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incorporating the Transactions of the  
BAPTIST HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
EDITORIAL

WE know all too little about Thomas Helwys. One suspects that all too few Baptists know what little there is to be known. He is rightly to be remembered as the leader of the group who initiated the first Baptist fellowship in England in 1612. To remind us of this event, there is the Baptist Union's Ter-Jubilee pamphlet: *Thomas Helwys and the first Baptist Church in England*, written by Dr. Payne. It should be read by all Baptists and by all others interested in the beginnings of Separatism.

Heroes of history have a habit of becoming detached from the normal experiences of life, and remembered for their one particular contribution to history. They become part of the pageant of history rather than men. Thus it is right for us to recall, for example, that Helwys' life was over before he was much above forty; that when he and Smyth crossed to Amsterdam in 1607-8 Helwys left behind his wife and seven children under twelve. We may judge the depth of conviction held by Helwys in taking that course. He had no need to go with Smyth and the others. He could have financed the expedition and remained at home. But he chose to go.

There is every reason to believe that his wife encouraged him in his witness. We should never forget the part Joan Helwys must have played. R. A. Marchant in *The Puritans and the Church Courts in the Diocese of York, 1560-1642*, shows that Joan was arrested in the spring of 1608 and imprisoned at York on the charge of being a Brownist and of refusing to answer questions under oath. Although she was released before the summer, she must have spent

some time in York Castle and is cited again in the summer, still for being a Brownist. There were thus, in those early days, families who held deep convictions about Separatist principles, and who held them at great cost. Does such a spirit exist among Baptist families today?

\*                                     \*                                     \*

We would take this opportunity to remind you of the occasion on April 7th at Bilbrough Baptist Church—the church close to the site of Broxstowe Hall in Nottingham. A plaque commemorating Helwys will be unveiled. If any of you would like to come to Nottingham on that day, the Secretary of the Historical Society will be glad to provide you with details.

\*                                     \*                                     \*

April 30th is the date of our Annual Meeting. As usual it will be at 4.30 p.m. at the Institute Hall of the Westminster Chapel. Dr. B. R. White will be talking to us about Smyth and Helwys. We hope for the usual good attendance. Tea will precede the meeting.

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