

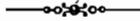
BAPTIST LEADERS,

1644-1844.

Transactions

of the

Baptist Historical Society.



Prefatory Note.

THE appearance of the first number of the "Transactions" of the Baptist Historical Society demands no word of explanation. Unlike most first numbers it is not in search of a public, and has no need to disclose its origin or its purpose. Its public—albeit a very limited public—is secured, and its purpose is well understood. It is awaited by the members of the Society, who recognise that a periodical, devoted to the objects for which they have come into association, is indispensable. The more obvious functions of the "Transactions" will be (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, but not read or discussed at its meetings; (3) to provide a means of communication between members—other and less formal than by papers—on matters of historical research.

The first two of these functions are admirably instanced in the present issue of the magazine. The paper read by Dr. Whitley at Bradford, at the autumnal meeting of our Society, on "Baptists and Bartholomew's Day," greatly interested the few members who could be present to hear it; but one and all welcomed the announcement that so elaborate and exhaustive a piece of work would soon be in their hands for leisurely and careful perusal, and would also be in the possession of other members, not present at Bradford, who would be not less impressed with the interest and value of the results of Dr. Whitley's investigations. He has effectually disposed of the notion that any considerable number of ministers holding Baptist views needed the impulse of the Act of Uniformity to bring about the severance of their connection with the State Establishment. It was a worthy and notable contribution wherewith to initiate our "Transactions."

Other papers, which could not be read at the meeting at Bradford, are presented now for the first time to the constituency

of the Society, and will be found worthy of study and preservation. Not less serviceable should our publication prove as a means, as already hinted, of less formal intercourse and interchange of knowledge and ideas between our members. If it should become in part a sort of denominational "Notes and Queries," in which those who are keenly interested in the same historical study may seek and give help, it will perform a useful part and supply an obvious need.

The formation of our Society has already brought a welcome surprise to some who thought that interest in the past of Baptist communities was at a lower ebb than it really is. It has been made plain that in various parts of the country, quite unknown to one another, many students of our history have been accumulating material, and working, though in ignorance of one another's efforts, toward a common end. These workers can now more readily come into contact, partly through the meetings of our Society, and yet more through the pages of this magazine. Association will afford stimulus as well as pleasure; information which has been a private possession, and as such has been in danger of being lost, will be cheerfully contributed to the common stock, and will be so ensured against oblivion; and in process of time these contributions, finding record in the volumes of "Transactions," will become a mine of wealth to the future historian of our denomination, who will have in them to his hand valuable material and the directions and hints of other seekers to facilitate his own research.

We may count with confidence on the coming of that historian, for a history of the Baptists more adequate than any yet attempted is due, and will become a matter of urgent demand. By manifold signs it is evident that our denomination is freeing itself from the bonds of an excessive individualism; and is rejoicing as never before in a sense of fellowship with brethren of like faith and practice the world over. Such widened outlook cannot be restricted to the present; it will inevitably turn to the past and seek to scan it also. Joy in brotherhood should not and cannot dissociate itself from the desire to learn what we may of our spiritual ancestry. There has been grievous neglect—to our discredit and loss. Reaping in joy we have been too heedless of those who sowed in tears. To the endeavour to repair that neglect and to meet the desire for a knowledge—at once wider and more exact—of the past of our denomination, may our Historical Society, through its "Transactions," be enabled to render effective aid.

GEO. P. GOULD.