



incorporating the Transactions of the
BAPTIST HISTORICAL SOCIETY
EDITORIAL

ENTHUSIASM amongst Baptists for marking the tercentenary of 1662 can, at best, be designated as "patchy". Here and there we hear reports of successful and worthwhile meetings held and of well-organised occasions planned for the Autumn. But, by and large, Baptist church members still seem not to be clear as to what it is all about. This is a pity. For whether we feel that it is an occasion for "celebrating" or not, it is certainly an occasion for remembering and re-thinking.

By the Act of Uniformity, passed in the summer of 1662, all Clergy were required by August 24th—amongst other things—to accept and follow the *Book of Common Prayer*. For the staunch Independent to accede to such a demand was impossible. He held that the State had no right to interfere in things religious. Church and State belonged apart. And more than that the *Book of Common Prayer* did not represent true praying with the Spirit.

We may recall John Bunyan's description of his examination before the Justices in Bedford less than two years before St. Bartholomew's Day, 1662.

JUSTICE KEELIN : Do you come to church, you know what I mean, to the parish church to hear Divine Service?

BUNYAN : I answered, No, I did not.

KEELIN : He asked me, Why?

BUNYAN : I said, Because I did not find it commanded in the Word of God.

KEELIN : He said, We were commanded to pray.

BUNYAN : I said, But not by the Common Prayer-Book.

KEELIN : He said, How then?

BUNYAN : I said, With the Spirit. As the apostle saith, "I will pray with the Spirit and with the understanding." (I Cor. XIV 15.)

KEELIN : He said, We might pray with the Spirit, and with the understanding, and with the Common Prayer Book also.

BUNYAN : I said, The prayers in the Common Prayer Book were such as was made by other men, and not by the motions of the Holy Ghost, within our hearts; and as I said, the apostle saith, he will pray with the Spirit, and with the understanding; not with the Spirit and the Common Prayer-Book.

The expression of the record is in the language of the seventeenth century, but the principles of Bunyan's attitude to the *Book of Common Prayer* remain evident.

On August 24th, 1662, hundreds of clergy were driven out by the State's authority for their refusal to subscribe to the Prayer Book. This may not be a tercentenary occasion for celebration but it is surely one upon which all Baptists need to ask themselves two questions. Do I believe that Church and State ought to be separated? Do I believe that within any act of worship there should be freedom in the Spirit for prayer?