council, proposed its formation at the Assembly. The notice went out on Baptist Union notepaper and was signed by J. H. Shakespeare as the Union's Secretary. "More than fifty ladies and gentlemen" were present at the "organizing meeting", and around sixty members were enrolled during the course of the day,

including John Clifford, J. W. Ewing, J. H. Rushbrooke, J. H. Shakespeare, F. C. Spurr and A. S. Langley. Principal G. P. Gould of Regent's Park College was elected President, with Shakespeare and T. Vincent Tymms as Vice-Presidents, Whitley as Secretary, and James Ward of Nottingham as Treasurer. A "provisional" committee was set up consisting of the Officers, F. G. Benskin, J. C. Foster, N. H. Marshall, and James Stuart. Later His Honour Judge Willis was elected as a third Vice-President, and the committee was enlarged to include men like C. J. Angus, James Ford, H. Wheeler Robinson, A. S. Langley and S. W. Green. The Society's aims were exciting and ambitious—gathering all records of British and Irish Baptists; holding meetings to discuss obscure points; publishing "Transactions" of these meetings, and other papers; promoting county and other histories; providing safe custody for ancient minutes and encouraging young students of history. It was proposed, as funds allowed, to publish two or three "Transactions" annually, and to issue every year "a volume of original sources or of elaborated history". There were to be two grades of membership: those subscribing five shillings, who would receive the "Transactions" and 'fellows' subscribing one guinea, who would receive everything published. Life membership cost ten guineas. By the autumn there were over 100 members.

The next few years saw the gradual working out of the Society's stated aims. The early minute-book records various interesting pieces of research which were taking place, the most notable being those undertaken by Whitley himself. Indeed his industry in this field was quite astounding. Slowly also a library began to be built up, made possible by gifts of books, photographs, prints and pamphlets. Before long the Society was receiving numerous enquiries from individuals, churches and Associations on all points of Baptist history, a "slight" charge of five shillings being made, in the case of non-members. From the beginning, the lectures and papers delivered at the Annual Meetings were of a high order. The first, fittingly enough, was given by the Secretary, on "Baptists and Bartholomew's Day". Speakers in the pre-war years included J. C. Foster, J. W. Thirtle, A. J. D. Farrer, Champlin Burrage, and W. Brock. In 1918 J. C. Carlile, absent in Canada, sent a paper on "Baptist Teaching in reference to the relation of the Church to the Authority of the State, and Non-resistance" which was read by H. Wheeler Robinson.

The Society was also busy in other ways in those early days. In fact, in order to appreciate the tremendous debt of subsequent generations of Baptist history students to the first committee and in particular to the Secretary, one has only to think of the impressive volumes which "guinea subscribers" received free of charge. First, in the year 1909-10 came the *Minutes of the General Assembly of the General Baptists, 1654-1811*, in two volumes, edited by Whitley. These were followed, in 1911, by a special Historical Society edition of McGlothlin's *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, and in 1912, by the *Minutes of the Ford and Amersham Churches*. The 1913 issue was

Baptists in Yorkshire and the North West, combining the Yorkshire Association centenary memorial volume edited by C. E. Shipley and Whitley's *Baptists of N. W. England, 1649-1913*. Two years later the results of Whitley's researches into Smyth's writings (made possible by a £50 grant from the Hibbert Trustees, through the good offices of Sir W. J. Collins), were made available in the *Works of John Smyth*, published in two volumes by the Cambridge University Press, at the Society's risk! The first volume of Whitley's monumental *Baptist Bibliography* appeared in 1916. It contained 4500 titles by 1700 authors, 920 of them being Baptists. Another six years were to pass before the second volume was ready. Together, they still constitute one of the most useful tools which a student of Baptist history could possess.

The work of these years cannot be discussed without reference to the *Transactions*, the Society's principal means of encouraging the study of Baptist history. Seven volumes were issued between 1908 and 1921, edited by Dr. Whitley, with the assistance of a small editorial committee. The journal had three main objects:

- (1) To circulate and give permanence to papers read at the meetings of the Society,
- (2) To communicate papers accepted on behalf of the Society, and
- (3) To provide a means of communication between members—other and less formal than by papers—on matters of historical research.

In the first issue Gould predicted that in time the *Transactions* would become "a mine of wealth" to the future denominational historian, a prediction which we ourselves have seen fulfilled. The articles⁹ covered a wide area of historical enquiry ranging from Particular Baptist beginnings to the New Connexion and the Baptist Board. Aspects of the history of Baptist witness in various parts of the country from Eythorne to Loughwood, and from Southampton to Rossendale were dealt with. Wales was not neglected nor was Scotland. Individuals mentioned included Bampfield, Bunyan, Chamberlen, Ann Dutton, the Hardcastles, Helwys, Smyth and John Ward. The Seventh Day Baptists were referred to, so too were the Johnsonians and the McLeanists, while Vol. VII contained an index to notable Baptists whose careers began within the British Empire before 1850. The list of contributors was an impressive one, including as it did W. H. Burgess, Champlin Burrage (both non-Baptists), A. S. Langley and H. Wheeler Robinson, yet each issue bore unmistakably the stamp of Whitley's genius. One valuable feature of his editing was the inclusion of short notes about individuals, churches, or movements which did not in themselves warrant a full article, but which nevertheless were of importance to the historian. In view of what has been said concerning the journal, it is perhaps not surprising that it received appreciative reviews from such varied sources as the *British Weekly*, *Christian World*, *Expository Times*, *Athenaeum*, *Times*, *the American Journal of Theology*, and the American and English *Historical Reviews*.

The early years saw a number of changes in the composition of

the committee. J. W. Thirtle came on to committee in April 1909, and a year later succeeded Ward as Treasurer. In 1911 the Society lost two of its leading personalities by death—the Rev. James Stuart and Judge Willis. The latter's place as Vice-President was taken by Sir George Macalpine. Other additions were A. J. D. Farrer (1912) and Eustace Little (1917). Little, a well known Buckinghamshire Baptist, and a friend of John Clifford, farmed near Princes Risborough. He it was who obtained the Ford and Amersham minute books for publication.

The accomplishment of these years is seen to be the more remarkable when it is viewed in the light of the frustrations and difficulties confronting the Society. Then as now, the Society's aims and interests, despite their importance, have had only a limited appeal. From the first there were financial problems. The first annual report drew attention to the fact that whereas the Hanserd Knollys Society had 1300 members at the end of its second year, this one had merely 130. The committee at the beginning of 1910 was told that overdue subscriptions amounted to £2/1/- in respect of the year 1908-9, and £23/19/- in respect of 1909-10, and decided to ask the Publication Society for a loan of £100. Soon afterwards the accounts (and not for the last time) showed a grant of £50 from the Baptist Union. Circumstances, however, did not make the Society's task easy, and in 1917 rising printing costs meant that only one issue of the *Transactions* could be published. The high cost of printing was, in fact, a constant problem.

The post war period brought change. In 1920 death robbed the Society of its President, a man "wise in council, rich in knowledge, fertile in suggestion"⁴. Eustace Little died the same year. In 1921 Dr. Thirtle who had served the Society as Treasurer since 1911 was succeeded in that office by F. J. Blight, the publisher, a Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh, and prominent in the L.B.A. The new President was H. Wheeler Robinson, a man whose contribution to scholarship in its various branches is too well known to require comment. Other changes were taking place at this time, the most important being a widening of the Society's policy, by an application of the lessons of history to present day problems. The new approach was not intended as a repudiation of the Society's earlier antiquarian aims and interests. It was thought of not as a break with the past but as a natural development of it.

This fresh policy found expression in a new journal, the *Baptist Quarterly*, which from 1922 took the place of the *Transactions*, and which, it was hoped, would command widespread denominational support and have a standing comparable to that of the *Congregational Quarterly* among Congregationalists. Whitley was the Editor, assisted first by Arthur Dakin, and later by F. Townley Lord, so far as "modern" articles were concerned. Each issue of the *Quarterly* contained in its 48 pages; therefore, both antiquarian and contemporary articles. In the nine volumes, covering the period 1922-1939, many of the pressing issues of the day were discussed, including the

nature and function of the ministry and ministerial training, baptism and Baptist witness in the modern world, and various theological questions such as the atonement, grace, and the problem of evil. Seymour Price wrote on Baptist trust-deeds and on the work of a church-secretary, Henry Bonser dealt with the task of a Superintendent and Ernest Payne pleaded for a greater interest in Baptist work on the Continent. In one volume (II, 1924-5) there were three overseas contributors (Baron Stow, E. C. Dargan and Josef Novotny). Nor were wider issues neglected. There were articles on C.O.P.E.C., on Lausanne, Edinburgh and on various aspects of what is usually known as the "ecumenical movement". Alongside such articles as these were others dealing more specifically with Baptist history. The first volume (a fairly typical one), for instance, covered themes as diverse as the Hollis family and Pinners' Hall, Robert Steed's discipline book (1689-1699), the origins of the General Baptist Missionary Society, and the Midland Baptist College. To draw attention even to important articles in subsequent volumes is out of the question. There are several, however, which deserve mention. F. G. Hastings' valuable calendar of the Isaac Mann collection of letters (1742-1815)⁵, is one. Another is the address given by Wheeler Robinson to the Congregational Historical Society in 1924⁶—on the value of denominational history.

The Society continued its practice of making available free of charge to its guinea subscribers, works of historical scholarship being produced by various individuals and organisations. The list, though perhaps not quite so outstanding as that for the early years, is still impressive. The second volume of Whitley's *Bibliography* covering the period 1777-1837, and containing some 5000 titles, appeared in 1922. The following year saw the publication of his *History of British Baptists* (a second edition being issued in 1932), and in 1928 his *Baptists of London, 1612-1928*, was published with the aid of a grant from the London Baptist Association. Other books sent to guinea subscribers were Seymour Price's *Popular History of the Baptist Building Fund, 1824-1924* (1924), Ernest Payne's *Bugbrooke Baptist Church, 1805-1930* (1930), A. J. Klaiber's *The Story of the Suffolk Baptists* (1931), E. F. Kevan's *London's Oldest Baptist Church* (1933), Whitley's monograph *Calvinism and Evangelism in England* (1933), and Payne's *Roadside Baptist Church, 1688-1938* (1938). The 1934 and 1935 volumes were photographic reproductions of important works of earlier times—Carey's famous *Enquiry* (1934) and Helwys' *Mystery of Iniquity* (1935), the first English book to claim universal religious liberty.

One outstanding feature of the Society's life in the years between the wars was the historical excursion usually held in connection with the Annual Meeting. As the Annual Assembly in those days was not confined to London, most of the large towns and cities were visited including Cardiff, Edinburgh, Manchester and Liverpool. In 1922 when the Assembly was held in Leicester, the Society visited Arnesby, Sutton in the Elms and Barton in the Beans, places of historical interest

to Baptists. In London a "Free Church walk" (1931) and a Southwark pilgrimage (1932) were organised. One of the most interesting of these excursions, however, was the visit in 1935 to Drake's Island where in 1668 Abraham Cheare died, "a prisoner for conscience sake". It was also the prison of General Robert Lilburne. This visit took place by permission of the War Office, obtained through the kindness of Ernest Brown, then Minister of Mines. *The Western Morning News* for May 3rd recorded, "Although no vestiges of the pioneer's grave or dungeon now remain, the Baptists stood solemnly at the summit of the island in silent commemoration of Cheare's martyrdom". It must have been a deeply moving occasion. Of special interest, too, were the visits to Bible House (1936) and Lambeth Palace (1938), where various "treasures" were seen and explained.

A great deal of hard work was done behind the scenes by the officers and committee. Historical enquiries continued to come in, even from America, and the Society soon built up a reputation as a clearing house for information. It was also able to link students who, unknown to one another, were pursuing similar research projects. The work of building up the library continued, and from time to time gifts of special interest and value were made to it, like those of the Mr. B. Booth Granger, who in 1931 made a present of several family manuscripts and the pulpit Bible used at Melbourne by Francis Smith, an ancestor of his. Two years before this the library, after eleven years at Droitwich, was moved to the tower of Bristol College, coming under the care of F. E. Robinson. An interest was shown, moreover, in the wider aspects of Church history. In the summer of 1931, for instance, at the invitation of Dr. Scott-Lidgett, Whitley accompanied by Blight, A. J. D. Farrer and A. S. Langley, attended an Anglo-American conference of historians in London. In 1936 Farrer and F. Townley Lord had attended a similar conference. It is astonishing how many people regard Baptist history as a dry-as-dust discipline. How encouraging therefore it is to be reminded, in the 1934 report, of the fresh and exciting surprises awaiting the student. Two such recent surprises are mentioned—the discovery that in 1716 there was a Baptist governor of Madras who promoted missions in Sumatra and India, and the chance discovery that Andrew Gifford had presented a portrait of Henry VI to the British Museum and that he led the way in studying the activities of the Praemonstratensian Canons.

The end of the Clifford-Shakespeare era saw further changes in the committee as younger men came to the fore. There is little point in listing all who served on the committee, as their names were printed regularly on the cover of the *Quarterly*. Some of the more significant of those names, however, must be mentioned. Mr. Seymour J. Price who had already begun to acquire a reputation as an amateur historian, and who was already assisting Whitley in the editorial work of the Society, was elected in 1932 to the Vice-Presidency. Two years later F. J. Blight was succeeded as Treasurer

by a young accountant from the Upton Church, Allan H. Calder by name. Blight died shortly afterwards, in January 1935, only a few weeks later than his predecessor, Dr. Thirtle. The fact that the Society was able to pay its way, especially during the early days of the *Quarterly*, was in large measure due to Blight.⁷ From 1924 A. J. Klaiber acted as Assistant Secretary. In 1935, after 27 years' service, Whitley was compelled by ill health to lay down the secretaryship, though happily this did not mean an end to his connection with the Society. In fact, he changed places with Seymour Price, becoming Vice-President. A message of "brotherly appreciation" was sent to him, together with a cheque which he used to purchase a fountain opposite the garden door of his Chelmsford home. Whatever else "retirement" meant to him, however, it did not mean idleness. 1937, for instance, found him undertaking an historical lecture tour in the West Country, and by November 1938 he was contemplating a third volume of the *Baptist Bibliography*, having then amassed some thirteen thousand entries for the period 1838-1938. Certainly it was no exaggeration to say that in his particular realm of work the denomination owed him a debt it could never repay.⁸

A name which began to appear with increasing regularity from the early 1930s was that of Ernest Payne who, soon after commencing his service with the B.M.S. (1932), came on to the Historical Society's committee. It is interesting to note that his first article for the *Quarterly*, on the subject of public prayer, was written while he was still a student at Regent's Park College.⁹ The wide range of his interests has always amazed those who have known him. At this time he took a lead in encouraging an interest in Baptists of other countries. In 1937, for instance, the Society at his suggestion sent fraternal greetings to the Baptists of Jamaica by Seymour Price and Thomas Powell who were visiting that country on behalf of the B.M.S. The following year he became the English correspondent for the recently commenced *Chronicle*, the journal of the American Baptist Historical Society.

The years during and immediately following the Second World War were difficult ones for the Society. Inevitably many of its normal activities were suspended or at least curtailed. The *Quarterly*, however, though issued at irregular intervals, continued to appear—no mean achievement in the circumstances.¹⁰ The quality of the journal, moreover, was maintained at a high level. Not all of the articles were concerned with Baptist history in the narrow sense. Some were of more general interest. Such for instance were J. O. Barrett's on the Pastoral Office (X.1), that of Ingli James on the Free Churches and the State (X.7), and those of T. G. Dunning and R. L. Child on Baptists and the Ecumenical Movement (X.2 and 7). Biblical studies were represented by established scholars like H. H. Rowley (X.4) and in the post-war period by up and coming scholars such as G. R. Beasley-Murray (XII.9, 10-11) and D. S. Russell (XIII.2). Historical articles included studies of George and John Dyer (X.5, XI.8-9; XIII 6 and 7), Keach (X.2), Bunyan (Vols. X and XI), Hall

of Arnesby (X.8) and Staughton (XI.3-4). Some of the most valuable contributions to the *Quarterly*, many of them on themes connected with the early years of the B.M.S., were those which came from the pen of Ernest Payne who was now Senior Tutor at Regent's Park College. Indeed, had it not been for him, it is doubtful whether the *Baptist Quarterly* could have continued at this time.

The post-war years were years not only of difficulty but of loss. Death robbed the Society of its two most outstanding officers. Principal Wheeler Robinson died first, on May 12th 1945.¹¹ W. T. Whitley's death occurred some two and a half years later on December 18th, 1947, in his 87th year, he having served the Historical Society as Secretary, Vice-President, and finally President. As Mr. Seymour Price has rightly said,¹² Whitley was by common consent our "most outstanding British Baptist historian". To the study of Baptist history "he brought a trained and disciplined mind" and no one has done more "to preserve and interpret the records of our past". Price now became President, with Arthur Dakin, P. W. Evans, Ernest Payne and A. C. Underwood as Vice-Presidents. Underwood died in 1948, and A. S. Langley became a Vice-President in the same year. Younger men were now coming to the fore. G. W. Hughes was by this time Secretary, and G. W. Rusling and D. S. Russell had joined the Committee. The editorial work was in the capable hands of E. A. Payne who together with Price and Hughes, made up the "editorial board". Dr. E. J. Tongue of Bristol followed F. E. Robinson as librarian.

From its earliest days right up to the present time the Society has had to contend with financial difficulties. The 1940s and 1950s were certainly years of hardship. Rising costs and a lamentable apathy on the part of British Baptists concerning their denominational heritage, contributed to this state of affairs, so that in 1959 Mr. Calder had to report that the Baptist Historical Society had not paid its way for many years. Whereas in 1935 the cost of the *Baptist Quarterly* was some £74 per annum, twenty years later it had risen to £200. Now members were urgently sought, and subscription charges were revised. In 1956 the annual membership subscription was raised to a guinea, ministers being charged half that amount. The cost of the *Quarterly* to non-members now became six shillings an issue, and the following year life membership was put at ten guineas. A gift of £250 made by the Union for a surplus on the 1955 Baptist World Congress proved invaluable; so too, did an annual grant of £50 from the Union, which starting at this time has continued to the present day. Any suggestion that the Union's grant is to be regarded as "charity", however, would be entirely unwarranted. It is rather a practical recognition by the Union of the importance of the Society's work. As Ernest Payne said in 1952, "Our denomination cannot afford to do without the Historical Society". Even so costs continued to rise, and in 1962 the present subscription rates came into force.

The passing of the years brought changes in personnel. A. S. Langley and P. W. Evans died in 1951, and Hugh Martin and

F. Townley Lord became Vice-Presidents. In 1956, after ten years' service as secretary, G. W. Hughes expressed a wish to retire though he was persuaded to continue for another two years, when W. M. S. West, then a tutor at Regent's Park College, Oxford, succeeded him as secretary and editor. Mr. Seymour Price died on May 29th 1959,¹⁸ and was followed as President by Dr. Ernest Payne, who despite his numerous and pressing duties as Secretary of the Union, has given a vigorous lead to the Society. In 1966 Mr. Calder retired after 32 years as Treasurer, and to mark the Society's appreciation of his service, he was elected a Vice-President, the Rev. R. L. Child being elected at the same time. Mr. Calder's place was taken by T. S. H. Elwyn, a young minister from Dartford and the author of a short history of the Northamptonshire Association.

Notwithstanding the financial difficulties already referred to (to say nothing of difficulties with printers, and the problems resulting from the closure of the Carey Kingsgate Press), the Society has never slackened its efforts to foster an intelligent interest in Baptist history. A brief account of some of its activities during recent years would, perhaps, be helpful.

The *Baptist Quarterly*, remains the principal means of encouraging the study of our denominational history and its value as a historical journal is increasingly being recognised, in this and other countries. Since 1962 it has been edited by G. W. Rusling of Spurgeon's College, who for several years before that, together with Alec Gilmore, had been associated with Morris West in the editorship. Gilmore continued for several more years to be responsible for book reviews. The policy initiated in 1922, of maintaining a balance between historical and theological articles has continued, though in some quarters it has been felt that there have not been enough articles of contemporary interest, a somewhat surprising judgment! Though the standard is generally high some articles and series deserve special mention. Those by the President are invariably interesting and valuable; A. Gilmore contributed a useful series on baptism (XV. 1, 7, XVI. 1); and there have been a number of interesting articles on the ministry (XVII. 8, XVIII. 2 and 4). From 1959 till 1965 Neville Clark's stimulating comments on contemporary theological literature appeared under the title "In the Study", a series which was widely appreciated. Several series on controversial themes have been included, among them Ernest Payne's discussion with Winthrop S. Hudson on Baptist origins (XVI. 7 and 8) and the more recent debate between G. R. Beasley-Murray and Victor E. Hayward on infant baptism (XXII. 2 and 4). The *Quarterly* has in recent years also rendered a notable service in providing younger scholars with an opportunity of publishing the results of their researches, an opportunity which might not otherwise have come their way. Reference too must be made to the special "double issue" in July 1967, in honour of Dr. Payne, on the completion of his term of office as General Secretary of the Baptist Union. This contains articles by seven of his former students, each making a significant contribution in its own sphere of scholarship. A specially bound copy

was presented to the President.

The Annual Meeting continues to provide not only a meeting point for those interested in the Baptist Historical Society, but an opportunity for hearing informed and usually stimulating addresses on themes relevant to the interests of the Society. Speakers during the last twenty years have included not only leading scholars, like G. F. Nuttall and E. G. Rupp, from other denominations, Winthrop S. Hudson and Robert Handy from America, and our own Hugh Martin, but also younger men with a contribution of value to make, like W. M. S. West, B. R. White and Roger Hayden. Rupp who has spoken twice, took as his theme in 1958, the Society's Jubilee year, "The Importance of Denominational History". He reminded those present that "the Baptists and the Methodists are the two great Protestant Free Churches who in our time have to decide whether they will be either World Church—or World Sect. And one of the safeguards against our making a wrong decision is the appeal to history".¹⁴ In 1961, the Carey bicentenary year, Brynmor F. Price spoke on "Carey and Serampore". As an experiment, in 1966, no lecture was given. Instead, a panel of "experts" answered questions on the theme, "Church History—why bother?" More recently still, as the result of a generous gift from Dr. G. Henton Davies, the Henton Lectureship has been established, Dr. Henton Davies himself, at the Society's request, giving the first lecture at the 1967 Annual Meeting.¹⁵

An account of this sort would not be complete without some reference to a number of significant Baptist and Free Church anniversaries which were celebrated during the early 1960s. The Society was not, it is true, itself responsible for such celebrations; nevertheless, it did much to encourage interest in them. The bicentenary of Carey's birth has already been mentioned. Then there was the ter-jubilee of the Union, commemorated throughout the denomination by an enterprising and imaginative programme which owed its inspiration to the insight and vision of the President. His Whitley lectures given in 1958 and 1959, and published as *The Baptist Union: A Short History*, made a fitting preparation for those celebrations. 1962 also commemorated the founding 350 years before, of the first English Baptist church in this country. On April 7th a plaque in honour of Helwys was unveiled in the church at Bilborough, which is close to the site of Broxstowe Hall. The officers of the Society shared in this. The Society also shared in the celebrations connected with the tercentenary of the Great Ejectment of 1662, co-operating in the production of a duplicated *Bibliography* covering the period 1660-65. Dr. Payne contributed to the joint volume *From Uniformity to Unity, 1662-1962*.

When, in 1960, Dr. Tongue left Bristol for Sussex, the library came under the care of the Rev. N. S. Moon of Bristol College. It did not remain for much longer at Bristol, but however, being transferred under Mr. Moon's supervision during the next few years, and merged with the Baptist Union library at Church House. Several of our own colleges profited from duplicates; others were sold to American

colleges, the proceeds benefiting the Society's funds. The task of integrating and recataloguing the two libraries was in the capable hands of Miss Rosemary Taylor, a trained librarian and Oxford graduate in history. In 1966 the Rev. Ernest Clipsham was appointed Librarian and Minute Secretary, though happily both Miss Taylor and Mr. Moon continue to serve on the Committee. Until his tragic death in a motor car accident earlier this year, Mr. A. de M. Chesterman was also a member of the Committee, thus giving the Society a valuable link with the archives of the B.M.S.

The present library at Church House contains books and documents by or relating to Baptists, some of which go back to the XVIIth century. Among the manuscripts in the library are the early minute-books of the Barbican, Maze Pond and Eagle Street churches. Association records include a number of documents belonging to the early days of the New Connexion, and 14 letters from churches in the Kent and Sussex Association, written in 1812. There are letters by Carey, Fuller and Spurgeon, and four of John Dyer's diaries. Indeed as a Baptist historical collection the joint Baptist Union-Baptist Historical Society Library is second only to the Angus Collection at Regent's Park College, Oxford. Its facilities are available to all who wish to avail themselves of them, and constant use is made of those facilities by research students, by amateur historians writing the story of their local church, and by church members wishing to learn more of our Baptist heritage. Historical enquiries are received every day. An increasing number of churches and associations ask the Society to house their records in the Library, and it is hoped that others will follow this excellent trend, or at any rate take other steps to ensure that their records are adequately looked after. The way in which through the years irreplaceable documents of great historical value have through ignorance and carelessness, been misplaced, mutilated or destroyed, is little short of tragic. For this reason the Society has welcomed the action of the East Midland Association in appointing its own "custodian" of historical documents.¹⁶ To ensure that our early records are properly cared for, however, is only one aspect of the Society's concern. It is important also that historians should know where such records are to be found. Some seven or eight years ago, therefore, the Union with the encouragement of the Society, sought information from the churches concerning the nature and present whereabouts of their minute books and other records. It is hoped, in due course, to compile a register of all such documents.

The need for an adequate index to the *Transactions* and the *Quarterly* has long been felt both by general readers and by research students. There is no special merit (except as an exercise in humility and patience) in having to work one's way through seven volumes of the former journal and twenty-two of the latter, in search of information on a particular subject. The publication early in 1966 of a Cumulative Index to the *Transactions*, was, therefore, a welcome first step towards meeting this need. Compiled by the Rev. D. C. Sparkes, a member of the committee, it was published for the Society by

University Microfilms Ltd., at 35 shillings. This was a notable achievement on the part of the compiler, the Society and the publisher. The Index, "a tool of the greatest value for all who are doing serious work in the field of Baptist history", consists of over 200 pages containing more than 10,000 entries. It was produced by the photo-litho-offset method. At the same time, University Microfilms produced a 35mm microfilm of all seven volumes of the *Transactions*, the price of which, reeled and boxed, was £12 10s. 0d. The Society has benefited from royalties on the sale both of the Index and the microfilm. Reference should also be made to the readiness of our Baptist colleges to share in the project by contributing to the cost involved in the preparation of the Index. Originally it was hoped that it would be possible to issue it in connection with the Diamond Jubilee celebrations. It was all the more gratifying, therefore, that it could be published two years earlier. Mr. Sparkes is already in process of producing a similar Index to the *Baptist Quarterly*.

This account, brief and inadequate as it is, nevertheless shows that the Baptist Historical Society has, during the last sixty years, made a contribution of great value to the life and witness of the denomination. Its work, carried out largely behind the scenes, has not always received the recognition it should have done. What matters, however, is that there has been a Baptist Historical Society to stimulate, and at times to keep alive, an interest in our denominational heritage. Ernest Payne was not exaggerating when he said that we cannot afford to do without the Historical Society. Indeed, his words were never more true than at the present time. One of our most pressing needs today is for an awareness of our Baptist history and an informed understanding of our Baptist principles. We cannot be true to our fathers or play our part in the modern world unless we take pains to understand the story of the past. One aspect of the Society's achievement is that it has shown the relevance of the past to the present situation.

Naturally, the Society has a special concern for those who can be described as students of Baptist history in the narrow sense. Not all of them are academic historians. Some, for instance, are ordinary church members with an interest in tracing the story of local Baptist witness. The Society has provided and is still glad to provide information, advice and encouragement to them. A number of local church histories and pageants could not, in fact, have been written without such help. Similarly, those engaged in research of a more academic nature have received encouragement. B. R. White, like Morris West before him, is in close touch with the various research projects being undertaken, both at Oxford and elsewhere. In this connection, however, the part played by Dr. Payne during the past quarter of a century deserves special mention. In this as in other respects, the Society acknowledges its privilege and good fortune in having as its President one of the leading church historians of our day.

Had the Baptist Historical Society merely survived for sixty years that, in itself, would, in view of its importance to the denomination, have warranted suitable recognition. However, not only has it sur-

vived the struggles and difficulties of those years, but in terms of membership, finance and purpose it is at present vigorous and healthy, as the Diamond Jubilee celebrations (including the Summer School in June) have made clear. Not content with resting on the laurels of its past achievement, its thinking is ever now centred on future activities. Members of the Society, for instance, in collaboration with American scholars, are already engaged in the preparation of an important series of Baptist source books. One thing is certain, namely that the task of the Society in days to come will be an increasingly important one, and if the story which has so far been told is anything to go by, the achievement of the first sixty years will be well matched by that of the years that lie ahead.

NOTES

¹ F. J. Foakes-Jackson, *A History of Church History*, 1939, page 12.

² S. J. Price, *Baptist Quarterly*, Vol. XII (1946-8) page 357.

³ See the Cumulative Index to the *Transactions* compiled by D. C. Sparkes, and published for the Society by University Microfilms Ltd., 1966.

⁴ *Transactions*, Vol. VII, page 244.

⁵ Commencing with Vol. VI.

⁶ Vol. II.

⁷ H. Wheeler Robinson, article "A Decade of the Baptist Quarterly", *Baptist Quarterly*, Vol. V (1930-1), page 337.

⁸ *Baptist Quarterly*, Vol. VII (1934-5), page 289.

⁹ *Baptist Quarterly*, Vol. II (1924-5), page 128 ff.

¹⁰ Not all of these difficulties were due to war conditions. The January issue of 1940, for instance, was delayed first by Mr. Price's illness at the end of 1939, and then by the proofs being lost in the Christmas post!

¹¹ For tributes to him by A. J. Grieve, T. H. Robinson and W. R. Matthews, see Vol. XI, Nos. 14-15, pages 373-8, and Vol. XII, Nos. 1-2, page 9. E. A. Payne produced a memoir of him which in 1948 was presented free to every honorary member. In a tribute to him in 1946, Ernest Payne said "He showed his sense of the importance of Baptist history within the larger framework of Church history".

¹² Vol. XII, Nos. 10-11 (1946-8), pages 357-63. See also pages 364-5 for a list of Whitley's works compiled by E. A. Payne.

¹³ See the tribute by E. A. Payne, *Baptist Quarterly*, Vol. XVIII, No. 3.

¹⁴ *Baptist Quarterly*, Vol. XVII, page 312.

¹⁵ See *Baptist Quarterly*, Vol. XXI, page 97, and Vol. XXII, page 156 and page 360.

¹⁶ See T. J. Budge's article on "The Care of Baptist Records" in *Baptist Quarterly*, Vol. XXI (1965), No. 4, pages 181-3.