



*incorporating the Transactions of the*  
**BAPTIST HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

## EDITORIAL

**T**HE first task of a new editor is to pay tribute to his predecessor. This we do gladly. Mr. Hughes has served the Historical Society as Secretary for ten years and has been connected with the editorial side of this journal for the same period, first as a member of the editorial board and then, latterly, as sole editor. He has rendered this service to the Society from the midst of a busy pastoral life and we owe him a considerable debt of gratitude for his work during the past decade in building up and consolidating the Society after the disruptive war years. It is good to know that he is willing to maintain his connection with this journal in an advisory capacity.

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On April 30th, 1908, the Baptist Historical Society was formed, and next April, during the Baptist Union Assembly week, we shall celebrate the Society's Jubilee. The final details of the meetings are not yet settled but all members will be notified at the earliest opportunity. It is, however, certain that the Annual Meeting will be held on Monday, April 28th, at 4.30 p.m., probably at the Central Hall, Westminster. At this meeting there will be opportunity to discuss fully the affairs of the Society. Of the tasks that lie before us in the immediate future, we shall write in the editorial next quarter. It seems probable the Annual Meeting will also hear an address by Dr. Thomas Richards. It is hoped that every member will try to make it possible to attend this important meeting. Our celebration will not, however, be limited to this Annual Meeting.

The Programme Committee of the Baptist Union Assembly has agreed that one session of the full Assembly shall be devoted to a public recognition of the Historical Society Jubilee. This session, probably the closing one on the morning of Tuesday, April 29th, will be addressed by Professor E. G. Rupp of the University of Manchester.

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In this present issue we publish an extended review of the Report on Ordination presented to the Baptist Union Council under the title of *The Meaning and Practice of Ordination among Baptists*. It is the Report of a Commission set up by the Baptist Union Council, but the Council, at its meeting in March, 1957, after considerable discussion, found itself unable to accept the Report as it then stood and referred it back to the Commission. At the November Council the Commission presented the Report again with a brief memorandum attached. These notes are necessarily being written prior to the November Council. Therefore, when they are read, the future of the Ordination Report will have been settled. It will either have been consigned to gather dust on the shelf or sent out for discussion to the churches. But whether published or not, it has raised issues of great importance to all Baptists.

Our reviewer has dealt at length with the Report itself, but we would like to comment on the brief memorandum attached to it. The memorandum makes quite clear that, in spite of the debate in the Council in March, when the Report came under heavy fire, the Commission does not feel able to alter its main conclusions and has accepted only a number of minor suggestions. (It is to be hoped, incidentally, that the somewhat surprising format of presentation to the March Council with the Report already set up in page proof has had no bearing upon the Commission's decision to make little alteration!) The memorandum, however, does make a point of considerable importance in explaining the Commission's refusal to make drastic alterations. It is, in short, that many of the points raised by Council members in debate lead to wider issues beyond the scope of the Report. The Report and the subsequent debate have, in fact, pinpointed once again the need for further clear and fearless thinking among Baptists on the Nature of the Church and Ministry in the light of biblical and historical evidence. We use the word 'fearless' intentionally for, as our reviewer has pointed out, the New Testament section of the Report is well done indeed, but the subsequent interpretation of the New Testament evidence in the light of Baptist practice shows evident signs of compromise.

Involved in all this, however, is a complicating issue which has probably never been sufficiently faced, namely, whether the Baptist Union has any theological rôle to play in relation to the Baptist Ministry or whether the Union's function is purely

organizational. This issue is raised quite specifically in the memorandum when it speaks of such questions as "the relation between ordination and ministerial probation; the connection between ordination and accreditation, and the respective responsibility of the local church and the Baptist Union in regard to ordination." To take a specific example, are the Ministerial Lists in the Baptist Union handbook to be thought of in terms of a Baptist doctrine of the Ministry or only of Baptist Union organization? Is there any theological difference, from the viewpoint of the doctrine of the Baptist Ministry, between an accredited minister of a Baptist church and a non-accredited minister who may follow him in the same pastorate? This and other related problems need to be faced.

The memorandum suggests that the Baptist Union Council should give urgent attention to the production and publication of studies on the Baptist concept of the Church and Ministry. It is to be hoped that this suggestion will be accepted. It is also to be hoped that the Council will discuss in detail how this may best be done. So far the tendency has been for the Council to set up *ad hoc* Commissions to report on various theological questions as they arise. We would suggest that the time has now come for the Council to consider seriously again the setting up of a standing Faith and Order Group within the denomination. Such a group, although not limited to Council members, would be ultimately responsible to the Council, and would be free to examine in scholarly detail such theological issues as are now raised and others which arise out of them. The setting up of such a group now would be particularly opportune, not only to enable it to discuss the issues raised by the Ordination Report, but also in view of the real likelihood of the Free Church Federal Council bringing before the various Free Churches very soon the issue of Free Church union. Whether any such action is taken by the Council or not, we shall be publishing in this journal a series of articles on the issues we have been discussing in this editorial. This series will begin in our next issue with an article introducing the problems involved and the field to be covered. We hope in this way to help in fulfilling the desire expressed in the memorandum that thought should be stimulated in the denomination in these vital issues.

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A notable addition has been made to the ever-growing number of books on Baptist beginnings, by the publication of the story of Canadian Baptist origins. This book, *The Baptists in Upper and Lower Canada before 1820*, is the joint work of Stuart Ivison and Fred Rosser. It is published in Canada by the Toronto University Press and is obtainable in England through the Oxford University Press. This book traces the story of American Baptist missionary activity amongst the settlers in Upper and Lower Canada during

the first decade of the nineteenth century, with the resultant formation of many small isolated churches. The war of 1812, however, inevitably disrupted this missionary activity and the newly-formed churches drew closer to each other in fellowship with the development of Conferences and Associations. By 1820 not only was the grouping of churches almost complete but the travelling missionaries from the United States had also almost ceased to visit them and the young churches themselves had begun to produce their own Ministry. The authors tell their story well and we are given accounts not only of events but also vivid descriptions of the missionaries, ministers and churches involved. All libraries interested in Free Church history will want this book, but it is a pity that its very high price in England (40/-) will undoubtedly limit its circulation.

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As we go to press we learn that yet another book on local Baptist history is soon to be published by the Carey Kingsgate Press. This time it is a book written by one of our own members, namely, C. B. Jewson, and he has called it *The Baptist in Norfolk*. A review of this interesting publication will appear next quarter.

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