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The BAPTIST QUARTERLY

The Journal of the Baptist Historical Society

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Dr. Hugh Martin, C.H.

SINCE we last went to press the Society has suffered the loss of one of its Vice Presidents, Dr. Hugh Martin, who died on July 2nd at the age of 74. The present issue contains his last contribution to our journal and significantly it relates to hymnology. He was a prolific writer on Biblical, social and literary themes and readers of the *Quarterly* will know that he contributed a steady succession of articles to this journal. But of the many publications with which he had to do it is doubtful if any will affect the life of our own denomination more deeply or lastingly than the new *Baptist Hymn Book* of which together with its *Companion*, he was editor. To the subject of public worship and its hymns he brought great insight and knowledge and the fact that the new hymnal has taken its place as one of the greatest hymn books of modern Protestantism owes much to him. It will not however be the only reason why he should find an honoured place in future histories of our denomination. It was rather the culmination of a life-time of fine service to the Church of God.

The son of a Baptist minister, Hugh Martin studied at Glasgow and it was there that he began his life-long association with the S.C.M. which he served as Assistant Secretary from 1914-1929. He had much to do with the development of the work both of the S.C.M. and of the World Student Christian Federation. In 1929 he became Editor of the S.C.M. Press and the tribute paid in this journal on his retirement in 1950 rightly acknowledged that he had

made it one of the most important religious publishing houses in the world. He was an outstanding servant of the ecumenical movement, "one of the chief architects of the British Council of Churches and of the World Council of Churches" and, of course, in our own denomination one of the pioneers in this field. He was one of those to whom every aspect of Christian relations was important, co-operative missionary thinking, Life and Work, Faith and Order. He served as chairman of committees in C.O.P.E.C. and the British Council of Churches and he did much work also for the Friends of Reunion. One tribute speaks of his rock-like steadfastness, unerring judgement, and quiet but warm-hearted friendship. "Nothing was too demanding or too small for his attention."

The same was true of his work for the denomination. He brought these gifts and qualities to both the Baptist Union and the Baptist Missionary Society, and to their committees. It is noteworthy that both bodies made him an honorary member. He was first chairman of the Carey Kingsgate Press and for some time served in the same capacity on the Scholarships Committee. He was a Vice President of our own Society since 1951. All these services, which here one can but itemize, indicate the range of his capacity and concern and also of the confidence which experienced Christians placed in him. One could go on to speak of his Moderatorship of the Free Church Federal Council in 1953, of his directorship of the Religious Division of the Ministry of Information during the war years 1939-43. A man who could do so much so well was greatly gifted and dedicated. Our readers will already have seen Dr. Payne's tribute in *The Baptist Times* of July 9th and they will be glad to know that a memorial booklet can be obtained free of charge from the S.C.M. Press, 56 Bloomsbury Street, W.C.1.

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At William Jewell College, Liberty, Missouri, the authorities are in process of constructing new library facilities one feature of which is to be a replica of the study of C. H. Spurgeon. In this will be housed Spurgeon's considerable Puritan library of some 7,000 volumes which was bought by William Jewell College in 1905. The purchase has behind it a story with some curious features. It seems that Spurgeon's family came to the decision to sell the library about two years after his death. It came into the hands of the Rev. John Bradford, Secretary of the London Baptist Association, and there remained for several years. According to Dr. Thirtle, writing in an editorial in *The Christian* on November 9, 1905, Bradford was advised by some to disperse the collection but he was determined, if possible, to find a buyer for the library as a whole. There is no means now of knowing what enquiries he made but Thirtle wrote that ". . . the opportunity of securing the volumes for the

enrichment of some great theological library has made no effective appeal to the wise of our great land . . ."

It was whilst attending the first Baptist World Alliance congress in London in 1905 that Dr J. T. M. Johnston, a delegate from the U.S.A., heard of the library, and the sale was negotiated at a price of £600. It seems curious that no buyer could be found in this country, perhaps more curious still that a buyer was sought. The retention of the collection as a unit will have mattered more to Spurgeon's family than the money. Why could no British home be found for it? To mention no other possibilities the family had a direct interest in two Baptist colleges (Spurgeon's own and, through James Archer his brother, Regent's Park), either of which, one would have thought, would have gladly received such a collection. Can it have been that the idea occurred to no one, or that it occurred and was rejected by the family, or that the library was offered and refused? The latter may sound highly improbable but it is by no means impossible when one recalls that a Baptist principal was offered W. T. Whitley's library and in a moment of most uncharacteristic folly refused it because he could not think where to house it! The mystery remains and the only moral of the story is that members of a historical society are the sort of people who ought to use all their persuasive powers to secure the right disposal of books and manuscripts. Dr. J. Gordon Kingsley of New Orleans Baptist Seminary, who has told us of the new project at William Jewell College, refers to the story of the removal of Spurgeon's library to America as "a romance all its own," but he understandingly acknowledges that British Baptists "can justly lament the residence of the Spurgeon collection on alien soil."

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Two booklets which have recently come to hand both deal with Nonconformist registers but of different types. Dr. Williams's Trust has issued an *Index to the John Evans List of Dissenting Congregations and Ministers, 1715-1729*. Evans was secretary of the General Body of Three Denominations, the ministerial counterpart of the Dissenting Deputies, and his list was based on correspondence set in motion by the committee of the General Body. The present booklet was compiled by John Creasey and is obtainable from Dr. Williams's Trust at 7/6d. The other booklet is a reprint from the *Journal of the Society of Archivists* (Vol. II, No. 9, April, 1964) of an article on Nonconformist Registers by Mr. Edwin Welch, M.A. This has to do with the registration of births, marriages and deaths, and in a most lucid manner traces the legal position and problem of Nonconformists from the 17th century onwards, giving equal attention to events subsequent to the Acts of 1836 as to the history preceding them.