



incorporating the Transactions of the
BAPTIST HISTORICAL SOCIETY

EDITORIAL

WHEN one thinks of the flourishing Society for Old Testament Study (founded in 1917) and its sister society dealing with the New Testament, it is somewhat surprising that there has not been until now a similar body for the furtherance of work on Church History. This gap has now been made good, thanks to the initiative of the Rev. Prof. C. W. Dugmore, of the University of London, and certain of his colleagues on the British International Sous-Commission of the Commission Internationale d'Histoire Ecclésiastique Comparée. The decision to form the new society was taken at a meeting held in the Great Hall, King's College, London, on 6th July, 1961. A committee of six, representing the main periods of Church History was appointed with Dr. Dugmore as its chairman. One of its first tasks will be to draft details of the constitution. At the outset this committee will serve for two years, the members thereafter retiring by rotation. The Rev. Prof. M. D. Knowles, F.B.A., was elected as first president of the Society and Mr. W. H. C. Friend, of Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge, as honorary secretary. Two Baptists, Dr. G. J. M. Pearce, of Regent's Park College, and Rev. G. W. Rusling, of Spurgeon's College, were present among the founding members of the Society.

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The year 1962 will bring with it two significant acts of Commemoration. The remembrance of the Great Ejectment of 1662

will have a place particularly in the life of the Presbyterians, the Congregationalists and the Baptists. We shall have cause to refer to this in greater detail in a later Editorial, but readers might like to know that on the evening of August 24th there is to be a service of commemoration at the City Temple in London and on the evening of October 23rd there will be a great rally in the Royal Albert Hall. In addition, very many local Fraternal and Free Church Councils are arranging commemorative meetings in their localities. Although the pattern of meetings will vary, it is to be hoped that the basic fact of what the commemoration is all about will no where be taken for granted. There is some evidence that many Baptists, at any rate, are not at all clear as to why 1662 should be remembered. No doubt many in the other denominations are likewise uncertain and therefore factual statements of the historical events need to be laid as foundations to all the commemorative occasions.

But if Baptists are somewhat vague about 1662, they should not have any uncertainty about the second act of commemoration, namely that of 1612. It was in that year, of course, that Thomas Helwys and his group returned from Holland to found the first Baptist church in this country. Certainly there may be Baptist churches which claim a foundation date prior to 1612, but it is unlikely in the extreme that such foundations were originally Baptist churches. This, however, is not the occasion to argue that particular point. The return of Helwys is an event to be remembered. On Saturday, April 7th, there will be a special service in the Bilborough Baptist Church in Nottingham, when a commemorative plaque will be unveiled by the President of the Baptist Union. The plaque is to be placed in the Bilborough Church as being the church nearest to Helwys's family home at Broxstowe Hall. Members of the Historical Society are asked to note this date. The service will be in the afternoon. In addition, it is suggested that we might like to make a contribution towards the cost of the plaque. As members will know, it is not possible to do this out of our normal funds, and therefore we invite you to make a special contribution to the Treasurer for the Helwys plaque. It should surely be possible for all of us who recognise just what Helwys did and stood for to meet the cost of the Helwys plaque. Our Annual Meeting on April 30th will be addressed by the Rev. Dr. B. R. White of Andover, who has recently completed a thesis on John Smyth. Dr. White will speak about Smyth and Helwys. Early next year a Ter-Jubilee booklet on Thomas Helwys will be available. It is hoped that, in these ways, 1612 will be recognised generally as worthy of commemoration by Baptists.