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III

BAPTIST AND CONGREGATIONAL PIONEERS

First Edition, 1906.
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The *Mayflower*, which bore the Pilgrim Fathers from Plymouth, England, to Plymouth, Massachusetts, in 162c.

BAPTIST AND CONGREGATIONAL PIONEERS

BY

J. H. SHAKESPEARE, M.A.

LONDON: NATIONAL COUNCIL OF EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCHES. THOMAS LAW, MEMORIAL HALL, E.C.

THE KINGSGATE PRESS, KINGSWAY, W.C.

TO

THE REV. WILLIAM GOODMAN, B.A.,

WHO, THROUGHOUT A LONG LIFE, HAS

EXEMPLIFIED THE BEST TRADITIONS

OF FREE CHURCHISM.

PREFACE

THE period which is dealt with in this book is rich in lessons of heroic courage, endurance, and fidelity to conscience, but its main importance lies in the historic explanation which it supplies as to the origin and nature of the existing cleavage in English religious and ecclesiastical life. Separatism arose, in the first instance, upon a doctrine of the visible particular Church as distinct from the parish assembly of the Church of England, and also as a protest against the Royal Supremacy in matters ecclesiastical.

No one would dream of writing the story without availing himself of the invaluable researches of Drs. H. M. Dexter, John Brown, and F. J. Powicke. I have, however, also gone to the original records, in some in-

stances to records which have only recently become accessible. I have frequently rejected accepted tradition as to events and dates, and in one case, have practically re-written the story. It is impossible, in the limits of this work, to give references, but I trust that no one will put aside my conclusions without going to the originals as I have done.

I desire to thank the Rev. T. G. Crippen, B.A., the librarian of the Congregational Library, who has placed its resources at my disposal, and also the Rev. W. T. Whitley, M.A., LL.D., for many valuable suggestions.

J. H. SHAKESPEARE.

HIGHGATE,
December 22, 1905.

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I

THE ENGLAND OF THE SEPARATISTS

THE England of the sixteenth century cannot be explained apart from the translation of the Scriptures into the tongue of the common people. Through long generations the Word of God had been hidden away in dusty libraries, and in the tongue of the learned. Its simple message had been obscured by notes and explanations of churchmen and schoolmen. The immense majority of the clergy themselves knew but little of the Bible. The great discovery, therefore, of the age was not the New World, but a book in which even the common man might see, as in a mirror, the primitive doctrine, sacraments, and ministry, and compare the astonishing and dazzling vision with what these had come to be. Wyclif, "the morning star" of the English Reformation, in

1380, gave a version in a tongue which, for freedom, vigour, and richness, we can only liken to that of his great contemporary, Chaucer. Revised by his disciple, Purvey, in 1388, it was circulated in fragmentary manuscripts and became the fountain-head of Lollardry. It was passed from hand to hand, read by the "vulgar and by women," until it was complained that they knew more of the Bible than did the priests themselves. Forbidden and suppressed, it is deeply interesting to note that most of the few remaining copies have been traced to the very districts where the first Separatist Churches arose. As with a magic wand, it called Lollardry into being, and though the new faith was stamped out in fire and blood, and though the desolating Wars of the Roses turned men's thoughts in other directions for a hundred years, yet it was so fruitful and so lit with the sunrise of an age to come that it has been truly said, "Out of the floating mass of opinion which bore the name of Lollardry, one great faith gradually evolved itself, a faith in the sole authority of the Bible as a source of religious truth."

It was in the sixteenth century, however, that the English became a people of one Book. Erasmus, the friend of kings and

scholars, issued his Greek version of the New Testament in 1516. The printing-press scattered it far and wide. Its influence was extraordinary. For the first time since the early centuries, men saw Christ, "speaking, healing, dying, rising again, as it were," in their very presence. In France, in the German States, in Holland, and in our English realm, men searched the Scriptures in vain for the subtleties and superstitions of Rome, but as they followed the footprints of Christ through Galilee and Judea, they found how simple was His Gospel and how complete His sacrifice. They failed to recognise in ignorant priests and tyrannical prelates successors of the apostles whose words were recorded in the Acts and the Epistles. "In what point," demanded Bonner of the yeoman, Robert Smith, who was burnt at Uxbridge in Mary's reign, "do us differ from the word of God?" The reply was swift and definite, "In hallowing water; in conjuring of the scenes; in baptizing children with anointing and spitting in their mouths, mingled with salt; and many other lewd ceremonies, of which not one point is able to be proved by God's order." "By my troth," said Sir John Mordant, "I never heard the like in all my life. He disalloweth

therein holy ointment, salt, and other laudable ceremonies, which no Christian man will deny." The translation of the Bible carried with it immeasurable changes and the birth of the modern world. Tindale issued his version of the New Testament in 1525. Miles Coverdale gave the English Bible in 1535. The Great English Bible was authorised in 1539. The Bible was placed in every church. It was read aloud in countless homes. It did its own work. Separatism was a part of the inevitable outcome. If it were possible to-day to extinguish Separatism with its doctrines and adherents, and the open Bible were yet retained, there would be Baptists and Congregationalists to-morrow.

In this period we enter into a world swayed by theological opinions, passions, and conflicts. The issue in a later generation came to be that of political freedom, but now it was more vital and divine than a question of taxation or the authority of Parliament. The nation became the arena of warring creeds and Churches. It was stirred to its depths by a theological pamphlet. The seething ferment and the endless strife of parties in Church and State, in the palace, at St. Paul's Cross, among clerics and statesmen, soldiers,

traders, and peasants, raged round the royal supremacy, the mass and ecclesiastical vestments. A fresh set of names began to appear in our English history, Papist, Conformist, Non-Conformist, Puritan, Presbyterian, Anabaptist, and Brownist, all with a religious significance, and the story of the time is bound up with them. It is not to be supposed that men were more intent then upon the unseen and the eternal; but life itself, security, conduct, property, wars, and foreign alliances turned on the mysteries of religion and the articles of a creed.

The problem of government for Henry VIII. and his immediate successors was, how to preserve peace in an England containing a Catholic majority, under rulers who rejected the Papal authority. It arose in the first instance through one of the accidents of history, and was bound up with the bluff and strong-willed King's matrimonial affairs. It is not for us to discuss whether the same issue would have arisen if there had been no Catherine of Arragon. It is enough to record that the Defender of the Faith against Luther, the man who hated Protestantism and held every article of the Catholic Creed, who made burning the penalty for the denial of the doctrine of transubstantiation, liberated England

from the power of Rome, and began the movement which, with swift strides, passed into the Reformation. Henry dissolved the monastic orders, set the Bible free to do its own work, degraded the Church to a department of the State, and demanded from bishops and clergy the acknowledgment of himself as "the only supreme head on earth of the Church of England." But it was not to be expected that the convictions and sympathies of the people would veer round with equal suddenness and rapidity. Though London was strongly Protestant, and though the reforming zeal burnt more fiercely than ever in the reign of Edward VI., yet the country at large received Mary with enthusiasm and joy. Both Houses of Parliament united in the return to Roman obedience and received the Papal absolution upon their knees. They were not very conscious that they were changing their opinions and faith. But soon they learnt what submission to Rome meant; the storm of persecution broke; the country beheld the horrifying spectacle of the Primate of all England being burnt at the stake; for the space of three and a half years it lay under a veritable nightmare of un-English cruelty, burnings, appalling agonies, merciless and insane bigotry, and the lesson could not

be forgotten. Far into Elizabeth's reign, however, in the diocese of York, the people kept Romish fasts and festivals and held fast by Romish superstitions. Elizabeth, on the other hand, by the accident of her birth, was bound to resist Rome. If the word of the Pope was law, then she was illegitimate. But she knew her people. She knew that the majority were Catholic. It was true, as the Spanish ambassador said, that while London and the seaports nearest Holland were heretical, yet the Catholic party was in a majority. "I will do as my father did," she said. She had no scruples, no real religious convictions. She wanted a *via media.* This was her sole and only faith, one land, one creed, one ritual, one Church, and one absolute power on the throne.

To the average Englishman of the Elizabethan period there must have seemed much to justify such a policy. The threatening cloud on the horizon was always the Spanish invasion. Spain was the proudest and greatest empire in the world. Its armies and fleets and argosies, its colonies in the distant West, which the imagination pictured glittering with gold and precious stones, its Inquisition and implacable cruelties, its sieges, sacks, and murderous vengeance in the Low

Countries, were the wonder and terror of the time. A Spanish king had been crowned King of England, at Westminster. Fresh from the *auto-da-fe* of Granada and Seville, he had looked with cold surprise upon the hubbub which a few English martyrdoms had set up. No Englishman could be sure that he would not wake up one day to find the Spanish galleons in the Thames, and the faggots burning again at Smithfield. It was England against Spain all over the world, and anything which seemed to divide the nation was treason and disloyalty. Therefore, whether recusant, or Puritan, or Separatist, all alike felt ere long the pressure of the iron will and the strong hand of the Tudor Queen.

The year 1559 is one to be marked in English history. The first Parliament of Queen Elizabeth passed an Act of Uniformity, one of that dire and miserable succession which put temporal gain in the place of conscience. It introduced a cleavage into our national religious life, which widened until the breach became irreparable. It prescribed the use of the second Prayer Book of Edward VI., "no other or otherwise," the penalty of disobedience by the clergy being deprivation and imprisonment.

Intended at first against the Papist, the penal laws of Elizabeth were easily applied to the Non-Conformist and Separatist. It is significant in the story of the Separatist that penalties were now imposed for non-attendance at church. Power was given to ecclesiastical commissioners to ordain as to vestments and ceremonies. Later on, in 1562, the first Test Act was passed, which required the oath of allegiance to the Queen, and the disavowal of the Pope from all who held secular office as members of Parliament, magistrates, or otherwise in the State. After the Papal Bull of deposition against Elizabeth was launched in 1570 by Pius V., releasing her subjects from their civil obedience, the range of the statute against high treason was greatly enlarged so as to press more heavily on Romanists. In May, 1571, the Thirty-Nine Articles took their present form, and subscription to them was exacted as a wicket-gate to all civil authority. Thus, at one stroke of the pen, all power in the State, all emolument and preferment were rigidly confined to the members of the Church of England.

As we have seen, these laws and penalties were originally directed against Papists, but they must all be looked upon as part of the

policy of a queen in whom there was no bigotry, and very little religious conviction, to secure and maintain one people, one Church, and one faith. But another party was rising in the State. Other foreign influences were at work besides those of Rome and Spain. The flight of the Marian exiles to the Continent and their intercourse with the Protestant Reformers were destined to bear fruit in the most surprising way. Some of them came back pledged to the Reformed doctrine and practice. They were under the spell of the genius of Calvin. They corresponded with the reforming leaders of Frankfort, Zurich, and Geneva. When controversies arose between themselves and Parker or Whitgift, they sought the advice of Gualto, Bullinger, or Calvin. It is vital to note that the Puritans were within the Church of England. Many of them not only accepted episcopacy but believed in it. The quarrel was not yet as to doctrine, it was purely a question of music and vestments, of the difference between a surplice and the black Genevan gown, of ceremonies which were a "cloaked papistry or a mingle-mangle." Their claim was not for uniformity, but for the toleration of such simpler usages and dress as seemed good to the party of the

exile. But Archbishop Parker slowly and steadily forced upon the English Church one ritual and dress, and gave as his ultimatum, the surplice, kneeling at the communion, and the wafer-bread. The Non-Conformists wavered and then yielded, but the battle was only begun. It was inevitable that it should quickly become a question affecting the orders, discipline, and doctrine of the State Church. The returned exiles, with the pattern of Geneva before them, were not willing to regard episcopal ordination as essential to the Christian ministry. Every fresh act of prelatic aggression, each attempt to enforce uniformity and subscription, drove them into closer alliance with the Presbyterians. To conform became more and more difficult. New leaders arose among the Puritans. Under Cartwright a system was attempted within the Establishment itself, which, if successful, would have been the farewell to the entire hierarchy. It was advocated with a bitterness and bigotry which were not surpassed by Rome. The six propositions which were sent from Cambridge to the Chancellor, said to have been drawn up by Cartwright himself, did not touch questions of ritual or vestment, but only the constitution and ministry of the

Church. A number of the Puritan leaders instituted the Presbyterian "Orders of Wandsworth," and extended the Presbyterian organisation in the very heart of the English Church. The answer of Whitgift was the reappointment of the ecclesiastical commission for the discipline of the Puritans. All the engines which had been devised against Romanists were now directed against the other wing also in their attack upon national unity. The struggle was well begun, and its issue was the great rebellion and the secession of 1662.

It seems strange to us that the Puritans should have been so resolved to remain in the Church of England. Would it not have been both braver and wiser for the Non-Conformists to have quitted an organisation with which they were in growing antagonism? But we must remember that separation from a historic and visible Church was not a familiar shape. Every wise man will try if possible to reform an institution from the inside. Only the weak and violent withdraw from a great cause or society, except as a last resort. Even the Continental reformers, so long as the conflict raged round garments, advised the Puritan leaders to conform rather than suffer deprivation. Moreover, there

must have been the lingering hope in their minds that in the final issue their cause would triumph. Each crisis in the Church had coincided with the accession of a new monarch or archbishop. A single generation had witnessed the sudden break with Rome; it had seen an archbishop, who had burnt a Protestant martyr, himself perish at the stake for denying the doctrine of transubstantiation; the reforming zeal of Edward VI. had been followed by the Marian recantation and submission; even if Parker and Whitgift had sought to crush it, Grindal had smiled upon Puritan usage. The question was, what would be its final shape when the English Church issued from the fires, and Non-Conformists, as they began to be called, may be pardoned for having cherished the hope that they would play a more effective part in the struggle by remaining within than by leaving the Church of the realm.

There were some, however, who did not take this view of the situation and of their duty. There began to be an increasing party in the State of those who carried their Non-Conformity far beyond the Prayer Book, semi-Romish garments, or episcopacy. They rejected the Genevan gown. They looked

with intense distrust upon the Reformists. Some of them denied the right of the civil power of kings and magistrates to meddle with faith and conscience, or to impose any articles or forms of worship upon the Church. They taught the doctrine of a separate and regenerate Church, in contradistinction to the mixed parish assemblies of the Establishment. It was a portentous spectacle when Henry VIII. introduced the right of private judgment, as against the colossal power of Rome, and you cannot stop a great reform just when you have had enough of it. Men's thoughts had been prisoned and chained for centuries, but they began now to expand in a new universe. The Separatists, the Baptists, the Brownists, the Barrowists, as they were called in contempt, saw plainly that the true Church could not be coincident with the whole baptized population. Despised and proscribed by all, expressly excluded from every act of toleration, they were yet the children of freedom and light.

To account for them fully, we must deal briefly with certain communities and individuals who were precursors and heralds, whose work was rudimentary or suggestive, but who cannot accurately be termed Baptists or Congregationalists.

It is entirely unhistorical and misleading to confuse the English Baptists with the Anabaptists. That there was an indebtedness no one can deny, but they were marked off from each other by differences of origin, doctrine, social and political ideals. One point of likeness, the rejection of infant baptism, has blotted out, for many historical writers, the whole field of difference. "It is not fair," says Bishop Creighton, "to associate the English Baptists with the fanatical sects that infested Germany in the early part of the sixteenth century." The first appearance of these execrated sects in England is in 1535, when ten Dutchmen, "who were counted for Anabaptists," were burnt in London. There were many, however, who came over among the refugees as the tide of emigration set strongly away from the Low Countries to the English shores. They were very numerous in Kent, London, and East Anglia. They certainly formed Churches at Canterbury, Eythorne, Faversham, and elsewhere. Some English names occur, but, to quote Williston Walker, "they made few direct disciples during the sixteenth century on English soil." One of the most famous of them, Robert Cooke, has been largely ignored because he dealt less with baptism than with

predestination, but he was a man of note in his day, holding office under Catherine Parr, and a courtier as late as 1573. Knox replied to him in his *Confutation of the Careless by Necessitie*. His teaching anticipated the views of John Smyth fifty years later. The words Anabaptist and Baptist have been flung about in the loosest way, and the evidence must always be examined. Thus, Anne Askew has been called a Baptist, though she was simply a Protestant who was condemned for denying transubstantiation; and Robert Smith, the yeoman of the guard, though he accepted the baptism of infants if separated from Romish ceremonies (Foxe's *Acts*, 1583 Ed.); and Joan Boucher, or Joan of Kent, though she was an Anabaptist who was burnt for denying that Christ took flesh of the Virgin Mary; and the Church at Bocking has been called the first Baptist Church in England simply because Strype says that a number of persons there, "a sort of Anabaptists," met to talk about the Bible. The term "Baptist Pioneers" is used in this book to denote the English Separatists, Congregationalist in Church polity and anti-pædobaptist in practice, who gave rise to indigenous Churches in this country, and with whom the English Baptists

of to-day are in historical, theological, and spiritual succession. The term Anabaptist should be reserved for that semi-social and semi-religious movement which took its rise in Switzerland out of the death-throes of the Peasants' War, spread rapidly over Germany and the Netherlands, became sporadic in England, and which has been described as the "Revolt of the Common Man." Socially, it ran to grave excesses at the outset in its rejection of civil authority and order. Religiously, one distinctive mark of the Anabaptist is always the denial that Christ took flesh of the Virgin Mary. Its views, in this respect, have never been adopted by the English Baptists. After the great Congress at Buckholt, in Westphalia, in 1536, the learned and pious Frisian priest, Menno Simons, rescued from the wreck of Anabaptism its sane and healthy elements, and originated the Mennonite Church, with which the first English Baptist Churches at the beginning of the seventeenth century were in communion. The truth is that, while the Anabaptists in England raised the question of baptism, they were almost entirely a foreign importation, an alien element; and the rise of the Baptist Churches was wholly independent of them.

Again, it must be borne in mind that there was Separatism prior to, and distinct from, Congregationalism. First of all, there was the Separatism of Queen Mary's reign, which was simply Protestant, and amounted to no more than a refusal to go to mass, and an attempt to continue the use of the second Prayer Book of Edward VI. We are indebted to Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* for the story of one such congregation in London. The names of its five ministers are given, of whom the first became Bishop of Peterborough, and the last Bishop of Coventry and Lichfield. John Rough was one of the five, and Cuthbert Sympson was a deacon; both were burnt alive, the torture of the rack having failed to extract from the deacon the list of the members. Rough was a Scotch friar, and a friend of Knox, who became an English clergyman, having been beneficed at Hull by the Lord Protector Somerset. He fled to Friesland on the accession of Mary, but incautiously returned and joined the London Separatists. The Church dissolved when Mary died, for the system it desired was re-established. It is quite inexcusable even to suggest that it was a Congregational Church. "That which they add," says Robinson in his *Justification of Separation*,

"of sundry secret congregations in Queen Mary's days in many parts of the land is but a boast. There were very few of them in any. . . . There was not one congregation in Queen Mary's days that remained in Queen Elizabeth's. The congregations were dissolved, and the persons in them bestowed themselves in their several parishes, where their livings and estates lay."

A more serious claim, though a mistaken one, has been made to discover the origin of Congregationalism in the Separatism of the early years of Queen Elizabeth. Thus, Dr. Stoughton says, "A Congregational Church existed in London so early as 1568." Such a statement takes a great deal for granted. The reference is to the Church of which Richard Fitz was a minister, and Bolton a deacon, which met, under the guise of a wedding, at the Plumbers' Hall, Cannon Street, and was broken up in June, 1567. It consisted of some persons who were dissatisfied with the "leavings of popery" contained in the Prayer Book, and who, disliking the religious settlement which Elizabeth had made, took the extreme step of Separatism. In the Three Articles of their Confession, they demanded the preaching of the Word, pure sacraments, and a scriptural discipline;

probably they meant the Genevan discipline. At any rate, they used a Prayer Book which had been arranged in Geneva, and examined and approved by Calvin himself. Under examination before the patient and gentle Grindal, they objected to the hierarchy and to certain forms of worship. Dr. Dexter justly argues that there is no "evidence that they had elaborated for themselves any system whatsoever." All Puritanism was naturally on the verge of Separatism, but these Separatists were not propagandists; they published nothing, they elaborated no system of Church polity, and, at once, they disappeared from history.

If we are to understand by the founder of modern Congregationalism one who formulated its principles, expounded its polity, and established, by mutual and solemn covenant, a particular Church of the Congregational order, which was succeeded by others organised on the same lines, then we must look elsewhere than to these anticipations of an approaching dawn.

II

ROBERT BROWNE

I.—THE MAKING OF A CONGREGATIONALIST

THE supreme importance of Robert Browne as a pioneer arises, not from the greatness or worth of the man himself, but from the value and vitality of the truth which he rediscovered. "That so powerful and intelligent a body as the Congregationalists," says Dr. Jessop, "should strive to affiliate themselves to so eccentric a person as Browne, . . . will always appear somewhat strange to outsiders." But no unbiassed student of his strange and stormy career could rest his claim to veneration on any other ground than that he reached a truth which men, vastly superior in character and learning, failed to grasp. It was a truth no less precious because, in later days, he fell

away from his apostleship. The cause he championed was not less sacred in that—while others, who had "learned his great language," witnessed to it by their blood—he himself broke "from the van and the freemen," and assumed the livery of the system which he had despised. But, at least, it should be remembered that he passed within, where Luther and Calvin only stood upon the threshold; that, with the genius of an ecclesiastical statesman, he formed the first Congregational Church on English soil, and that, for a time, in spite of suffering and imprisonment, he was content to stand alone against the religious world of his day, against Catholic, Anglican, and Puritan.

What was the truth which had been lost, which Robert Browne found and which can never be lost again? It was the primitive doctrine of the Church. It was the return to Corinth, Philippi, and Rome. The visible Church had come to be regarded as a vast historic organisation under a certain form of government. It might be a world-wide system owning the Roman obedience; or a Church within a geographical area, a national Church under the supremacy of the Crown; or it might be Calvin's conception of Church government through Presbyters. But the

issue was everywhere the same. The single, individual Church was wiped out. It vanished and was denied. The congregation or the parish took its place. Even Puritanism held that every baptized person, not excommunicate, was a member of the Church, and looked to the civil magistrate to execute its discipline. But Browne reaffirmed the New Testament ideal of the visible Church. He rediscovered the visible society of Jesus. He held that it was responsible for its own purity. Later on, we shall inquire how far in all this he was indebted to the Continental Anabaptists, but it is certain that Browne ranks with the world's religious pioneers, inasmuch as he taught that "the essence, substance, and life of the outward Church" was nothing else but "the keeping of the covenant by the outward discipline and government thereof," and that neither ministry nor sacraments could "make an outward Church, except they have the power of Christ to separate the unworthy." He formed such a separate company of believers, self-governing, under the authority of Christ. Some of his words ring to-day with all the clearness and vehemence of battle cries, "Reformation without tarrying for any," "Let them know that the Lord's

people is of the willing sort." Like every true Congregationalist, he was a High Churchman. "Yea, the Church hath more authority," he said, "concerning Church government than magistrates, as it is written (Isa. xlv.), 'They shall follow thee and go in chains.'" Most pioneers miss their way and make serious mistakes, and he was no exception to the rule. He was as a man hewing a path through a dark, trackless forest and vast masses of undergrowth. In himself, as in his work, the fine gold was mingled with much dross. His teaching was sometimes inconsistent and even halting, but he did that which England needed most in his day, and his Separatism was the inevitable reaction against the identification of the Church and the State.

Browne came of a family of wealthy merchants of which the earliest trace is at Stamford in the fourteenth century. His ancestors were distinguished by riches and liberality, by civic services and honours. Three became aldermen of Stamford and two were sheriffs of Rutlandshire. One founded a hospital for decayed tradesmen, and another restored All Saints' Church in his native town. His grandfather was entitled by special charter of Henry VIII. to remain covered in the presence of king and lords.

The fragment of family history which had the chief bearing on his career was the marriage of his great-uncle with an aunt of Lord Burghley. Robert was born at the family manor of Tolethorpe, two miles from Stamford, about 1550, and was the third of seven children of Anthony Browne, "a man of some countenance," and his wife Dorothy, daughter of Sir Philip Boteler.

It is uncertain of which college he became a member when he went to Cambridge in 1570, but it is probable that, after his matriculation, he migrated to Corpus Christi, where he graduated in 1572, being placed eighteenth on the list. He may have been drawn to Corpus by early theological sympathies, as the celebrated Puritan leader, Thomas Aldrich, had been appointed master of the college in 1569. Two men destined to play an important part in the story were at Cambridge at this time. Thomas Cartwright was made Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity in 1569, and attracted crowds of students by his fiery genius and dialectic skill, until he was deprived of his post in 1571. Perhaps Browne's animus against Cartwright and his teaching began already. Robert Harrison, afterwards co-pastor at Norwich and Middleberg, had removed from St. John's to Corpus

Christi, and was now a fellow-student and acquaintance of Browne. Nothing further is known of the period spent by him at the university, except that he was counted so "forward in religion" that he aroused suspicions and made some enemies by his zeal. Strype's statement that he was domestic chaplain to Thomas Howard, Duke of Norfolk, is inherently improbable. The duke was at this very time deeply implicated with the Papist party, and it is almost ludicrous to suppose that his chaplain should be this youthful and budding Separatist, who was not even in orders. Dr. Jessop suggests that "Strype has confused Robert Browne with" Brown, the Shrewsbury merchant, "implicated when the Ridolfi conspiracy was discovered." But the latter's connection with the plot and with the duke was so slight and accidental as to make this very unlikely. On the completion of his course Browne gave himself for the space of three years to the teaching of children. Report has it that the school of which he became a master was at Southwark, and that he also preached in the Gravel Pits at Islington. "By the grudge of his enemies" he was discharged from his office, but continued still to teach privately until, driven away by the severity of the

plague, he returned to his father's house in 1578.

We enter now upon the period in Robert Browne's history in which, with unaffected earnestness and passionate longing, he sought to find the light and to follow it. Good men may differ as to the conclusions which he reached, but his sincerity and overwhelming desire to bring about a reformation of religion are not open to question. He had always been set on the Church of God, and now resolved to seek its profit in the best way he could. His first step, then, was to leave the quiet haven at Tolethorpe and to go back to Cambridge. He became a member of the household of a Puritan clergyman at Dry Drayton, the Rev. Richard Greenham. This good "preaching minister" was one of those who remained loyal to the Church of England, but clung resolutely to simplicity of dress and worship. It is a beautiful picture which we get of the life within this sixteenth-century manse and parish, the regular and frequent preaching, the teaching of children, the early service, as soon as the dawn broke, that the labourers might hear the Word, the morning and evening prayers in the home, the Christian instruction of the servants, the daily charities, the young men whom he

gathered round him and cared for. He was such an one as Chaucer's poor parson who taught Christ's lore, "and first he followed it himself." Into this idyllic scene, the young enthusiast came, in 1578, with many thoughts and hopes. What these thoughts and purposes were, he himself tells us in *A True and Short Declaration.* Even while he had been a teacher of children in Southwark, he had been sore grieved at the woful and lamentable state of the Church, and had given himself wholly to search out the proper guidance and order of the Church and the abuses in ecclesiastical government. "Night and day he did consult with himself and others about them." But when he entered into Mr. Greenham's home, his convictions rapidly became clear and positive. He saw that the voice of the Church, that is, the voice of the whole people, was the voice of God, so that next under Christ was not the bishop, not even an apostle, but the Church. The primacy of the Church he judged not only to be "against the wickedness of the bishops, but also against their whole power and authority." The bishops, in forcing ministers upon the people, presumed further than Christ, Who would not suffer His apostles to take charge of any who did not willingly

receive them. Evidently Browne was on the high road to Congregationalism. We can almost hear the long debates in the manse at Dry Drayton. Mr. Greenham had doubtless listened to Cartwright in the Lady Margaret lectures, and would urge, as he did, that since the bishops both preached the Word of God and had the Sacraments, they must needs have the Church and the people of God. The persistent objector would reply that to preach the Word of God "as it is written in Jeremiah xxiii. 22" was to teach the people "those things whereby they might turn them from their evil ways." As the bishops did not call the people from their sins, but rather led them in the same, they did not preach the Word of God. At his first coming to Dry Drayton, the young Browne began to expound the Scriptures, which were read at the manse table after meals. Then Mr. Greenham, without leave of the bishop, suffered him to teach openly in his parish. His gifts were evident, and, with the consent of the mayor and vice-chancellor of the university, he took charge of the Benet Church in Cambridge for six months.

Obviously, the natural course for so earnest and gifted a preacher was to obtain the bishop's license, but he was resolved not to

seek this authority. Dr. Jessop is mistaken in thinking that he must have been ordained at an earlier period. "To be authorised of them" (the bishops), "to be sworn, to subscribe, to be ordained, and to receive their licensing, he utterly misliked and kept himself clear in those matters." He refused the bishop's seals, which were obtained for him by his brother. He openly preached in Cambridge against "the calling and authorising of preachers by bishops." He came to the conclusion "that the kingdom of God was not to be begun by whole parishes, but rather of the worthiest, were they never so few." He refused the stipend which the Benet Church sent to him. But the bishop and council saw in him a dangerous man, and he was inhibited from preaching. The labours, mental conflicts, and spiritual agitations of the past six months laid him low. It was borne in upon his mind that hitherto the Lord had only tried and prepared him "to a further and more effectual message." With many tears he sought where he might find those like-minded with himself. He had reached the turning point of his career. The Lord was about to set before him an open door.

Two events now occurred of vital moment

and far-reaching consequences, which, in reality, determined his ecclesiastical course. One was his visit to Middleberg, in Zeeland. Until recently there has been no confirmation of Fuller's statement that Browne "perched himself" in the city of Norwich *after* his visit to the Low Countries. Biographers have unanimously assigned the visit to Zeeland to a later date; but the story of this period must be re-written in the light of a recent discovery by Mr. Champlin Burrage in the British Museum. On February 19, 1589 (New Style), Bancroft quoted in his sermon at St. Paul's Cross a few passages from some writings of Robert Browne, of which all trace was lost. It was supposed that Bancroft had in his possession a treatise by Browne, but in 1903, Mr. Burrage, searching in the British Museum, lighted upon twelve folio pages beautifully and compactly written, containing Bancroft's quotation, which proved to be a letter by Browne to his uncle, Mr. Flower, written January 10, 1589 (N. S.). In this letter we read these words: "Before my first voyage beyond the sea and since my last return." It is probable, therefore, that Browne went to Zeeland twice, first in 1579, or 1580, for a little while, and again in 1581. The version

which quaint old Fuller gives of the first journey is somewhat prejudiced, "Browne went over into Zeeland to purchase himself more reputation from foreign parts. For a smack of travail gives an high taste to strange opinions, making them better relish to the licourish lovers of novelty." It was quite natural that, in this time of his mental and spiritual agitation, Browne's thoughts should turn to Holland, which through the successful rebellion against Alva's rule, was the only spot in Europe where religious liberty and equal toleration could be found, and here perhaps he would worship with Cartwright's Puritan congregation. He would converse with Dutch Anabaptists, and would no doubt hear much of the Dutch congregation in the city of Norwich.

The other important and formative event in his career was the visit to Norwich, that ancient and beautiful city, then one of the first cities of the kingdom, which was to be the birthplace of Congregationalism. Already it had opened its gates to the skilled and thrifty exiles of Alva's infamous massacres. In 1587, the Dutch and Walloons, numbering 4,679, formed a majority of the population. In London, the Dutch congregation was under the care of the Bishop

of London, and serious complaints were lodged that it included many Anabaptists. So in Norwich, the Dutch, by consent of the bishop, would worship in the Blackfriars' Hall, still called the Dutch Church, and would likewise be infected with the Anabaptist heresy. It was partly through the influence of Robert Harrison that the visit was paid. Browne's sometime fellow-student had left Corpus Christi to be master of the county school at Aylsham, and was now the master of the Old Man's Hospital in Norwich. This charity occupies the church originally dedicated to St. Giles, but is called St. Helen's to avoid confusion with St. Giles' Church in the west of the city. St. Helen's Church itself disappeared after the Reformation. Harrison had paid a flying visit to Cambridge, intending to seek license from the bishop, but was dissuaded by Robert Browne, with whom he renewed his acquaintance, and who regarded the bishop's authority as "trash and pollution." Shortly afterwards, Browne "took his voyage" to Norwich and lodged with Harrison. They walked much together in the fields talking of religion. Harrison was no match for the powerful and overbearing personality of Browne, and at last "wholly yielded to the truth." They talked

of the lordship and government of Christ, and whether they could be lawful pastors who had submitted themselves to the bishops, of the ways also by which men could find salvation and Christian assurance. Harrison made a stout resistance before he would give up the true ministry of some Puritan preachers, but afterwards he admitted them to be "like their fellows." The fact is that Browne would not suffer him to have an opinion of his own. For example, they compared their Christian experience and "how faith was tried and wrought in them." Harrison argued that faith might be wrought by reading the Scriptures, but Browne said that this could not be, but only by hearing the Word preached, as Paul saith, "How shall they believe in Him of Whom they have not heard, and how shall they hear without a preacher?" This did not mean hearing the Word read, for Paul saith that, "Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God," meaning the message in the mouth of the preacher. In vain Harrison urged that he was first called as he was reading the Bible, for he was answered that, "we may be deceived in such things," and after this he surrendered at discretion.

It was, then, under the very shadow of the

cathedral and the bishop's palace, perhaps in Robert Browne's room at the hospital, that the first Congregational Church in England was formed in 1580 or 1581. It was a tremendous act. It was a solemn hour, fraught with big destinies. The grim spectre of persecution and exile hung darkly above that little company, and yet around them was the glory of a new beginning for England and even for the world. Ignorant of much, sharing to the full in the intolerance of their time, this little branch of Christ's people saw clearly that the stained, fettered Church of England was not God's way, and to them was the unspeakable honour of bringing back the rights of the people of God.

Browne had thought long and deeply on the principles of Congregationalism, and it is, therefore, both interesting and important to see the manner of the planting of this Church. A day was set, a covenant made, and certain points were proved to the people from the Scriptures. "They promised their agreement to each thing particularly, saying, 'To this we give our consent.'" The terms of the covenant were chiefly these—they joined themselves to the Lord, and elected those who should watch for their souls, promising them obedience. They adopted an order

for receiving any into fellowship and for separating the unworthy, and they engaged specially to warn and rebuke one another privately and openly. Church discipline proved to be to them, as later to so many, a rock of offence.

It should be carefully noted that Robert Browne taught that the officers of the particular Church were the Pastor, the Teacher, the Elders, the Deacons, and the Widows. Moreover, Congregationalism, as it was conceived and planned by him, had a place not only for the particular Church, but also for the association of Churches together for common ends. In the *True and Short Declaration*, he wrote, "For the joining and partaking of many Churches together, and of the authority which many have, must needs be greater and more weighty than the authority of any single person." Again, in *The Book which Sheweth*, we read, "Who have the grace and office of teaching and guiding? Some have their several charge over many Churches. Some have charge but in one Church only. How have some their charge and office together? There be synods or the meetings of sundry Churches: which are when the weaker Churches seek help of the stronger, for deciding or redressing of matters: or else the

stronger look to them for redress." He defined a synod thus, "A synod is a joining or partaking of the authority of many Churches met together in peace for redress and deciding of matters which cannot well be otherwise taken up." There has been an extreme Brownism, as there has been an extreme Calvinism, but selfish independency cannot shelter itself under the authority of the founder of Congregationalism.

The question has been hotly debated how far Robert Browne was an original discoverer, and to what extent he was indebted to the Anabaptists. It is almost certain, in spite of the contrary view held by Dexter, that he owed something to the Dutch Anabaptists. He had conversed with them in Zeeland, and in Norwich he had been in the midst of a large Dutch community. His thoughts were first drawn to Norwich because he had heard that there were some in that city who shared his convictions and sentiments. In his anxious consultations by day and night, Browne must have become acquainted with their views. His fundamental conception of the covenant was the Anabaptists' conception. Mr. Champlin Burrage, in his work, *The Church Covenant Idea*, has pointed out that, twenty-five years earlier, an Anabaptist book

was printed in English which affirmed the principle of particular Churches and laid emphasis on the covenant. Yet Browne was an independent thinker. He rejected the extreme tenets of the Anabaptists as to oaths, civil officers, and also their views on Baptism, and must in the fullest sense be regarded as a radical religious reformer.

II.—Apostleship and Apostasy.

The period of inquiry and speculation was ended. Browne had crossed the line, and he gave himself to the new propaganda with the fervour and energy of an apostle. Hearing that at Bury St. Edmunds there were many "forward in religion," he went thither with his "arrogant spirit of reproof" and his fiery denunciation of the bishops. At the instance of "certain godly preachers," he was arrested and cast into prison for the first time. This was the beginning of his thirty-two imprisonments. The prison in those days was the scene of inevitable misery and horror, in which the unhappy victim was herded with the vilest scum and dregs of humanity. Often he was left to rot and perish in a dungeon cell so dark that he could not see his own hand. The Bishop of

Norwich complained to Lord Burghley that Browne had already seduced "the vulgar sort of people," who assembled themselves together to the number of a hundred to hear him. We can well believe that, but for the intervention of his powerful kinsman, the bishop would have made short work of this "troublesome man," as Fuller calls him, but at Burghley's request he was released. He at once returned to Bury St. Edmunds, again to preach and again to be arrested. This time he was incarcerated in London.

Meanwhile, the little company at Norwich, of which Browne was the Pastor, and Robert Harrison the Teacher, were sore beset and meditated flight to Scotland or to Jersey or Guernsey. Browne, from his prison, wrote to them not to go till they had further testified the truth; but at last, when some were in prison and the rest of them grievously persecuted, they all "were fully persuaded that the Lord did call them out of England." The bond of Church fellowship was very real. They migrated as a company in the autumn of 1581 to Middleberg.

And if the story could have ended here, it would have been well. The bright morning star was soon to be quenched in blackness and ruin. The exaggerated importance

which Browne attached to "warning and rebuking, privately and publicly," gives force to the sharp criticism of Dr. Jessop, "It was to be a society . . . for a miraculously gifted few." On the one hand, was a Church without discipline, and on the other, a separated Church with a censorship which flagrantly violated Christ's word, "Judge not, that ye be not judged." The little company, which had set out to reform the Church of God, ended in sordid strife, backbiting and jealousy, failure and apostasy. The grave peril of the Church is to forget that the "fruit of the Spirit is love."

At first it would appear that Robert Harrison and the Church joined themselves to the Puritan colony at Middleberg, of which Cartwright was the distinguished minister. Perhaps Browne had not yet arrived, and it is probable that, when his influence was felt, the Separatists withdrew. A letter, temperate, if not convincing, was addressed to Harrison by Cartwright, inviting him to return. Browne replied to it in a pamphlet ten times its length. He published the two letters, putting his own reply first, with the naïve explanation that "if an untruth be once received it worketh such a prejudice in the head." In this corre-

spondence Browne showed at his very worst as a controversialist. He poured torrents of abuse upon Cartwright for his "fond and blasphemous" notions, and twisted his arguments about until they were unrecognisable.

The story of the Church at Middleberg is set down at some length in the *True and Short Declaration.* The members became estranged from their pastor, and when he fell sick, "they made ado secretly." Meetings were called at which accusations were made against Browne, who privately rebuked Harrison, telling him that he knew several things against him if he liked to speak. There was great confusion at the Church meetings, and Browne insisted that one matter at a time should be debated and judged before another was raised. He was condemned as an unlawful pastor. There was some paltry question about a silver spoon. Browne resigned, but was brought back again, and, in an open meeting, each one confessed his fault. Again, and yet again, was Robert Browne condemned by the Church. There were whisperings and murmurings. Robert Browne's wife had her share in the disputes. He was charged with divers heresies, and at last shook off the dust

of his feet against the Church and, with a little remnant, set sail for Scotland.

Harrison was left behind as the pastor of the Church. He published some *Forms of Catechism* and a small treatise, but he disappears now from the story, and after his death in August, 1594, the Church at Middleberg was broken up and ceased to be.

During the two years spent at Middleberg, Browne issued from the press three treatises as an exposition of his views.

1. *A Treatise of Reformation without Tarrying for Anie.*

2. *A Treatise upon the* 23 *of Matthewe.*

3. *A Book which Sheweth the Life and Manners of all True Christians.*

These treatises were printed both separately and together, and, being circulated in England, were honoured by a special proclamation against them from the Queen in June, 1583, and, in the same month, Elias Thacker and John Coppin were hanged at Bury St. Edmunds for effecting their distribution. As early as 1576, Coppin had refused to have his child baptized by an "unpreaching minister," and had also declined to have godfathers and godmothers. But the offence through which they became the first martyrs of Congregationalism was, that they had

been great dispersers of Browne's pamphlets.

The student will turn to the *Book which Sheweth* for the best exposition of the grounds on which Browne separated from and reformed the Church, as well as for the most systematic account of his theology. It is a work of real insight, arranged in a series of questions and answers with definitions and divisions. The author states, with a pardonable pride, "As for the learned who seek deepness and stand in their methods and curious divisions, we have for their case taken some pains." Congregationalism arose partly in opposition to the episcopal form of government in the Church of England, but much more as a protest against the complete obliteration of the distinction between the Church and the world. It weighed like an agonising burden upon the heart of Browne that the only local Church was the parish assembly, and that, to the Lord's table, the most unworthy might come. This clearly was not the New Testament way. "There is a circulation, as in the fashion of clothes, so of opinion," says Fuller, and he adds that Dr. Fulke proved the Brownists to be the same as the ancient Donatists. The statement is historically incorrect, and is made in radical

ignorance of Donatism; but at any rate Browne's teaching was not to be brushed aside as an old heresy. Among secondary points, the reader will notice that Browne held that, in baptism, the body was to be washed, sprinkled, or dipped, in which he was probably in agreement with the earlier modern Baptists. He taught, however, that the children of the faithful were members of the Church through the promise, and should be presented for baptism.

Dr. Dexter has said that Robert Browne is entitled to the proud pre-eminence of having been the first writer clearly to state and defend in the English tongue the true—and now accepted—doctrine of the relation of the magistrate to the Church." It is a great claim, but before we reject the contrary opinion of Professor Masson, it will be necessary to examine the facts very carefully. There can be no doubt that Browne expressly excluded the magistrate from the control or discipline of the Church. He declared that the magistrates "have no ecclesiastical authority at all"; and again, "they may do nothing concerning the Church, but only civil and as civil magistrates; . . . that is, concerning the outward provision and outward justice, they are to

look to it; but to compel religion, to plant churches by power and to force a submission to Ecclesiastical government by laws and penalties, belongeth not to them, as is proved before, neither yet to the Church." This appears most satisfactory. There are, however, other passages which lead us to suspect that Browne was feeling his way to religious liberty, but was not always consistent with himself. Thus we find, "If, then, the magistrate will command the soldier to be a minister, or the preacher to give over his calling, they ought not to obey him, for they have not the gift, and God hath called them this way rather than that, yet if a magistrate call one of a lower calling to a higher, to that which he is fit and prepared, he ought to obey, for God hath called him thereto." This seems to bring the magistrate back again, but really the question has been settled by the discovery of the long-lost letter to Mr. Flower, to which we have already referred. In this letter Browne declares, "If, then, it be demanded who shall call and consecrate ministers, excommunicate and put down false teachers, let the word of God answer, which appointeth the chiefest and most difficult matters to be judged by them of chiefest authority and gifts

. . . I answer that the civil magistrates have their right in all causes to judge and set order." Later on, while still maintaining that the godly alone should choose the minister, he would admit the civil magistrate to be both present and director of the choice. It is true that these words were written two years after his subscription to the Church of England, but it is more than probable that, in this private letter, he expressed his real and unchanged opinion.

To return to the story. As we have seen, Browne left Middleberg towards the close of 1583, with a few faithful followers, and sailed for Scotland. Having dealt faithfully with the English Church without much apparent success, he now turned his attention to Presbyterianism in its citadel and Vatican. He made his way from Dundee to St. Andrews; thence, armed with a letter from Andrew Melville, on to Edinburgh. From the Canongate he made his assault upon the Church of John Knox, chiefly for its lack of discipline. Presbyterianism, however, was in no mood to be reformed. Browne was at once cited before the Kirk session. On January 21, 1584, he urged that "the whole discipline of Scotland was amiss," and appealed to the magistrate. He was promptly

clapped into the common gaol, and a report on his heresies sent to the King. But statecraft just then was not favourable to Scotland, and the order came for his release. He carried his message to other parts of the country, and then returned to England. His impressions of Scotland were naturally very unfavourable, and, in the letter to Mr. Flower, he gave as his judgment that, under the name of Presbyter, a pope or proud popeling might be hid, and that if Parliament should exchange bishop for presbyter, "instead of one pope we should have a thousand, and of some lord bishops in name a thousand lordly tyrants in deed." This passage may have been in Milton's thoughts when he wrote—

"New Presbyter is but old priest writ large."

Browne added that he had travelled much in Scotland, and had "seen all manner of wickedness to abound, much more in their best places in Scotland, than in our worser places here in England," and, with a hint at his sufferings, "in England also I have found much more wrong done me by the preachers of discipline than by any of the bishops."

In July, 1584, we find Browne in London. Probably he now wrote the *True and Short Declaration*. In a letter from Burghley to

Browne's father, dated October 8, 1584, it would appear that he had been arrested by the order of the Archbishop of Canterbury on the charge of writing a certain book, but that he had been dealt with leniently on Burghley's intervention. There is much warrant for Fuller's description of his treatment as "extraordinary favour indulged unto him." He returned to the old home at Tolethorpe a broken and disappointed man. But his father soon wearied of his company. "Men may wish—God only can work—children to be good." Browne was removed to Stamford, and, in the spring of 1586, went to Northampton to preach and labour with something of the old fervour and energy. He was cited for trial by the Bishop of Peterborough, and failing to appear, was "excommunicated for contempt."

But the end of Browne's Separatism was at hand. Having given his assent to the doctrines of the Church of England, he was appointed master of St. Olave's Grammar School, Southwark, on November 21, 1586, and signed strict articles in the Governor's Minute Book not to meddle with the ministry or keep any conventicles, to take the children to church, and to commune himself. There is little further to record.

On the 15th of April, 1590, he wrote a singular letter to Lord Burghley, enclosing some Latin tables and definitions, in which he based all the rules of art and learning on the Word of God. In 1591, through the influence of Burghley, he became rector of Achurch-cum-Thorpe, in Northamptonshire. Here he ministered for forty years. He was married twice, and nine children were born to him. He kept the parish register with the utmost care, except between September, 1617, and June, 1626, but it appears that there was a preacher or licensed curate in the parish continuously from 1604 to 1627. Some of the entries in Browne's handwriting illustrate his originality :—

"July, 1604. Marie Hobson an ould-poore maied."

"1629, Nov. 7. A childe of my own gracious Godsonne Robert Green Baptized elsewere in Schisme."

He sometimes preached in a little thatched house at Thorpe, where perhaps he still taught his particular principles of Church polity, not being allowed to do so in the parish Church.

Of this period many libellous stories are told. Fuller professes often to have seen him when a youth, and adds, "He had in

my time a wife with whom for many years he never lived, and a church where he never preached." But probably this, together with Bailey's charge that he beat his poor old wife and called her a "cursed old woman," is an infamous libel. The last entry by him in the parish register is dated June 2, 1631.

His end was tragic. He struck a constable who had somewhat roughly demanded the payment of a rate, and being summoned before the magistrate for the offence, was committed to Northampton gaol. The unhappy old man was more than eighty years of age, corpulent, and unwieldy. A feather bed was thrown upon a cart, and so he was taken to prison. For the last time he was to hear the clang of the prison door behind him, and on some date, not known with exactitude, but prior to November, 1633, the passionate spirit burnt itself out. Fuller records that he was buried in a neighbouring churchyard, and adds, "It is no hurt to wish that his bad opinions had been interred with him."

The problem of Robert Browne is insoluble. He carried the secret of his recantation with him to the grave. Never was any man more unfortunate in his public career. He was resolute and unresting in his search for the

truth, but he left it to others to be its apostles, to suffer exile and death on its behalf, and to face the inevitable consequences of its acceptance. His attitude towards Episcopacy had been one of unmeasured hatred and contempt, and it is difficult to believe that he ever really altered his opinions in this respect. This hatred was requited with equal virulence. "Hence the Church of England," said Bishop Hall, in his reply to the Brownists, "justly matches Separatists with the vilest persons. God Himself doeth so." From the other side of the controversy the Congregational martyrs regarded him with loathing and scorn. "We are not Brownists," said Barrow, before his judges. "Browne is an apostate," said Greenwood, "now one of your Church." For forty years the great pioneer of Israel's freedom led the people of God out of the bondage of Egypt, through the wilderness, sharing their struggles, sacrifices, and perils, counting it enough that God was his refuge and dwelling-place; living in the future, not the present; sustained by the vision of a purified and redeemed Israel, and of a promised land when the first generation had passed away But Robert Browne, as the darkness deepened, stole back silently from the Host of God

which he had led into the wilderness, and, in the safety of an obscure rectory, for forty years, watched the tragic procession of events, and gave no sign. He lived on through that dark time of the struggle for freedom against king and bishops, while those who had been inspired by his words were hung or banished from the realm. Many have been the attempts to explain this recreancy, and probably the answer is not to be found in any single direction. It has been suggested that he had never contemplated being cast out of the Church of England, and that, when the limit of patience was reached, he hesitated and drew back. It has been urged that, beneath the strain of repeated imprisonment, mental agitation, and disappointing conflict with his own brethren, the highly strung and intense nature gave way; that Congregationalism had the pioneer, bold as a lion, keen and penetrating and mighty in the Scriptures, and that Anglicanism had the physical and mental wreck, the half-deranged and wholly terrified apostate. It is clear from the letter to Mr. Flower that the poor broken creature, like an animal which has been cruelly tortured, cowered at the possibility of again being flung into the dark and noisome dungeon. But, in spite of

all that may justly be laid to the score of mental derangement, we believe that he had, in fact, lost faith in the value of Congregationalism as a practical and working theory of the Church. He felt that it was not worth dying for. We freely admit that the Congregationalism of the Church at Middleberg was not worth any sacrifice, and that it carried with it no spiritual enrichment for the world. It crumbled away beneath his hand, and he left it in ruins. It was Congregationalism with love left out, and in which liberty had become the cloak of maliciousness; and just as the corruption of the best is always the worst corruption, so Congregationalism, which has its very essence in the life of God within the soul, in love and kindness and every fruit of the spirit, when it parts from these saving elements, loses its savour, and is only fit to be cast out and trodden under foot of men.

III

BARROW AND GREENWOOD

I.—Prisoners of Jesus Christ

THE story of the martyrs of Separatism must be read in the light of that rigid and narrow conformity which now became the persistent and resolute policy of the Church of England. Elizabeth was determined to rule both in Church and State, and in her intense dislike of any deviation from appointed forms, she had a ready, relentless, and convinced agent in Archbishop Whitgift. The severity of his administration can scarcely be extenuated by the fact that it was a time of theological bitterness and bigotry in which no party was prepared to extend toleration to any other. It might well have been remembered by Whitgift that his immediate predecessor, Grindal, had been compelled to fly to the

Continent to escape the Marian fires, and that he himself had only dared to take orders when the danger had passed away. But the issue of this policy was to drive the bark of the Church straight upon the rocks and to involve the State in revolution. Could any other result have come about? The time was one of extraordinary richness, strength, and complexity. Never in the history of England did men so feel the breath of liberty, the impulse to new thought and action, or so claim the free play of the confident, unfettered mind. The material and intellectual prosperity of the country reached their meridian during the reign of Elizabeth. The daring spirit of exploration was illustrated in Willoughby, who perished on the coast of Lapland; in Frobisher, who made three voyages to find the North-West Passage; and in Drake, who put a girdle round the globe. English prose took a statelier and grander form in the writings of Sidney, Bacon, and pre-eminently of Hooker. In poetry, the great names of Spenser and Shakespeare stand out from all the rest. In this larger air, it was a fatal act of folly to seek to force the life of the Church into narrow moulds, to fine and banish the Puritan and to fling the Separatist into a filthy dungeon. Even

Rome had been more flexible than Canterbury, for it had permitted the Use of Sarum, Hereford, or York. The immediate effect was that multitudes of Englishmen began to ask themselves whether it was for this that they had thrown off the yoke of Rome, and, with the memories of St. Bartholomew's Day burning in their hearts, whether it was not better to make a clean sweep of Papistry in the worship of the Church. Indeed, Burghley thought that the procedure of Whitgift was "too much savouring of the Romish Inquisition." Puritanism rapidly widened its demands, and instead of mild protests against the sign of the Cross in baptism and the ring in marriage, attacked the whole Constitution of the Church, while the Separatist from his prison cell sent forth his rough, biting, fiery words throughout the land. Hooker's method of grave and dignified reasoning might have averted the danger had it come earlier, but when he wrote, already it seemed to him that Anglicanism might "pass away as in a dream." The folly of persecution has never been more clearly shown. Whitgift sowed the wind and the next generation reaped the whirlwind.

Whitgift is so conspicuous a figure in the ecclesiastical struggles of the time that it is

almost unnecessary to ask what he was and what he did. Macaulay describes him in his essay on *Francis Bacon* as "a narrow-minded, mean, and tyrannical priest, who gained power by servility and adulation." It is strangely true, however, that, in spite of these qualities, he was devoted to the good of the Church as he conceived it, and, when unopposed, could be affable, gentle, and patient. He had not the simplicity or learning of Grindal, who scrupled to suppress "prophesyings" or to command the clergy to wear surplices, and whose firm reminder to Elizabeth that even princes were "accountable to God" so exasperated her that she sequestered him from his office. Whitgift moved in pride and state through the world of his day, rich by private fortune and also through the sinecures and pluralities which he held. His pedantic intellect was fully convinced that Episcopacy was essential to the order and peace of the land. His courage and resolution were almost boundless. He flinched once before Elizabeth and grovelled before James I., but he defied Leicester and even the great Cecil He was no match in eloquence or learning for his chief protagonist, Cartwright, but he expelled him from the university, and later put him in prison for not taking the *ex-officio*

oath. Step by step he advanced the rigour of Conformity and the ecclesiastical powers of the High Commission. He would make no truce with Puritanism. Theologically, he was a Calvinist, but Elizabeth compelled him to waive unity of doctrine and to insist only on matters of discipline. He secured the enforcement of the famous Three Articles in which every minister was required to subscribe to the royal supremacy in things spiritual as well as temporal, and to pledge himself to an unqualified assent to the Thirty-nine Articles and to the sole use of the Book of Common Prayer. In addition, he drew up, in 1584, twenty-four questions which every minister must answer upon the oath called *ex-officio*. So close was his watch of the clergy in his province, that, in the same year, he was able to record that there were 786 who had subscribed as against 49 who had not. Under his influence the High Commission passed the Star Chamber Decree for the licensing of printing by the Archbishop of Canterbury or by the Bishop of London. And he so exercised these powers that the prisons were filled with the victims of his despotism. His Primacy was stained with the blood of the martyrs. Was it the expression of his life purpose, or was

it, as the shades of those whom he had done to death passed before him in that last hour, that to God and man he was offering defence in the words which fell again and again from his half-paralysed lips, "*Pro ecclesia Dei*"?

It is interesting to note that Separatism found its ablest and most uncompromising leaders in East Anglia, and that the majority of them were Cambridge men. Henry Barrow was born at Shipdam, in Norfolk, of gentle and well-connected parentage. He was distantly related to Lord Bacon, and perhaps to Aylmer, Bishop of London. A link can also be traced with Lord Burghley. The date of his birth is uncertain, but it must have been about the year 1550. He matriculated at Clare Hall in 1566, and graduated in 1569–70. In 1576, he entered Gray's Inn, attended the courts, and acquired that familiarity with legal procedure which afterwards stood him in good stead. These early years were spent in drunken riot and debauch, until one day, passing a London church and hearing the preacher very loud in his discourse, the dissolute young lawyer, out of curiosity, passed within and was arrested by the truth. The change in his mode of life was so marked as to be much

spoken of. Apparently he sought, by "a preciseness in the highest degree," to make reparation for a wasted youth. Henceforth, he gave himself to the study of Scripture and to the reading of good books.

John Greenwood went to Cambridge about ten years later than Barrow, matriculating at Corpus Christi in 1577, and taking his Bachelor's Degree in 1580–1. He must have been deeply impressed with the theological controversies which were just then at their height in the university. Cartwright, though expelled, was not silenced. Puritanism held the convictions of a band of students influential in their numbers, learning, and piety. The memory of Robert Browne still lingered at Corpus Christi, and he himself had returned to teach and preach in Cambridge. Greenwood, while taking orders as a deacon and then as a priest, became chaplain to a Puritan nobleman, Lord Robert Rich, at Rochford, Essex, until the latter was imprisoned in the Marshalsea. It is impossible to doubt that Greenwood was influenced by the teachings of Browne. About this time, Barrow and Greenwood met—a meeting fraught with great consequences to the Church of God and to themselves. No doubt, Barrow was the

stronger and more fiery spirit. In the judgment of Bancroft, "Greenwood was but a simple fellow, Barrow was the man." But they clung to their convictions with equal tenacity and courage, and stood side by side in suffering and imprisonment, until at length they sealed their witness with their blood, and death gave to them a merciful release.

In 1586, the year of Browne's recantation, we find Barrow and Greenwood in fellowship with the London Congregation, a secret assembly of Separatists, which met in private houses on the river bank, in the woods of Deptford and Ratcliffe, or in the gravel pits of Islington. Probably, the fact that Greenwood had held the office of chaplain in a Puritan household after his ordination marked him out for prominence, but Barrow, whom he had introduced, soon came to be recognised as a leader through his natural force of character. The Congregation was not yet organised into a Church—an event which occurred in 1592—but at this time we learn from depositions that it consisted of about one hundred persons. The Separatists always met by appointment early on the Sabbath and continued all day in prayer and exposition. Any brother could expound or offer prayer. They rejected liturgical

forms of worship, the sacraments of Baptism and Communion in the Church of England, and secular interference with the Church other than God's Word allowed. At every meeting a collection was taken for expenses, the balance being sent to the relief of any members of the congregation who might be imprisoned at the time.

As its pathetic story is unfolded, we shall see that perhaps no single community ever endured so great a measure of suffering in proportion to its numbers, or fell upon such evil days since Nero persecuted the Church of the Catacombs. Whitgift had not suppressed the Puritan "Classes," to be now defied by the Separatist Conventicle, which was within his easy reach. For a very brief, halcyon period, the brethren met in secret and found fellowship in the Gospel. Looking back upon it from his prison, Barrow said, "So sweet is the harmony of God's graces unto me in the congregation and the conversation of the saints at all times, as I think myself a sparrow on the house-top when I am exiled from them." But the Archbishop's spies were everywhere. On a Sunday in "the autumn of 1586" (to be exact, October 7th), Greenwood was reading the Scripture at the house of a friend in St. Paul's Churchyard

when the Bishop of London's pursuivant burst in upon him and carried him off to the Clink. It was the low muttering of the storm, and a less resolute and loyal friend than Barrow would have sought a hiding-place. But at once he went up from the country to London to visit Greenwood. As he rode upon the way, he discussed the New Testament bishop with a Norwich man, who promptly warned the authorities of his approach. On the 19th, he reached the Clink, and discovered that it was one thing to get in, but quite another to get out. The keeper, Mr. Shepherd, had his instructions, and having locked him up, hurried to Lambeth to report so notable a capture. The Archbishop's pursuivants quickly fetched him to the Palace into the presence-chamber of the Archbishop. Barrow knew enough law to see that all the parties concerned had acted illegally, and stoutly protested at his detention without warrant. The first examination of the long and painful series began. In all there were five examinations, and repeated conferences before the final trial. As we shall see, Barrow did not bear himself wisely or temperately in them. We must regret his violent speech, his obstinate contention for trifles, while we are amazed at the skill with which he pleaded

before the most powerful and subtle intellects of his day. But it should not be forgotten that he held his convictions with sufficient strength to endure death rather than abandon them, and that he and his companion, after months of suffering and imprisonment, broken in body though not in mind, overwrought in nerve and heart, were taken before the very men who, claiming to be God's ministers, had separated husbands from wives, parents from children, flung into gloomy prisons holy and blameless saints, and who were determined to crush beneath their heel the infant Church. If any one would condemn the bitterness which Barrow sometimes displayed before his judges, let him first hear that pitiful cry of "tortured helplessness" in the "Supplication" of 1592 to the Lord Treasurer, "These enemies of God detain in their hands within the prisons about London (not to speak of other gaols throughout the land), about three score and twelve persons, men, women, young and old, lying in cold, in hunger, in dungeons and in irons."

The story of the Examination was written "as near as my memory could carry" by Barrow himself. At the first Barrow gave a hint of the ability with which he could conduct his case.

Archbishop. Barrow, is your name Barrow?

Barrow. Yea.

Archbishop. It is told me that you refuse to receive or obey our letter.

Barrow. I refused to receive or obey that letter at that time.

Archbishop. Why so?

Barrow. Because I was under arrest and imprisoned without warrant and against law; and, therefore, now it is too late to bring the letter.

Archbishop. Why, may not a councillor commit to prison by his bare commandment?

Barrow. That is not the question,—what a councillor may do—but whether this man may do it without warrant by the law of the land? (Pointing to the keeper of the Clink.)

Archbishop. Know you the law of the land?

Barrow. Very little; yet was I of Gray's Inn some years. (Then his two doctors and he derided mine unskilfulness.)

(An unsuccessful attempt was then made to induce him to swear upon the Bible, and to enter into a vow to attend church. He quoted a passage from St. Paul.)

Barrow. Even now you said, it was a thing indifferent; if it be so, there is no power can bring me in bondage to my liberty.

Archbishop. Where find you that?

Barrow. In St. Paul, 1 Cor.

(The Archbishop, Archdeacon, Dr. Cosin, all denied it; he affirmed it. A little Testament in Greek and Latin was brought him, and a Bible. He looked for the place, but could not find it: Great fault was in his memory; for he looked in the tenth chapter, neither, indeed, could he bethink him where to find it, they so interrupted him.)

Archbishop. Your divinity is like your law.

Barrow. The Word of God is not the worse for my ill memory.

Archbishop. You speak not as you think, for you are proud.

Barrow. I have small cause to be proud of my memory; you see the default of it, but the apostle saith it. (Again, they all denied it.) You, then, have no cause to condemn my memory, seeing you all have utterly forgotten this saying.

As soon as he was out of the house, the persecuted man remembered where the passage was to be found. It is an unpleasant spectacle, the Archbishop, surrounded by his sycophants, panoplied in the might of the

realm, deriding and bullying this poor victim for conscience' sake. On the other hand, Barrow's contempt for Whitgift came out again and again. He had a rough and a quick tongue.

Archbishop. Well, when were you at church?

Barrow. That is nothing to you.

"I will send you to prison," cried Whitgift, and so they took him to the Gatehouse.

Eight days later, he was brought for his second examination before the High Commission at Lambeth, where he found "a goodly synod of bishops, deans, civilians, &c." Whitgift, "with a grim and angry countenance," again required Barrow to swear on the Bible, but was again met with an obstinate refusal. The prisoner demanded to hear the charge, and, as a special favour, was informed that he was accused of teaching that the Church of England was no true Church, having an idolatrous worship and an antichristian ministry, and, further, that all catechisms were idolatrous. He still declined to take the oath, urging, with some reason, that his accusers should be sworn, and not himself. Canterbury then completely lost his temper and cried, "You shall not prattle here, away with him. Lock him up close: I will make

him tell another tale ere I have done with him."

The third examination was after an interval of five months. On March 24, 1587, Barrow was again brought before the High Commissioners. The Court, however, included not only the Archbishop with Aylmer and Cooper, the Bishops of London and Winchester, but also the two Lord Chief Justices, the Master of the Rolls, and the Lord Chief Baron. Whitgift yielded as to the oath. There was much questioning on the use of the Lord's Prayer and the Book of Common Prayer, but Barrow's central contention came out in his statement that these parish assemblies of the Church of England, in which no difference was made between the faithful and the unbelieving, were not true Churches of Christ, and also that no prince might make any laws for the Church other than Christ had already left in His Word. Aylmer specially interrupted him "in slanders and evil speeches," but the Chief Justice of England said that Barrow had answered "very directly and compendiously," and again later that he "spake well." The civilians were evidently of calmer and juster temper than the ecclesiastics. Barrow was sent out in close custody while some of his brethren were

examined. He was recalled and directly challenged by Whitgift whether he would take the oath of the Royal Supremacy, which he refused to do. Further, in answer to the Archbishop's direct question, he boldly affirmed that the Church must reform at once "without staying for the prince," if he refused to do so, and also might excommunicate any transgressor, even the Queen herself, without respect of persons. In his examination before the same Commission, Greenwood, though more moderate, was equally resolute that "Christ is only head of His Church, and His laws may no man alter." Six weeks later Barrow and Greenwood were tried at Newgate before the Bishop of London under the first law against Recusants of 1581, and committed to the Fleet till a surety of £260 each should be found that they would attend church. The Recusancy Laws were passed when the fever against Papists was at its height, but they contained a clause which required that every person above sixteen years of age should "repair to some Church, Chapel, or usual place of Common prayer," and they now became a weapon against the Separatists.

The fourth examination is the most deeply interesting, since it brought Barrow before

the great Cecil himself. There was much in such a meeting which might kindle hope in the wretched victims who had now been confined to the Fleet for nearly ten months. Of all the ghastly torture chambers of London this was the worst. On March 13th, 1588, the prisoners contrived to reach the ear of the Queen in a "lamentable petition" which related their sufferings. Some were in "cold and noisome" cells, others were bound hand and foot "with bolts and fetters of iron," others had been cudgelled to death. Nicholas Crane, sixty-six years of age, had died of fever in the prison; John Chandler had been torn from his wife and eight children and had also died; two aged widows had succumbed to the poisoned breath of the Fleet. The offence of all was simply that they had listened to the Word preached by Greenwood. Doubtless, the Queen commissioned Burghley to inquire, and, on March 18th, he sat with the Lord Chancellor, Whitgift, Aylmer, and others at Whitehall to hear the case. He was the boldest and wisest of the Queen's counsellors. A stranger to religious enthusiasm, averse from fanaticism and bigotry, he must have looked with cold disdain and perplexity upon these men who could endure so much

for a mere opinion. Yet he disliked Whitgift's despotic methods and desired a closer alliance with the Continental Reformers. He knew that the Papists and not these men were the Queen's enemies. It seems that at first he tried to understand Barrow's position, but the overwrought, almost distracted, Separatist, who had come fresh from the horrors of the Fleet, missed his way entirely. He urged minor issues, that saints' days were idolatrous, that we must not say Sunday, Monday, &c., since God had named them the first, the second day, &c. The interest of the Lord Treasurer had quite waned. Here was something he could not understand. He sat back in his chair and said carelessly, "I perceive thou takest delight to be an author of this new religion." Presently he took another line in which he felt more at home.

"You complained to us of injustice; wherein have you wrong?

Barrow. My lord, in that we are thus imprisoned without due trial.

Lord Treasurer. Why, you said just now you were condemned upon the statute.

Barrow. Unjustly, my lord; that statute was not made for us.

Lord Treasurer. There must be straiter laws made for you.

Barrow. Oh, my lord, speak more comfortably, we have suffered enough."

Burghley took up a paper of evidence, compiled by Dr. Some after an interview with Barrow in prison, and read that the latter held it unlawful for a minister to live by tithes, and asked, in bewilderment, how, then, would the minister live? "Tithes," said Barrow, "were done away." "What," cried Burghley jestingly, "wouldst thou have him to have *all* my goods?" It was here that the Bishop of London had a heavy fall.

Burghley had said that ministers now were not to be called priests.

Barrow. If they receive tithes, they are priests.

London. Why, what is the word presbyter, I pray you?

Barrow. An elder.

London. Presbyter is Latin for a priest.

Barrow. It is no Latin word, but derived, and signifieth the same which the Greek word doth, which is an elder.

But the excited, persecuted man had reached the limit of self-control. He flung moderation to the winds.

Lord Chancellor. What is that man? (pointing to Canterbury).

Barrow. The Lord gave me the spirit

of boldness, so that I answered: He is a monster, a miserable compound, I know not what to make of him; he is neither ecclesiastical nor civil, even that second beast spoken of in Revelation.

He was dragged away. He had wrecked his chance. Afterwards, in his prison a better spirit prevailed. "The Lord pardon my unworthiness and unsanctified heart and mouth, which can bring no glory to the Lord or benefit to His Church, but rather reproach to the one and affliction to the other."

Almost throughout the ensuing period, from March, 1588, till his sufferings ended in April, 1593, Barrow was kept a close prisoner. The bitter cry comes from the Fleet in 1590, "Two years and well-nigh a half." Again in 1592, "Four years and three months kept by the prelates in most miserable and strict imprisonment." And yet again, the last cry in 1593, from Newgate, for the removal of "our poor worn bodies out of this miserable gaol." He had angered Whitgift too deeply to receive any grace. The less fiery and dangerous Greenwood was granted some liberty in prison, and, in 1592, for a brief period, was set free.

But though the body was wasted and broken by the long agony and awful monotony of

imprisonment, from which Robert Browne had drawn back frightened, the resolute spirit of Barrow rose triumphant. In the story of persecution, many have been sustained by a great purpose and a clear conviction. If the light of heaven had not shone for him in the darkness of that time, he might have sunk into insanity. But he had still a work to do. By some strange means which we shall presently examine, he sent forth to the outer world tracts, pamphlets, expositions, and refutations, tinged with a deeper fanaticism and bitterness, but profoundly interesting and illuminating to us.

In 1589, Barrow was examined a fifth time before the bishops, in a fashion which he regarded as the greatest wrong of all. It was followed by months of silence, but on February 25th, 1589–90, the Bishop of London issued an order on the instruction of Whitgift to forty-two selected Anglican preachers to hold conferences twice a week at least "with these sectaries which do forsake our Church and be for the same committed prisoners." The list of the fifty-two prisoners in the Gatehouse, the Counter, Newgate, the Clink, and the Fleet, gives us a glimpse into the extent of Whitgift's relentless cruelty. Barrow and Greenwood

are together now in the Fleet. Roger Rippon is in the Counter, Wood Street. He died in prison in 1592, and his coffin was borne openly from Newgate past the house of the justice who sentenced him, with the inscription, "This is ye corps of Roger Rippon, a servant of Christ, who is the last of sixteen or seventeen whom that great enemy of God, the Archbishop of Canterbury, with his High Commissioners, have murdered in Newgate within these five years for the testimony of Jesus Christ." There were Daniel Studley, afterwards an elder of the London Church, and Christopher Bowman, afterwards a deacon, who both, later on, escaped to Holland. Others are found in one list, and disappear in another, probably through death. The preachers appointed to confer with them were chosen chiefly from those who were known to have a Puritan bias. Some were specially hateful to the prisoners as being "renegade Reformists." There was no love lost between the Puritans and the Separatists. The charges are very familiar to us, the objection to forms of prayer, the denial of the Queen's ecclesiastical supremacy and that the Church of England was a true Church. The interest of the conferences is centred in Barrow and Greenwood.

Indeed, they alone were honoured with separate visits. The preachers had no taste for the unwholesome prison cells, and met the Separatists in the parlour. It is certain that the object of Whitgift was to collect evidence against them, but Barrow and Greenwood, eager to express themselves and to reach the listeners who crowded round the windows, urged their case with all boldness, not to say imprudence. Seven conferences in all were held, the first on March 9th, 1590, and the last on April 13th. They were largely a confused medley of irritating charges and retorts which convinced no one. There were interesting moments, as when Greenwood convicted Mr. Cooper of having subscribed to an article which he had denied, or when Mr. Sperin admitted that the call to the ministry by the Bishop was unlawful, and that he held the Bishop's office to be civil and not ecclesiastical. Bancroft, afterwards Archbishop, was there, but the preacher whom we are most surprised to meet in such a bad cause is Andrewes, Prebendary of St. Paul's and Master of Pembroke, later on Bishop successively of Chichester, Ely, and Winchester, whose book of devotion ranks with the *Imitatio Christi*. That this saint of the universal Church, who gave five

hours of each day to prayer, should thus become a party to Whitgift's policy shows how difficult it is for even the best of men to live outside their own age. It is not pleasant to read the colloquy between Barrow and himself, and to reflect that on the one part was the wretched prisoner with "worn out-body," and on the other the courtly cleric on the high road to preferment.

Andrewes. For close imprisonment you are most happy. The solitary and contemplative life I hold the most blessed life. It is the life I would choose.

Barrow. But could you be content also, Mr. Andrewes, to be kept from exercise so long together?

Andrewes. I say not that I would want air. But who be those saints you spake of; where are they?

Barrow. They are even those poor Christians whom you so blaspheme and persecute, and now most unjustly hold in your prisons.

Andrewes. But where is their congregation?

Barrow. Though I knew, I purpose not to tell you.

The conferences served no good purpose, and Andrewes, finding them little to his taste, withdrew from them entirely.

II—Martyrdom.

We now turn to the amazing literary work of Barrow and Greenwood during their imprisonment—amazing not only in its volume, but still more in the extent of its circulation. Their treatises were not penned in some cloistered retreat of learning, in the midst of books and friends, to be followed by the reward of place and power. Often in filthy and gloomy cells, through days of silent brooding broken only by the step of the gaoler, with such writing material as could be secretly introduced, on scraps of paper which were themselves a sentence of death to the writer if discovered —this was the story of the Separatist prison literature. Doubtless, means were found to bribe their keepers. When the cells and even the persons of the writers were searched and rifled, by some means incriminating papers were hidden away. Agents were found in Robert Stokes and Robert Boyle, who flitted between London and Holland, obtaining the manuscript, getting it printed at Dort, and bringing copies over the water. There were other agents, Greenwood's wife, Cycely a maidservant, Studley the receiver, Forester the copyist. The smuggling of

these contraband goods went on apace. Sometimes, especially in the case of the later and more important books, the whole or part of the edition was seized, only a copy or two remaining in the hands of a friend.

In 1586, Barrow was examined for the first time, and, as we have seen, he set down the story of this and later trials to the best of his memory. Probably, the first Separatist Manifesto, published in 1588, *A Brief Summary of the Causes of our Separation*, was the joint work of Barrow and Greenwood. In 1589, Barrow issued, in conjunction with Greenwood, a defence, entitled, *A True Description of the Visible Congregation of the Saints*; in 1590, *A collection of Scandalous Articles given out by the Bishops with the answer of the Prisoners thereunto. Also the summary of certain conferences in the Fleet;* later, in 1590, *The Platforme*, in which he urged that it was the Prince's duty to root out false ministries in the land; early in 1591, *A Brief Discovery of the false Church*, a volume of 391 pages, of which 3,000 copies were printed. The reply by Job Throckmorton to Dr. Some's *Godly Treatise*, which was entitled, *Master Some laid open in his colours*, has been wrongly attributed to Greenwood; but

in 1590, he issued a reply to Mr. Gifford's defence of read prayers, and, jointly with Barrow, a refutation of Mr. Gifford's comparison between the Donatists and Separatists. These, together with Barrow's *Letter to an Honourable Lady and Countess of his Kindred*, and also petitions to the House of Commons and to Lord Burghley, were their principal appeals to that outer world from which they were debarred. Some of these manuscripts were not printed for twenty years, but were circulated privately from hand to hand.

The days were becoming darker for Puritans and Separatists. Whitgift and Aylmer were exasperated by the biting satire and fiery invective of Martin Mar-Prelate. In spite of the intervention of James of Scotland and Sir Francis Knollys, Cartwright, the most distinguished of the Puritans, lay in the Fleet, while Udall was sentenced to death and actually died in prison at the end of 1592. The leniency which had permitted Greenwood to be out on bail, and even Barrow to leave his prison for a few hours, gave place to a fresh raid of persecution. The London congregation was now, in 1592, formed into a regular Congregational Church, afterwards known as the Ancient Church, with Francis Johnson as its pastor. Both he

and Greenwood were arrested on December 5th, at the house of Edward Boyes, on Ludgate Hill. One after another the Separatists were seized and imprisoned. Barrow pleaded passionately for a public conference, but on March 11, 1593, he and Greenwood were charged before Judges Popham and Anderson, under the statute of Elizabeth against the issue of seditious books. The authorship was easily established, and passages were cited to prove that the accused held both her Majesty and the Government to be anti-Christian. The Lord Treasurer was carefully watching the proceedings and reporting to Elizabeth. Execution was delayed, but, on March 23rd, Barrow and four others were condemned to death as felons. Early on the 24th, Barrow and Greenwood were brought out of the limbo and their irons struck off, but as they were about to be tied to the cart, the Queen's messenger brought a reprieve. Doctors and deans came to exhort them, but they were sick of controversy. "Our time was too short in the world." On March 31st, they were, very early and secretly, carried to the place of execution, but while they waited for death, with the rope round their necks, again there was a reprieve, and they were carried back to Newgate amid the joyful cries of the

populace. Barrow made one last appeal for help, to a noble lady. Meanwhile, the bishops were seeking to pass a more stringent measure through the Lower House against Brownists and Barrowists. It was received with signs of impatient dislike, and almost thrown out, but on April 5th, was allowed to pass in a "minced" condition. Burghley was annoyed with Whitgift, and taxed him soundly "against shedding the blood of men who held the faith (*i.e.*, non-Romanist) professed in England." To spite the nether House, the bishops hastened the execution, and, with the utmost secrecy, on the morning of April 6, 1593, two aged widows carrying their winding sheets, Barrow and Greenwood were taken to Tyburn, and there hanged. Two stories of slightly doubtful authority are related by Governor Bradford, which at least reflect the uneasy consciences of some who were concerned in this judicial murder. The Queen demanded of the learned Dr. Reynolds what he thought of Barrow and Greenwood. Being compelled to speak, he replied that "if they had lived, they would have been two as worthy instruments for the Church of God as have been raised up in this age." Her Majesty sighed and said no more. Again, riding in the Park, she asked the Earl of

Cumberland what end they made. "A very godly end," he replied, "and prayed for your Majesty and the State." Excepting Penry, it was the last execution of Separatists, as Separatists, on English soil.

It remains to inquire how far the Congregationalism of Barrow answered to that of Robert Browne. Essentially there was much in common. Both held the immediate duty of separation from a corrupt Church; that these parish assemblies, as they contemptuously styled them, were no true Church; that without discipline "this holy power of Christ, to censure and redress faults and offenders, there can be no Church, no ministry, no communion"; that the Scriptures, interpreted by the Spirit given to each believer, were the sole and complete guide in all faith and practice; that both as to the Old and New Testaments no man might alter or neglect the least iota thereof; and that the particular Church was a fellowship of faithful and holy people, gathered in the name of Christ Jesus, governed by His officers and laws. Indeed, Barrow's love for the Church flashes out in many a noble passage, undimmed by the sad experiences at Newgate and Middleberg. In the Confession of 1589, he wrote:—

"Most joyful, excellent, and glorious things

are everywhere in the Scriptures spoken of this Church. It is called the city, house, temple, and mountain of the eternal God, the chosen generation, the holy nation, the peculiar people, the vineyard, the garden enclosed, the spring shut up, the sealed fountain, the orchard of pomegranates with sweet fruits, the heritage, the Kingdom of Christ, yea, His sister, His love, His spouse, His queen, and His body, the joy of the whole earth. To this society is the covenant and all the promises made of peace, of love, and of salvation and the presence of God, of His graces, of His power, and of His protection."

But the rigid logic and legal training of Barrow led him into a form of Congregationalism which was oligarchical and aristocratic. He pursued his theory with the relentless persistence of the most unbending High Churchman. Barrow was most distinctly not a Presbyterian. The officers of the Church are the same as in Browne's *Book which Sheweth.* With him, the ministry or eldership consists of the pastor to exhort, the teacher to expound (a recognition of the fact that there are teachers who cannot arouse or apply), and the ruling elder to conduct and oversee. Beyond these, are the relievers, or

deacons, who gather and bestow, and the widows of not less than sixty years of age to pray and visit. But here the system becomes more elaborate. There is no equality in the Church. Honour and obedience are due to its officers, who, however, hold all they have at the disposal of the Church. Yet it is the business of the whole Church to exercise discipline, and each member has power to examine the administration of the Sacraments and the doctrine taught. "I never thought that the practice of Christ's government belonged only to those officers." The Church may not receive any form of government but this. Every true minister must not only be qualified with gifts, but lawfully called thereto by the Church and ordained with fasting and prayer. Inexorably, he argues that gifts and fruits of service do not make a minister apart from the election of the Church. The office of the deacon is to distribute and not to govern, and any other view is "gross error and ignorance." Only the pastor may administer the Sacraments, and the London Church went for months without the Communion, while its pastor was in the Fleet. The ministry is to be maintained in food and raiment by the gifts of believers only. At least, essential elements of Congregationalism

are here, a Church government based on the Word of God, and a particular Church governed by the people and for the people, exercising its own discipline. It is altogether extreme and misleading to say with Dr. Grosart, in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, that "while separate 'meeting-houses' of 'believers' grew out of Barrow's teachings and example, he himself had no idea corresponding with present-day Congregationalism."

For a time, Whitgift's espionage and cruelty and the growing severity of the laws were effective. Sir Walter Raleigh was wildly inaccurate when, in 1593, he spoke of the Separatists as numbering 30,000. The estimate of Lord Bacon was nearer the fact, though he went to the other extreme, when he described them as nearly extinct. Their ablest leaders were hung. Their pastors and teachers and most devoted members were in prison, but as the torch fell from the hands of Barrow and Greenwood, it was passed on to faithful men. Being dead, the martyrs yet spake by the memory of their sufferings and constancy, and through the writings which enshrined their faith. A new scene, however, was about to open in the drama of Separatism.

IV

JOHN PENRY AND THE MARTIN MARPRELATE CONTROVERSY

WE must not suppose that the great mass of the people in that laughter-loving Elizabethan age were reached by the pamphlets and the solemn reasonings of the Separatist prisoners. To Barrow and Greenwood their religious convictions were precious as their own life-blood, and even more so. It was a matter of life and death to them whether there was a New Testament eldership and discipline in the Church and whether prayers were read or *extempore.* These matters had a civil bearing also, and, just because they seemed to threaten the peace of the realm, bishops exercised tremendous powers in the High Commission against schismatics, and magistrates became expert theologians on the bench. But even

the world of the Puritan day, engaged in buying and selling, love and war, took its course untouched by a new pamphlet or a ponderous tome. It was enough for the ordinary man to hate the bishops and to pity the prisoners, but probably he knew and cared little what Separatism meant. The Martin Marprelate tracts did this at least—they widened the interest. The controversy became more national. By striking a blow at the reverence and awe which had surrounded a bishop's state, they effected a subtle and dangerous change in public sentiment. It was, to borrow a simile, as if a clown had suddenly leaped into the arena, flinging jests and mud at the stateliest and the proudest, while the galleries rang with laughter. The taste for personalities is widespread. The railings, the unsparing charges, the spicy anecdotes, the raked-up scandals, the audacity and impudence of Martin delighted the Court, the university, and the cottage. Scholars hid the tracts under their gowns; in Church, men peeped over the shoulder of the fortunate possessor of the *Epistle* or the *Epitome;* nobles carried them into the palace. The stabs were in the dark. For the first time the combatants were on fairly equal terms. The bishops had their dark and unscrupulous

methods. The pamphleteer worked in secret also. It was no argument against Episcopacy to point out that the Bishop of St. David's had two wives (simultaneously), but then it was no proper answer to a Separatist to cast him into "Little Ease." The authorship has never been discovered. There were several upon whom suspicion fastened — Barrow, Penry, Udall, Throckmorton—but the one who suffered the penalty of death for his connection with Martin was John Penry.

So far, as we have seen, the leaders had come from East Anglia, but the new champion descended into the fray from his native hills of Wales. In many ways he invests the story with a halo of romance. His meteoric career is marked by dauntless courage, fiery eloquence, and passionate devotion. He flashes through the record with swift and mysterious movements, crowds his work into a few busy years, and then, with the same swiftness, passes from the scene. No wickeder or more unmerited treatment was meted out to any one; yet he did not shrink. "If my blood were an Ocean Sea, and every drop thereof were a life unto me, I would give them all, by the help of the Lord, for the maintenance of the same my confession."

John Penry was born at Cefn Brith, in

Brecknockshire, in 1559, the year of Elizabeth's first Parliament and of the Act of Uniformity. Nothing is known of his early years. Perhaps some signs of brilliance and power led his parents to send him to Cambridge, and on December 3, 1580, he matriculated as a pensioner of Peterhouse, proceeding to B.A. in 1583. For some unexplained reason he passed on to Oxford, became a Commoner of St. Alban's Hall, and took his M.A. there in 1586. He married Eleanor, daughter of Henry Godley, of Northampton, by whom he had four daughters, the youngest of whom was only four years old when he suffered martyrdom.

There is reason to believe that he went to the university as a Romanist, and that at first he used to steal out to Mass at midnight. But the influence of the Puritans led to a change in his convictions. He became the friend of Udall, and his earliest published writings reflected the common sentiments and opinions of the milder Puritans of that day. Wales has always been distinguished for its open-air preachers, and this young apostle from the university, who had so recently found Christ himself, went throughout the hills and valleys of his native land, preaching the Word. "I never bare office," he said in

his final examination, "in any Church." He was simply a lay preacher. The religious condition of the people at that time must have been mournful in the extreme. The clergy were ignorant, often drunken and licentious, greedy of gain, many of them non-resident. There was little or no preaching in the churches. Penry declared that there were thousands in Wales who had never heard the name of Christ, and that the people were given up to idolatry, swearing, adultery, thieving, and superstitious beliefs in fairies. The soul of the young enthusiast was stirred within him, and in March, 1587, he published *The Aequity*, an address to the Queen and to the Parliament which sat from February 15th to March 23rd in that year, "that some order might be taken for the preaching of the Gospel among those people."

It is very important, in estimating the action of Whitgift, to note the moderation and gentleness of this first treatise. Penry was in no sort of opposition to Episcopacy and made no attack upon it. He dedicated the work to "my fathers and brethren of the Church of England." He was a loyal subject of Elizabeth, unto whom "I owe," he wrote, "all obedience and service in the Lord Jesus." He was not even a Separatist or a Voluntary,

but urged that Parliament should decree a maintenance for every godly, learned minister for the term of his life, and also one-tenth of each "impropriate living" to the maintenance of a teaching ministry. It was simply that he had a passion for souls and an earnest longing that the Gospel of Christ might, to use his own words, "in a saving measure be made known and published among the inhabitants of Wales, my dear and native countrymen." "Why cannot we have preaching in our own tongue?" he cried. Let there be an end of non-resident clergy. Let the Welsh preachers in England be sent home. No reading clergyman was a true minister. Some who never preached had three livings. "They whose hearts the Lord hath touched would thresh to get their living rather than the people should want preaching. Our gentlemen and people . . . would contribute. Salvation were not bought too dear with the very flesh of our arms."

By the publication of *The Aequity* Penry had violated the Star Chamber Decree of June 23, 1586, which required the censorship of the Archbishop of Canterbury or the Bishop of London. No press was allowed outside the Metropolis other than one at each university, and a few hand-presses which

were known and watched. The battle for the liberty of unlicensed printing, which should later enlist Milton as a protagonist, was beginning in real earnest. By Whitgift's order this lay preacher was brought before the High Commission, and roughly ordered to recant. The Bishop of Winchester declared that to say that no bare reader was a minister was heresy. "I thank God," replied Penry, "that I ever knew such a heresy, as I will by the grace of God sooner leave my life than leave it." Whitgift declared he would make him recant. He was committed to prison for twelve days but kept there a month, and then released without further examination. It was a blunder as well as a crime to make an enemy of such a man, and it is an illustration of the striking charge of Lord Macaulay, that the Church of England, unlike that of Rome, has no place for an Ignatius Loyola, a Bunyan, or a Wesley.

It was natural that Penry, who had hitherto moved in Puritan circles, should attract the attention of some leading members of that party. At this stage we must introduce into the story three men who played a great part in the Marprelate controversy. Udall was a Puritan divine who held the living of Kingston-on-Thames. In

April, 1588, he issued from the secret press an anonymous tract commonly known as *Diotrephes*, purporting to be a conference on the state of the Church of England, and in 1589 the *Demonstration of Discipline*, advocating the divine authority of Presbyterian Church government. Strongly suspected of being Martin, he was imprisoned and sentenced to death. The sentence was commuted to imprisonment, and he died in the Marshalsea in 1592. James of Scotland called him "the greatest scholar in Europe." Job Throckmorton was a Puritan gentleman living at Haseley, in Warwickshire, who sat in Parliament from 1572 to 1583, and again in 1586–7. An Oxford graduate, he was learned and eloquent, and also of a very biting wit. Waldegrave was a Puritan printer in the Strand, whose press had been seized and destroyed for printing the *Diotrephes*. These three now combined with Penry, probably after conference at Kingston, to issue anti-clerical literature. Before Michaelmas, 1588, Penry had purchased a press, Throckmorton supplying the money, and had set it up secretly in the house of Mrs. Crane, a widow at East Molesey.

The opportunity for the effective use of the secret press was supplied by Dr. Bridges,

the Dean of Salisbury. In 1587 he had issued *A Defence of the Government of the Church of England*, in a ponderous tome of 1,409 pages. A more ridiculous book the world never saw. Martin quoted from it one sentence of one hundred and fifty words, of which no man could make any sense, with the comment, "Dean take breath and then to it again." To deal with it "according to order" he saw would be tedious and absurd. But in November, 1588, there suddenly appeared, whence no one knew, the first of the Marprelate tracts with the singular title: "Oh read ouer D. Iohn Bridges, for it is a worthy worke: Or an epitome of the fyrste Booke of that right worshipfull volume, written against the Puritanes, in the defence of the noble cleargie, by as worshipfull a prieste, Iohn Bridges, Presbyter, Priest or elder, doctor of Diuillitie, and Deane of Sarum. . . . The Epitome is not yet published, but it shall be when the Bishops are at conuenient leysure to view the same. In the meane time, let them be content with this learned Epistle. Printed oversea, in Europe, within two furlongs of a Bounsing Priest, at the cost and charges of M. Marprelate, gentleman." It had little to do with Dr. Bridges except to make fun of him, but the whole land resounded

with its ridicule of the bishops and its budget of scandalous stories. Martin talks to the prelates with easy impudence. It is always "brethren bishops," "your brother Martin," "my learned brethren." He charges Whitgift with having been silenced by Cartwright. But it is upon Aylmer, Bishop of London, that he concentrates the attack. He accuses him of making his porter, a "dumb minister," of stealing some cloth, of defrauding his creditors, and of being a profane swearer. He quotes a passage from a book which Aylmer had unfortunately published when he was a Marian exile, "Come down, you bishops, from your thousands, and content you with your hundreds, let your diet be priestlike and not princelike." He adds with a pungent humour, "But I pray you, B. Iohn, dissolve this one question to your brother Martin: if this prophesy of yours come to pass in your days, who shall be B. of London?" He lays down conditions of peace with the promise upon performance "never to make known any more of your knavery unto the world." He quotes from a sermon of the Bishop of Gloucester, who, preaching at Worcester, "came at length to the very pith of the whole sermon, contained in the distinction of the name of Iohn, which

he then shewing all his learning at once, full learnedly handled after this manner. "Iohn, Iohn, the grace of God, the grace of God, the grace of God; gracious Iohn, not graceless Iohn, but gracious Iohn. Iohn, holy Iohn, holy Iohn, not Iohn full of holes, but holy Iohn." Such was the Epistle. Meanwhile, Waldegrave had moved the secret press to Sir Richard Knightley's at Fawsley, in Northamptonshire, and early in December the promised *Epitome* appeared. In February, 1589, the pilgrim press was at the house of John Hales at Coventry, and a third tract appeared, a broadside, entitled, *Certain Minerall and Metaphysical School Points*, which has been questioned as a genuine Martin. It was felt that Martin was making too deep an impression to be allowed to go unanswered, and Thomas Cooper, Bishop of Winchester, under the signature of "T. C.," had issued in January, 1589, *An Admonition to the People of England.* On March 23rd, the fourth Martin tract appeared with a title borrowed from a London street cry, *Ha y' any work for Cooper?* It is outside the scope of this chapter to deal at any length with the contents of these pamphlets. But we may notice that, in the *Epitome*, Martin sees plainly enough that the real difference between

Whitgift and the Puritans is "whether the external government of the Church of England be a thing so prescribed by the Lord in the New Testament as it is not lawful for any man to alter the same." He is also aware that his jests and gibes, indeed his whole method of attack, are disliked by Cartwright and many of the Puritan clergy. "The Puritans are angry with me, I mean the Puritan preachers. And why? Because I am too open. Because I jest." And again, "I jested because I dealt against a worshipful jester, D. Bridges, whose writings and sermons tend to no other end than to make men laugh. . . . I am plain. I must needs call a spade a spade." Again in the *Ha y' any Work?* he seeks to justify himself: "I am called Martin Marprelat," he pleads. "There be many that greatly dislike of my doings. I may have my wants, I know. For I am a man. But my course I knowe to be ordinary and lawfull. I sawe the cause of Christ's government, and of the Bishops' anti-Christian dealing, to be hidden. The most part of men could not be gotten to read anything, written in the defence of the one and against the other. I bethought mee therefore of a way whereby men might be drawne to do both, perceiving the humours of men in these

times . . . to be given to mirth. I tooke that course. I might lawfully do it. I (aye) for jesting is lawful by circumstances even in the greatest matters. . . . I never profaned the Word in any jeste. Other mirth I used as a covert wherein I would bring the truth to light. The Lord being the author both of mirth and gravitie, is it not lawfull in itselfe for the truth to use either of these ways when the circumstances do make it lawfull?"

The hunt for Martin was becoming very hot. All through 1589, by Whitgift's orders, spies were everywhere, and witnesses were constantly examined. Waldegrave was alarmed and retired to Rochelle. In June, Penry went to stay with Throckmorton at Haseley, and, in July, at Wolston Priory, the home of another sympathiser, Robert Wigston. On July 22nd *Theses Martinienses* appeared, and on July 29th *The Just Censure and Reproofe of Martin Junior.* Then the press was carried to Newton Lanes, Manchester, and *More Work for Cooper* printed. In August, for the first time, the Government scored against Martin. The press was seized, and the copies confiscated, but somehow an inferior press was set up at Wolston, *More Work* printed again, and finally, in September,

the last of the Martin Marprelate series, *The Protestation.*

It was a romantic story, the printing, the sale, the secrecy of it all, seven genuine Martins between November, 1588, and September, 1589. Penry had moved about from place to place, planning, superintending, carrying his life in his hands, sometimes disguised as a gallant with sword and cloak. He had published under his own name, from the secret press, *An Exhortation*, which was a further plea for preaching in Wales; *A supplication to Parliament*, and also a reply to Dr. Some. In 1589 he published *The Appelation*, an appeal to the High Court of Parliament against Whitgift and the High Commission, in which he recounted the treatment he had received. "What can the murdering Inquisition of Spain do more?" he asked. In 1590 he was denounced as Martin by name in *An Almond for a Parratt;* his house at Northampton was searched and ransacked; an order was made for his arrest. He was strongly suspected of being Martin Marprelate, but, with Throckmorton's help, he fled to Scotland, where he was warmly welcomed, and preached in many of the Churches. His rapid pen was soon at work again and he published a *Treatise*,

maintaining the loyalty to Her Majesty and the State of himself and his party, and also *An Humble Motion* to the Privy Council, suggesting how easily they might provide a learned ministry. It will be observed that he was still a Puritan, and his reception in Scotland was very different from that which had been accorded to Robert Browne. Whitgift issued an order for his arrest, which Elizabeth followed up by a letter to James of Scotland, but he remained in safety across the border.

The identity of Martin Marprelate cannot be determined with absolute certainty, but it is in the highest degree probable that the tracts were the work of Penry and Throckmorton. It is certain that Penry superintended the printing and publication. Dr. Dexter's elaborate argument that Barrow was the author is untenable. The Marprelate tracts were strongly Puritan, and Martin utterly repudiates more than one characteristic doctrine of Barrow. The evidence of Sharpe, the bookbinder, and the statements of Sutcliffe leave little doubt that Penry and Throckmorton collaborated, perhaps using some notes left by the Puritan, Field. Sharpe saw the manuscript of the *Minerall and Metaphysical School Points* in Penry's hands. Sutcliffe described Throckmorton as a "brave

cutter in kitchen rhetoric." Moreover, the style of Throckmorton's *Master Some laid open in his colours*, much resembles the raillery and insulting personalities of Martin. We may speculate that Throckmorton, with his bitter pen, chiefly wrote the *Epistle*, but that Penry, feeling keenly the attitude of the Puritan leaders, introduced a far larger proportion of argument into *Ha y' any work for Cooper?* The secret, however, was well kept.

In September, 1592, it was again laid on Penry's heart to preach the gospel in Wales. With remarkable courage and not a little indiscretion, he went up to London, and for the first time manifested Separatist sympathies. Apparently, he joined the London Church, which, as we have seen, had Francis Johnson and Greenwood among its officers. Perhaps it was in the house of Roger Rippon, in Southwark, that he heard Greenwood preach during the latter's brief respite from prison. He may have met with Barrow. Later, he wrote of Barrow and Greenwood as "my dear brethren." We judge from his final examination that he accepted the call of the Church to preach, and he certainly exercised his gifts at the Borough, Smithfield, Islington, and Stepney. One day, the vicar of Stepney recognised him in the street. He

was arrested and flung into the Poultry prison. At the Court of Queen's Bench, May 21, 1593, he was tried on a charge of treason on the strength of some "confused, unfinished, and unpublished" notes taken from his desk at his arrest. There was not sufficient evidence to connect him with Marprelate. The record of his examination is preserved, and still glows with the splendour of his devotion to the preaching of the Gospel. He would have heard of the martyrdom of Barrow and Greenwood, and he had little hope of escape. Almost his last act was to address a protest to Burghley, in which he re-asserted his loyalty to Elizabeth. It was a touching appeal. "I am a poor young man," he said, "born and bred in the mountains of Wales. I am the first, since the last springing up of the Gospel in this latter age, that laboured to have the blessed seed thereof sown in these barren mountains." He wrote also a letter to his wife and little girls, and finally a message to the London Church. "I am ready," he wrote to his wife; "pray for me. The Lord comfort thee, good Helen, and strengthen thee. My God will provide. My love be with thee now and ever in Jesus Christ." To the Church he wrote, advising them to prepare for exile abroad, to cleave together, and,

wherever they went, to take with them his desolate widow and friendless orphans. On May 29th at noon, he was told that he must die at four o'clock that day, and at five he was taken to St. Thomas-a-Watering and hung. It was all secret and hurried. A few friends hastily gathered round, but the young preacher was not allowed to speak to them. Far from his own loved and native mountains of Wales, he laid down his life upon a false charge of treason. The beginning of his offence was simply an unquenchable yearning for the souls of his fellow-countrymen. Had he been content to see the multitude scattered as sheep without a shepherd, or perishing with none to help or teach, his brilliant gifts might have won for him preferment and dignity. His death was a triumph for his enemies, short-lived and ominous, for already the clouds were gathering black and threatening above them.

V

FRANCIS JOHNSON AND AINSWORTH—THE ANCIENT CHURCH IN EXILE

IT has already been pointed out that, after the execution of Barrow and Greenwood, a new chapter opened in the story of Separatism. The scene was changed to Amsterdam. The great majority of the "Ancient Church" in London went out into exile. Newgate, the Clink, and the Fleet discharged their wretched victims, who now found an asylum in the only country in Europe where, after its heroic struggle with Spain, liberty of conscience prevailed. This new departure was the issue of the new legislation of Elizabeth, which was directed against Brownists and Barrowists, and which for the first time expressly distinguished between Romanists and Separatists. The former were still to be

kept at home for fine, imprisonment, and execution; the latter were of less consequence, "not many mighty, not many noble," and could be well spared from the body politic.

The frequent examinations of the prisoners and conferences with them showed plainly that many in high places viewed with uneasiness the severities meted out to those who, like themselves, held the Protestant faith. There seemed little chance of breaking their resolution. It was easier to get rid of them. The Conventicle Act of 1593 provided that persons above the age of sixteen who refused to repair to church as by law established, or attended a conventicle, should be imprisoned, and, failing to conform in three months, should be banished from the realm. If they returned they should be hung. The new enactment opened a deeply interesting era in Free Church history. Cruel and infamous as it was, it led, in the Providence of God, to the founding of a free empire in the distant West, and it explains why the scene shifted for a time to Amsterdam and Leyden, to New England and Massachusetts.

Acting upon the advice of Penry just before his death, most of the members of the London Church made their way to Amster-

dam towards the close of 1593. The two sections were henceforth separated by the sea, but the Church was still regarded as one. The membership in Amsterdam elected Ainsworth to take the place of the martyr Greenwood as teacher, but was without pastoral care until Johnson arrived four years later. Until he came, there was no celebration of baptism or the Lord's Supper, since no one was deemed competent to administer either sacrament. Even after its pastor, teacher, elders, and deacons finally settled in Amsterdam, the membership in London made no attempt at a separate organisation, and when last we hear of it in 1624, it was totally without resident officers. Such facts throw a strong light upon the then current theory of Church government.

It was an escape from prison and the reign of terror, but it was a cruel necessity which thus drove the exiles forth. They found themselves in a strange land among people speaking a strange tongue. They were poor, and, apart from a legacy of Barrow and some contributions from London, they would have starved but for the charity of some Dutch magistrates and Puritan English merchants in Barbary. They learnt to card wool and to spin. They became workers in different

trades, but it must have been a hard life, especially for some of them, to live on sixpence a week, or, like the gentle and scholarly Ainsworth, to subsist on "boiled roots."

Shortly after the Church re-assembled at Amsterdam, it received a notable accession in Henry Ainsworth. In spite of the great part he played, it is in keeping with his modest and retiring character that we know so little of his career. He was by far the most learned of the Separatists, having scarcely his equal in Europe in knowledge of Hebrew and Greek. Such erudition was the more remarkable since, on the testimony of Roger Williams, "he scarce set foot within a college walls." He was born about 1570 at Swanton, in Norfolk. After he became a Separatist and joined the exiled Church in Amsterdam, about 1595, he became its teacher, and was noted for his profound and moving expositions of the Word of God. He was mighty in the Scriptures, and could quote the exact words of Holy Writ, without turning to the page, to illustrate and enforce his doctrine. To the outer world he could speak in the tongue of the learned, and in his graceful Latin translation, the "Confession" of the Church reached the ear of scholars. Twenty-three volumes, which in-

cluded a version of the Psalms, an annotation of the Pentateuch, and a metrical rendering of the Song of Solomon, witnessed to his industry. Indeed, his gift of sacred song was a scandal to some who refused to sing with him in the worship of the Church :—

"Unto Jehovah sing will I,
For He exalteth gloriously,
The horse and him that rode thereon
Into the sea thrown down hath He.
Jah is my strength and melody,
And hath been my salvation."

We can imagine the pale and delicate student poring over his books, speaking little of his privations, and making the best of his "boiled roots." It is cheering to learn that he married and was henceforth better cared for. He was a lover of peace, but it was his unutterable misfortune to be involved in ceaseless broils. His conscience carried him out upon stormy seas. At last, worn out by his labours and troubles, after a long and painful illness, at the age of fifty-two his gentle spirit found rest.

The Brownists were everywhere spoken against. There are signs that the Dutch and French pastors of Amsterdam looked with dislike and distrust upon this little knot

of sectaries who were as bitterly opposed to the Puritans as to the Conformists of England. That these exiles, most of them artisans, poor and unlettered, should claim to have reached the truth and alone to be right, was an audacity amounting almost to an impertinence. Conscious that they were misunderstood, the Church published, in 1596, *A True Confession of the Faith* of the Brownists, which is a document of profound interest and value. It is prefaced by a description of the wrongs they had suffered at the hands of the bishops. Its tone is one of bitterness, and there is no restraint on their indignation as they recall the "barbarous cruelty" of their oppressors. It always rankles in their breasts that their opponents would not answer them by "free writing and conference," "but as savage beasts rending and tearing us with their teeth . . . greedily hunting after Christ's poor lambs . . . misusing their bodies with all exquisite tyranny in long and lamentable imprisonment." But Congregationalism was now a system; it had a literature; it looked forward to the future. New problems were beginning to emerge as the communities multiplied. The relation of Churches to each other, the transfer of members, the

question of unfaithful pastors, demanded a declaration of principle. In forty-five articles the "Confession" prescribed for doctrine and practice. The *True Description* of Barrow was written in prison. It was ideal, mystical, the picture, unshadowed by failure and disappointment, of the New Jerusalem coming down from heaven like a bride adorned for her husband. It shone with an unsullied radiance. But this is the "Confession" of a Church in the actual world, assailed not only without, but also within, by mutual strife, for judgment has begun in the house of God. There is to be no wavering in duty. The people of God are to come out of the corrupt Church of England in which they are endangering their salvation. The doctrine is Calvinistic. The attitude of the manifesto is Barrowist rather than Brownist. The ministry depends upon the call of the Church, and is not to be usurped by any. Yet it marks no advance in toleration upon either Barrow or Browne, for the magistrate is to root out all false ministries and all counterfeit worship of God.

We must retrace our steps, however, and follow the fortunes of the pastor of the Church, Francis Johnson, whom we have left imprisoned in London. The man himself

has been very diversely estimated. Governor Bradford, who had known him, said "a very grave man he was and an able teacher; and was the most solemn in all his administrations that we have seen any." On the other hand, the pervert Lawne, whom he excommunicated, assailed and defamed him with the most venomous hatred. Strangely enough, Mr. Arber, in what professes to be his "scientifically written" account of the matter, accepts Lawne without reserve, and describes Johnson as "a thoroughly bad man," "a dead Christian," and "an utter disgrace to our sacred faith." Probably the impartial student, who tries sympathetically to reproduce the past, will feel that this man, who made such great sacrifices for his convictions, though arbitrary, despotic, and utterly unsuited for Congregationalism, was unfortunate in his relatives, and was always driven on by a mistaken sense of duty.

Francis Johnson was a son of an ex-Mayor of Richmond, in Yorkshire, and was born about 1562. In due course, like his brother George, he entered Christ's College, Cambridge, where, matriculating on April 1, 1579, he passed on to his M.A., and was subsequently elected to a fellowship. It is all important to notice how absolutely Presby-

terianism coloured and possessed his mind at this time, and we may question whether at heart he was ever really in sympathy with anything else. On January 6, 1588, he preached at St. Mary's, Cambridge, on Peter v. 1–4, and insisted on the Scripturalness of the Presbyterian form of Church government. It was like the man to choose the most public place in which to defy Whitgift. Of course he was imprisoned and expelled from the University. A little later we find him chaplain to the English merchants in Middleberg, in Zeeland, as Cartwright had been, and in enjoyment of the comfortable salary of £200 a year. There is no more singular or impressive chapter in the history of the Church than that of the conversion of its persecutors. Saul of Tarsus went to Damascus to seize the disciples, being exceedingly mad against them, but was arrested by Christ to be the greatest preacher of the Cross. In 1591, Johnson lighted upon *The Plaine Refutation of Mr. Gifford's Book*, by Barrow and Greenwood, which was being printed at Dort. Being "exceedingly mad" against the Brownists, he induced the magistrates to confiscate the entire edition and consign it to the flames. He stood by to see that the destruction was complete, but rescued two

copies of the volume that he might read and refute it. In the quiet of his study he was convinced by its reasonings, and it may be noted that fourteen years later, as an act of justice, he reprinted the edition at his own expense. From this point he was himself a Brownist. At least, it should be remembered to his credit, that he unhesitatingly gave up his comfortable berth and faced imprisonment and privation. At once he flew to London and sought out Barrow in the Fleet. In 1592, as we have seen, he was elected pastor of the London Church, and was arrested with Greenwood at the house of Mr. Boyes, on Ludgate Hill. He escaped death when Barrow and Greenwood were hanged at Tyburn, but for the next five years he was imprisoned in the Clink, his brother George being at the time in the Fleet, and the elder, Daniel Studley, in Newgate.

After Francis Johnson had been a prisoner for five years, some of the Separatists were released from confinement. Several among them found their way to Holland; but it was a condition of the release of Francis and George Johnson, Daniel Studley, and John Clarke, a "stiff-necked" Separatist, that they should sail for the island of Rainea, in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, with some merchant

adventurers. On April 8, 1597, they left England in the *Hopewell* and the *Chancewell*, but the latter soon ran upon the rocks, and her consort, having rescued all on board, returned to England. The poor exiles contrived to hide in London, and in September escaped to Amsterdam.

The Ancient Church now numbered about three hundred communicants. It had with it as officers the grave and able pastor, Francis Johnson, the learned Ainsworth as teacher, beside the elders and a deacon. It had an ancient widow as deaconess. "She honoured her place, and was an ornament to the congregation. She usually sat in a convenient place in the congregation, with a little birchen rod in her hand, and kept little children in great awe from disturbing the congregation. She did frequently visit the sick and weak, especially women, and, as there was need, called out maids and young women to watch, and do their other helps as their necessity did require, and if they were very poor, she would gather relief for them of those that were able, or acquaint the deacons; and she was obeyed as a mother in Israel and an officer of Christ."

In 1603, the exiled Church sent messengers—probably Johnson and Ainsworth—

to present an address to James I. on his accession. Nothing is more touching in these records than the unshakable loyalty to the Throne of the first Separatists. "They made a good end and prayed for your Majesty" might have been said of many others besides Barrow and Greenwood. No doubt they hoped for milder treatment from the new monarch. They prepared a statement of the heads of difference between themselves and the Church of England; then a Supplication, but they could get no hearing. They received no help from the Puritan clergy, who, in their own Address to the Throne, described the Separatists as those "absurd Brownists." At last, the petition, having been reduced to seventeen lines, was presented by a courtier, but it only obtained the Royal frown.

We have repeatedly noticed that the Brownists paid little heed to the warning of the Apostle, "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant?" They had an altogether exaggerated view of the duty of mutual warning and rebuking. That the Church of England had no discipline was not a sufficient reason for practising a discipline which was excessive, inquisitorial, Pharisaical, and mischievous. There was no

error in doctrine so minute that it could be disregarded. Christ had left a law for His Church, which could not be varied in the slightest iota. There was nothing too trivial or paltry for the scrutiny of a Church member. It is not pleasant to dwell upon the quarrels, the scandals, the stormy Church meetings of the Ancient Church, both in London and Amsterdam, and it is only fair to remember that they were largely due to departures from Congregational ideals and principles. But, like the tragedy on the threshold of the Apostolic Church, they read at the beginning of Congregationalism a sad and permanent lesson of its peril and snare.

The story of the incessant disputes in the Ancient Church is narrated by George Johnson, in a closely printed quarto volume of 214 pages, entitled, *A Discourse of some Troubles and Excommunications in the Banished English Church at Amsterdam.* No one with any semblance of the judicial faculty would for a moment accept the story as set down by this partial and bitter witness. It is, on the face of it, an *ex parte* statement. But even as it stands we feel that Francis Johnson had much to bear from his fraternal admonisher. The trouble began with the remnant of the Church still left in London,

and of course there was a woman in the case. Francis had married secretly, in the Clink, Mrs. Thomasine Boyes, the widow of the friend in whose house on Ludgate Hill he had been arrested. She brought him a dowry of £300. Whether it was a suitable match is beside the mark. Her enemies disparaged her as "a bouncing girl" addicted to extravagant dress. Governor Bradford, on the other hand, says, "She ware such apparel as she had been formerly used to"; and again, "In our time his wife was a grave matron and very modest both in her apparel and all her demeanour, ready to do any good works in her place." She was certainly the driving force behind the pastor. The crusade of George against his sister-in-law began in London. He charged her before the Church with being as proud as the wife of the Bishop of London, with wearing four or five gold rings, and that her hat was too toppish. At length he applied to her the words of Jer. iii. 3. The trouble broke out again almost immediately after the migration to Amsterdam. We can readily imagine that the relict of Mr. Boyes never forgave Jer. iii. 3. Moreover, the half-starving members of the Church could not be expected to look kindly upon the gold rings

and flounces of the pastor's wife. Conferences were held repeatedly between the brothers. A solemn discussion took place in the Church meeting as to whether the aforementioned hat was too toppish. The gown was ordered to be produced. It was charged further that the pastor's wife lay in bed till nine o'clock on a Lord's Day morning. At length, in 1599, Francis Johnson pronounced excommunication upon his brother George, and expelled him from the Church as a slanderer and a libeller. Still more unfortunately, in 1602, the old father, John Johnson, appeared upon the scene, took the part of George, and was excommunicated by the Church. It is a sordid and depressing story of an arbitrary pastor impelled by the tears of an angry wife, on the one hand, and of an essentially small, coarse, narrow, though sincere nature on the other. Governor Bradford thus sums up the story:—

"The Church did, after long patience towards them and much pains taken with them, excommunicate them for their unreasonable and endless opposition and such things as did accompany the same."

We can only summarise briefly the succession of troubles which later on befel the Ancient Church, until we deal with the

secession of Henry Ainsworth. First of all, Thomas White, who had come from the West of England in 1603, two years later left the Church, it is said, through unsatisfied ambition, and published a *Discovery of Brownism*, a very spiteful and slanderous work. Francis Johnson replied. This was followed by the arrival of John Smyth in 1607, and his secession with Helwys, Morton, and a considerable company in 1609. Christopher Lawne was expelled in 1611, and in 1612 published, with three other former members of the Ancient Church, *The Profane Schism of the Brownists or Separatists*, an unrestrained attack upon Francis Johnson and his people, charging them with injustice, cruelty, and lewdness. In 1612, Daniel Studley was deposed from the eldership—a long-delayed, but richly deserved penalty on a man guilty of immorality, whose influence in the Church had worked immense mischief.

These episodes, painful as they were, must be regarded as less serious than the final dispute between Francis Johnson and Ainsworth. It is infinitely sad that two good men, who had made such sacrifices for conviction, both of them inevitably driven on by their conception of truth and duty, should, like Paul and

Barnabas, have such sharp contention and be sundered for the rest of life. We have already seen that the more elaborate Congregationalism of Barrow, in the *True Description*, tended to set the elders apart as a ruling class. This was not the intention of Barrow, who said most emphatically, "All the affairs of the Church belong to that body together." But Francis Johnson accentuated the functions, dignity, and power of the elder, until the authority of the Church had been entirely absorbed. Congregationalism became under him autocratic, oligarchical, and aristocratic. He profoundly distrusted popular government. Together with Studley, he claimed to set aside the elections of the Church. He repudiated the notion that the Church had power to appoint its own minister or to receive and exclude members. The controversy between the Presbyterians and the Separatists chiefly centred in Matt. xviii. 17, "Tell it to the Church," which the one interpreted, "to the elders," and the other, "to the people." Barrow always contended for the exercise of discipline by the Church, but Francis Johnson claimed that "the people are to have no voices in excommunication." By this time but little of Johnson's Congregationalism was left, and it is more accurate

henceforth to describe him simply as a Separatist. Ainsworth, much as he loved peace, could not see with indifference everything for which he had endured exile quietly swept away. He stoutly maintained a moderate Congregationalism, that the ruling power was not in pope, prelate, elder, or congregation, but in Christ Himself, who had given to every man his work. "That authority to administer the sacrament," he wrote, "should belong to every one of the Church we utterly deny; no sacraments are to be administered until the pastor or teacher be chosen and ordained into their office." But he held that the power to elect its officers and to exercise discipline remained with the Church.

There was no *via media* between these interpretations. Ainsworth, when he could no longer endure the daily friction and strife, withdrew with a large following and began to worship two doors off in the Jews' Synagogue. No half measures would content the burning zeal of Johnson, who deposed and excommunicated his former colleague and all who were with him. But on an appeal to the magistrates by the chief owners of the old meeting-house, the Ainsworthians were restored to the use of the

buildings, and the Franciscans, as they were called, were driven out. Poor Francis, in 1613, migrated to Emden with his disheartened flock, but in 1617 he was back again in Amsterdam, only, however, to die in the January following, still styling himself the pastor of the Ancient Church. Almost his last act, "a few days before his death," was to issue *A Christian Plea*, which was misrepresented by Matthew Slade as a final recantation, but which really maintained his separatism while reaffirming his differences from Ainsworth and Robinson. Of the people, those who did not rejoin Ainsworth went out, with an amazing courage, across the Atlantic in a small and ill-found vessel, under the leadership of Elder Blackwell. We can only imagine the horrors of the voyage—a hundred and eighty persons "packed like herrings," drifting aimlessly about, the captain dead, a miserable, broken remnant of fifty reaching Virginia in March, 1619. As to the section with Ainsworth, in whose succession of later pastors was numbered John Canne, the founder of Broadmead Baptist Church, Bristol, we find that early in the eighteenth century it united with the Presbyterian Church in Amsterdam.

The contrast is pathetic between the ardent

young pastor of 1592, who has found the truth and for joy thereof casts everything away that he may possess it, and the disappointed, broken man of 1617, prematurely old, scarcely knowing whether he is a Congregationalist at all. Was it worth while for this to suffer the loathsome Clink, exile quarrels at home, in the city, and in the Church? "Though I have all knowledge . . . and though I give my body to be burnt, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing." Congregationalism had a weary path to tread before it discovered the bond of Church life, which consists not in knowledge, but in love.

VI

JOHN SMYTH, THE SE-BAPTIST

"NONE of the English Separatists," says Bishop Creighton, "had a finer mind or a more beautiful soul than John Smyth. None of them succeeded in expressing with so much reasonableness and consistency their aspirations after a spiritual system of religious belief and practice. None of them founded their opinions on so large and liberal a basis."

We have now reached the stage at which it becomes historically correct to speak of the English Baptists in the modified sense that, while they were not immersionists, they limited baptism to believers. John Smyth has a rightful claim to be regarded as the founder of the modern Baptist Churches, because he broke away from Brownism on the issue of believers' baptism;

he formed the first English Baptist Church from the exiles in Amsterdam; and in his noble and historic Confession he formulated the Baptist principles, separated, like gold from dross, from those elements of Anabaptism which would never have commended themselves to the practical English mind.

The rise of the modern Baptist was as inevitable as the rise of the Congregationalist, as soon as the New Testament was freely circulated in the common tongue. Brownism was, in fact, an instance of unstable equilibrium. Probably the first Separatists were quite unable to consider dispassionately any doctrine associated with the name Anabaptist. As a term of contempt it had no rival in the ecclesiastical vocabulary. Moreover, the fact that the Old Testament had to them equal authority with the New, prepared them to see in baptism the analogue of circumcision in the Abrahamic Covenant. But since the Separatists held that every particular of the Church's order and ceremony had been prescribed by Christ and His apostles, and must not be varied in the least degree, some one was certain to demand ere long, "Why, then, do you baptize infants?" Browne, Barrow, and the Ancient Church in its Confession of 1596, agreed that the seed of the faithful,

though infants, were to be offered for entrance into the Church in baptism. Yet if, as Browne held, baptism was the grafting into and putting on of Christ, why should it be administered to infants? Indeed, Barrow got into inextricable confusion in his contention that without a true baptism there was no true Church membership, that there could be no true baptism without a true ministry, and that the ministry of the Church of England was false. This was the only baptism he had ever received. Must he, then, be baptized again? Well might he ask, "What, then, is to be done in this distress?" His ingenious device of the distinction between a false and an adulterate baptism was not very convincing. "There is no remedy," jeered Bishop Hall; "you must go forward into Anabaptism or come back to us." "All your Rabbins cannot answer the charge of your re-baptized brother, John Smyth."

The place and date of John Smyth's birth are both unknown, and indeed the chronology of his career up to his migration to Amsterdam is invested with much uncertainty. To begin with, let us get rid of those mistaken traditions about him which it is possible absolutely to disprove. He was not the John Smyth who matriculated at Christ's College

in 1571, and graduated in 1575–6. He was not the Separatist Smith who was imprisoned in the Marshalsea for nine months in 1592. He was never vicar of Gainsborough, the living there being held successively by John Jackson, Jerome Phillips, and Henry Clifford, from 1566 to 1610. Like most of the Separatist leaders, he was a University man; and one fact which helps to fix the date of his course at Cambridge is that he was a pupil, at Christ's College, of Francis Johnson, who, as we have noticed, matriculated in 1579. John Smyth proceeded to his M.A. in 1593, and, if his educational career was normal, we may infer that he was born about 1570, and entered the University about 1586. These dates seem to confirm the statement of Bernard, that John Smyth was ordained a clergyman by Wickham, Bishop of Lincoln, whose episcopate extended into 1594. No evidence can be found to support Bernard's further allusion to him as holding a benefice, though Mr. Pike has discovered that a John Smyth became vicar of Hutton Cranswicke, in the diocese of York, on November 23, 1593, and that the next vicar was appointed on December 1, 1601. But we reach historical certainty with the election of John Smyth as lecturer or preacher of the city of Lincoln. A

few months ago, the Rev. E. C. Pike discovered, in the Minutes of the Lincoln Corporation, the record of Smyth's appointment to this office on September 27, 1600, by eight votes to seven. On the 21st of October, his stipend was fixed at £40 a year, with £3 6s. 8d. for house-rent. On August 1, 1602, the Council, apparently well pleased with his services, assured this stipend to him for the rest of his life by seal of the Corporation, but on October 13th the vote was annulled, and he was deposed from his office for having "approved himself a factious man in this city by personal preaching, and that untruly against divers men of good place." Perhaps he may have inveighed against some of the city fathers. He was inhibited by the Bishop of the diocese. The Council Minutes of December 13th, while describing him as "the late preacher of this city," indicate that a lawsuit was threatened against the Corporation for the stipend assured to him. These entries are entirely incompatible with the statement and consequent inferences of Mr. Arber, that John Smyth was lecturer in Lincoln from 1603 to 1605.

After the abrupt termination of his lectureship, Smyth published two little volumes of discourses preached by himself at Lincoln,

which strikingly illustrate the strength and richness of his mind, as well as the earnestness and sincerity of his search for truth. It is important to notice that he was still an Anglican, when he prepared these works for the press. The first was discovered in the library of Emmanuel College, Cambridge, by Professor Whitsitt in 1880. It is entitled, *The bright morning star, or the resolution and exposition of the 22 Psalm, preached publicly in four sermons, at Lincoln, by John Smyth, preacher of the citie. Printed* 1603. The other little book, of which a copy of the first edition is in the Regent's Park College Library, is entitled, *A Pattern of True Prayer by John Smyth, Minister and Preacher of the Word of God,* and was entered at Stationers' Hall, on March 22, 1605. The author states that he delivered this treatise not long since to the ears of a few, being the lecturer in the city of Lincoln. It is dedicated to Lord Sheffield, who had acted as arbiter between the Corporation and the preacher. Reading between the lines, we can see that the dispute was not settled in 1603, and that John Smyth still claimed his title as city preacher, but the difference had been "managed" in 1605. The book is an exposition of the Lord's Prayer, published to

clear himself of unjust accusations. He is no longer in Lincoln—"when I taught in Lincoln," he says. He thinks "a uniform order of public prayer in the service of God is necessary," but he concludes with much reasonableness, "he that prayeth the Lord's Prayer in truth and matter prayeth well" . . . yet "I had rather speak five words to God in prayer from understanding, faith, and feeling, than say the Lord's Prayer over a thousand times ignorantly, negligently, and superstitiously." He is not a Separatist, "yet there are some," he says, "whom we will account brethren, though they do not so reckon us, seeing they have separated from us"; and again, "I do here ingenuously confess that I am far from the opinion of them which separate from our Church concerning the set form of prayer (although from some of them I received part of my education at Cambridge)"—a reference, doubtless, to Francis Johnson.

John Smyth was still "far from" Separatism when, towards the close of 1604 or early in 1605, the *Pattern* went to the press, but his mind moved swiftly, and it is certain that he was at this time in the Gainsborough district passing through the stage of doubting.

It is necessary, at this point, to describe

a Separatist movement which had arisen partly as the result of the zealous labours of some Puritan clergy on the borders of three counties, Lincolnshire, Yorkshire, and Nottinghamshire. From the neighbouring towns and villages of the district, a number of godly persons began to assemble on the Lord's Day at the Scrooby Manor House. Not far away was Babworth, where Richard Clyfton was rector, and Worksop, with Bernard the Puritan clergyman, and Gainsborough, a notable town from which, on a clear day, the Lincoln minster can be seen. Gainsborough had been associated with some of the most interesting persons and events in English history. Here, in the Palace by the beautiful Trent, King Alfred was married, and here Canute was born. The lord of the manor himself had fine traditions of suffering for conscience' sake. In 1602, those whose hearts the Lord had touched with zeal for His truth "formed themselves by covenant into a Church of the Congregational order." In 1606, the distance for some being great, the Church divided into two parts, one remaining at Gainsborough and the other worshipping at the Scrooby Manor House. John Smyth was in the Gainsborough Church, notes Bradford, as a private member,

and "afterwards was chosen their pastor." He became in fact, as well as in the opinion both of Bishop Hall and Bernard, a ring-leader of the separation.

There was an interval of three or four years between the date in 1602 at which the Lincoln lectureship ceased, and the date in 1605 or 1606 when John Smyth became a Separatist. It is known that he lingered in the city of Lincoln in dispute with the Corporation; that he went to Worksop to confer with his "old friend" Bernard; that the Ecclesiastical Commission was harsh towards him, and that twice he escaped the pursuivants of the Archbishop; that he went to Coventry to confer with Barbon and others, as to whether it was right to leave a true but corrupt Church; that for nine months at least he was in doubt and suspense; and that he lay sick unto death at the house of Helwys at Basford, in Nottinghamshire. Bernard moves through the story, a hesitating and unhappy figure, at one point meditating escape to the Continent, at another, gathering round him a hundred godly persons from different parishes as a Church within a Church, holding conference with Robinson and Helwys and coming to his final decision, "Well, I will return home and preach as I

have done, and I must say, as Naaman did, the Lord be merciful to me in this thing." As the shadow of ecclesiastical penalty fell upon him, in 1603, he drew back, but John Smyth "marched breast forward" and "never fell back from any truth" he saw.

It was impossible for the Separatists of Gainsborough and Scrooby to remain in England. Persecutions gathered around them with increasing violence, and they began to turn their eyes away from these inhospitable shores to the land where so many of their brethren had found a refuge. Probably the Gainsborough group was the first to go, with John Smyth, Helwys, Morton, and a large company. It is not possible to assign any other than an approximate date. Smyth had not long been pastor of the Church, but he was swift in his decisions and movements. Helwys was eager to go, for on July 26, 1607, his wife, Joan, had been brought before the Ecclesiastical Commission and then confined in York Castle. "It was Mr. Helwys," says John Robinson, "who above all other guides or others furthered this passage into strange countries; and if any brought oars he brought sails." A further help as to the date is derived from the fact that, while

Smyth was still pastor at Gainsborough, he addressed a letter to Bernard, to which the latter replied six or seven months afterwards in a volume entitled, *Christian Advertisements*, which was entered at Stationers' Hall, June 18, 1608. The reply may have been written a month or two earlier. This would bring us to a period between September and December, 1607, during which Smyth's letter was written. In all probability, the migration took place towards the close of 1607.

The changes in John Smyth's theological position after he reached Amsterdam were so rapid that we must pause for a moment to look more closely at this extraordinary man. He was open-minded to a fault, eager to search for and to receive the truth. His conscience was sensitive and even morbid, and he could not rest a moment in silence if he felt that he had embraced an error. Ecclesiastical ties, Church fellowship, old comrades, all were as nothing to him compared with truth. This frail, dauntless man could see the whole world of his thought suddenly dissolved, and could enter a new universe without a tremor. The remarkable thing was that his magnetic personality always drew others after him, and that even

those from whom he parted and who excommunicated him could write of their desire to retain him, "Yea, what would we not have endured, or done; would we not have lost all we had, yea, would we not have plucked out our eyes; would we not have laid down our lives? . . . And all our love was too little for him and not worthy of him." It is true that John Robinson found his instability a sore cross. But if we are to understand fully these rapid changes, we must remember how completely Smyth was held in the grip of an inexorable logic. The treatises and pamphlets of the Separatists were written by Cambridge men, who had adopted the logical methods in vogue at the University. Browne had railed in his notes on Matthew xxiii. at the logic-chopping preachers of his day. Francis Johnson conducted Church meetings with the aid of irritating syllogisms. John Smyth's reply to Bernard was a succession of majors, minors, and ergos. We shall not understand this Baptist pioneer at all, until we recognise that his eager and untrammelled mind simply rose up and went forth as an exile, whenever he saw the beckoning hand of a properly constructed syllogism. Indeed, it is impossible to deny the force of his defence after his supreme

intellectual and spiritual migration—"To change a false religion is commendable, and to retain a false religion is damnable. For a man of a Turk to become a Jew, of a Jew to become a papist, of a papist to become a Protestant, are all commendable changes, though they all of them befall one and the same person in one year, nay, if it were in one month."

On his arrival in Amsterdam, Smyth began to practise as a physician, taking nothing, however, from his poorer patients. Of money he was quite careless, discharging his functions as pastor without any salary, and even stripping the clothes from his own back, that he might aid those needier than himself. It has been much discussed whether he and his company joined themselves to the Church of Johnson and Ainsworth when they first came to the city. Dr. Dexter thought they did when he wrote his monumental work, but in *The True Story of John Smyth* he altered his view of the matter, since in the *Differences* Smyth described his own community as "the second English Church at Amsterdam."

Mr. Powicke argues that Dr. Dexter's earlier judgment was correct, and cites three passages to prove that it was after its further

secession that it became the "second Church." Two of the passages, however, speak simply of "communion" which might easily exist between two separate Churches, and the third is so highly figurative that no argument should be founded upon it: "Soon after this God stroke him with blindness, that he could no longer find the door of the Church, out of which he was gone by schism, and which he had assaulted with error." It is difficult to see how Smyth could have retained and exercised his pastoral office in the Ancient Church of which Francis Johnson was minister.

Just before leaving England or soon after reaching Amsterdam, John Smyth published *Principles and Inferences concerning the Visible Church*, in which he maintained the Brownist theory of Church government. It was followed very shortly by *Parallels, Censures, and Observations*, which was dated by the printer 1609, but which must have been written not later than the beginning of 1608. "I published," he says in the *Parallels*, "a little method not long since, entitled *Principles and Inferences*." As yet he was a Brownist, and there had been no break with the Ancient Church. The *Parallels* was a reply to Bernard's *Christian Advertisements*,

and contained Smyth's letter to which we have already referred, divided into nineteen sections, with Observations on each section. Almost immediately after, Smyth, with about eighty others, gave up communion with the Ancient Church, and in the same year, 1608, published *The Differences of the Churches of the Separation* in defence of his action. It is important to notice that he was not yet a Baptist, and that the separation was upon another and very singular ground. Again we must plead his unfortunate logic as an extenuation. He admitted, in the *Differences*, that the "Ancient brethren" had restored the primitive and apostolic order of the Church, but he had reached the conclusion that, since the worship of the Church must be spiritual, and since printed words were signs and therefore partook of the nature of ceremonies, and seeing that Christ closed the book before He began to preach in the synagogue at Nazareth, it was wrong for the minister to have a book, even a translation of the Bible, before his eyes during prophesying. He added other reasons for separation, viz., that the eldership was uniform, and that only believers might contribute to Church funds; but the first was the chief, that "there was no warrant to bring translations of scrip-

ture into the Church." We smile at such scruples, but it was all terribly serious to him, and he began his ecclesiastical life afresh.

The supreme change was yet to come—the change in John Smyth's theological position, which has had the most momentous and far-reaching results. He became a Baptist. Again, his wonderful charm and persuasiveness drew others after him, including Helwys and Morton, and he formed the first English Baptist Church. No doubt he had come under Mennonite influence and teaching, and by the end of March, 1609 (N.S.), he had arrived at a definite decision. He published *The Character of the Beast*, in which he expounded his Baptist views. He contended that "infants ought not to be baptized, because (1) there is neither precept nor example in the New Testament of any infants that were baptized by John or Christ's disciples, and (2) Christ commanded to make disciples by teaching them and then to baptize them."

John Smyth and his company were met on the threshold by an apparently insuperable difficulty. If infant baptism was no baptism at all, then, apart from the Dutch Anabaptists, to whom he was not yet prepared to turn, there was no one to baptize

him, since an unbaptized person could not administer the rite. Again his logic came to the aid of this fearless man, and he solved the problem by baptizing himself. "After much straining of courtesy who should begin," says John Robinson, and there is a note of derision in his words, "Mr. Smyth baptized first himself and next Mr. Helwys, and so the rest making their particular confessions." Bishop Creighton regards the matter, however, with a juster mind, and urges that "Smyth was only acting logically upon the general principles of the Separatists. If the history of the Church was to begin again, it might as well begin from the beginning." Smyth replied to the objection that he had no warrant to baptize himself, "I say, as much as you have to set up a true Church . . . for baptizing a man's self, there is as good warrant as for a man churching himself." So he baptized himself, doubtless after the manner of the Mennonites, which was by pouring, and hence he has been called the se-Baptist, or self-Baptist.

In this connection, we must deal with a gross and palpable forgery of the Minutes of the Church at Crowle, in Lincolnshire, which was devised to prove that Smyth was immersed in the river Don by Morton. The

Rev. Jabez Stutterd, the General Baptist minister at Crowle, stated that, in 1866, he was shown seven or eight leaves, moth-eaten and decayed, which he carefully copied and which contained the following record: "1606, 24 March. This night at midnight Elder John Morton baptized John Smyth, vicar of Gainsborough, in the river Don. It was so dark we were obliged to have torch-lights. Elder Brewster prayed and Mr. Smyth made a good confession. Walked to Epworth in his cold clothes, but received no harm. The distance was two miles. All our friends were present. A strong wind but fair above head. To ye triune God be all ye praise." It is worth while noticing the undoubted errors in these few lines. As we have seen, Smyth did not become a Baptist earlier than 1608, he was never vicar of Gainsborough, and further, if it was fair overhead on March 24, 1606, it could not have been so dark, as the moon came to the full the night before. The whole thing was, however, a clumsy forgery, which has been completely exposed in detail by Dr. Dexter.

This religious wanderer had yet one more journey to take. He came to the conclusion that the Mennonites in Amsterdam were a true Church and had a true baptism. For two

generations they had practised the baptism of believers. If we may speak of an apostolic succession in ideas, we may link them to the primitive Church. All through the centuries, like a river sometimes flowing in hidden depths and sometimes emerging to the light, there has been a spiritual community holding the baptismal sign of the regenerate life of faith. Now appearing, now disappearing, we can see them on the highlands of Armenia with traditions of Thaddæus as their founder, passing on through the Byzantine Empire, following the course of the Danube, the Po, the Rhone, the Rhine, always passing along the great rivers, until at last they reach the plain of the Netherlands, invariably with one theological mark, an ancient if heretical view of the Person of Christ. "I deny all succession except in the truth," said John Smyth; but he felt that he ought not to have baptized himself when by his side was the Mennonite Church. Together with forty-one others who confessed their error in baptizing themselves, and who desired "to get back into the true Church of Christ" as speedily as possible, he applied for membership with the Mennonites. He parted company with Helwys, who considered that he had sinned against the Holy Ghost in doubting as to his

own baptism. He was never received by the Mennonites. Perhaps the quarrels of the Ancient Church, or Smyth's repeated changes, made them wary. They required a statement of doctrine to be submitted. The inquiry dragged on after the se-Baptist himself had passed away. Not till January 20, 1615 (N.S.), was consent given. Eleven names of the forty-two had to be struck out through death or defection, and on that date the remaining thirty-one were admitted into the Mennonite communion.

Four Confessions of Faith remain as records of the theology of Smyth and Helwys and their two companies. The first, consisting of twenty Articles written in Latin, was prepared by John Smyth to meet the Mennonite inquiry. The second was a Dutch Confession written by the Mennonite minister, Hans de Rys, which was accepted and signed by Smyth. The third, written by Helwys, placed the creed of himself and his company before the Mennonites in twenty-six Articles. Last of all, the se-Baptist wrote, very shortly before his death, *The last book of John Smyth called the Retraction of his errors*, together with his Confession of Faith in One Hundred Propositions. The first and third are the earliest English Baptist Creeds.

Of the story little remains to tell. A friendly Mennonite, Jan Munter, allowed Smyth's Church to occupy a part of his "Great Cake House," or bakery; but their leader had not long to live. He was little more than forty years of age, but religious fervour and privations had worn away a frame always fragile and delicate. In the summer of 1612, he was taken with his last illness, and after lingering in prostration through seven weeks, he died of consumption, and, on September 1st, was carried from the "Cake House" for burial in the "Niewe Kirk."

Thomas Helwys quitted Amsterdam in 1611, or early in 1612, and returned to England with his Church. He came of an honourable county family, and at this time his kinsman, Sir Gervase Elwes, was Lieutenant of the Tower of London. Like Smyth, Helwys was an Arminian, and the Church which he formed and which worshipped in Newgate Street, was the first General or Arminian Baptist Church on English soil. Three little works from his pen may be found in the Bodleian to-day, the most important of which, *The Mystery of Iniquity*, contains, on its title page, an address to the King, and boldly declares that no earthly ruler has any

power over the immortal souls of his subjects. Helwys died in 1626, and was succeeded as pastor by Morton, who had come over with him from Amsterdam, and had shortly afterwards been cast into a London prison. He also contributed to the literature of religious liberty. A little later, the Church returned to Amsterdam and joined the Mennonites. Its influence and energy were witnessed by the fact that, when Helwys passed away, four other General Baptist Churches in Lincoln, Sarum, Coventry, and Tiverton had been formed and were in communion with it.

When the English Baptist Churches arose, the conflict between the followers of Calvin and Arminius was at its height. It was a dispute which produced curious results and cross-divisions. Whitgift was a rigid Calvinist, and so were the Puritans and Separatists whom he persecuted. Laud was a determined Arminian, and the strongly Presbyterian House of Commons hated him not less for his theology than for his political policy. The Independents were Calvinistic, and were still further embittered against John Smyth by what they called "his gross and damnable Arminianism." Both Helwys and he boldly repudiated the sterner doctrines of Geneva about predestination and irresistible grace.

In his first Confession, John Smyth declared, "Infants are conceived and born in innocency without sin and so dying are undoubtedly saved." "God doth not predestinate any man to destruction." "The sacrifice of God's body and blood doth not reconcile God unto us, which did never hate us nor was our enemy, but reconcileth us unto God." These are noble words, and it was a bold thing to utter them then. Whence did Smyth derive his broad and generous theology? Probably he had read the plea against Calvinism by Robert Cooke, the courtier and Anabaptist, which Knox replied to, paragraph by paragraph, and which also was answered by Turner, Dean of Wells, in his *Treacle against the Poison of Pelagius*. Probably Smyth was also influenced by the Pelagianism of the Mennonites.

Helwys' Church is of supreme importance in the story of toleration. "This obscure Baptist Congregation," says Professor Masson, "seems to have become the depository for all England of the absolute principle of Liberty of Conscience." It is the imperishable glory of the earliest London Baptist Church that, again to quote Masson, "from this little dingy meeting-house, somewhere in Old London, there flashed out, first in England,

the absolute doctrine of religious liberty." Leonard Busher, a member of this Church, a poor man labouring for his daily bread, yet with some measure of learning, issued in 1614 a tractate, entitled, *Religions Peace or a plea for liberty of conscience*, in which, anticipating Milton's Areopagitica, he argued that it should be "lawful for any person or persons, yea, Jews and Papists, to write, dispute, confer, and reason, print and publish any matter touching religion." How far the Independents at this time fell short of the doctrine of Religious Liberty is illustrated in Henry Jacob's Confession in 1616. "We believe that we and all the visible Churches ought to be overseen and kept in order and peace, and ought to be governed, under Christ, both supremely and also subordinately, by the civil magistrate, yea, in causes of religion, when need is."

There is much to admire and love in the character of John Smyth. Even "his failings leaned to virtue's side." But it was as he drew very near to the gates of death that the fervent love and piety, the sweetness and beauty of this eager, radiant soul were most striking and wonderful. In his last declaration, he wrote, "All penitent and faithful Christians are brethren in the communion of

the outward Church, by what name soever they are known ; and we salute them all with a holy kiss, being heartily grieved that we should be rent into so many sorts and schisms ; and that only for matters of no moment." While he could not "with a good conscience" recede from the views he had advocated, he deeply regretted the tone in which he had written and the censures he had passed, both on the Brownists and on the Church of England : "I utterly renounce and revoke it," he said. Under the shadow of death, there fell upon him an awful sense of the greatness of the truths in which Christians are agreed, and he declared, in words which we shall do well to remember, "From this day forward do I put an end to all controversy and question about the outward Church and ceremonies with all men, and resolve to spend my time in the main matters wherein consisteth salvation."

VII

JOHN ROBINSON—THE PILGRIM CHURCH

THE Free Church historian turns, with a sense of relief, to the noble and commanding figure of John Robinson and to the pleasant and unbroken fellowship of the Leyden Church. Browne and Francis Johnson had gone a long way between them to wreck early Congregationalism. But the increasing intolerance of the Church of England, backed by Stuart duplicity and tyranny, gave it a fresh lease of life, and continued to make Separatism attractive to Christian men of a high type. Each pioneer has marked a fresh stage in the development. John Robinson rendered the incalculable service of showing that Congregationalism, which had been discredited by quarrelsome Churches and hopelessly intractable men, was a work-

able and practicable system, and contained within itself the elements of human advance.

We have already noted the formation of the Church at Gainsborough and the friendly division into two sections in 1606, the one remaining with John Smyth, the other henceforth worshipping in the Scrooby Manor House, and known as the Pilgrim Church. The story has been told by Dr. Brown with such beauty and amplitude of learning, in *Pilgrim Fathers of New England*, that we need not do more than glance rapidly at the new scenes and actors that appear now upon the stage. The village of Scrooby, in Nottinghamshire, and on the borders of Yorkshire, nestling among its trees and uplands, sleeping by its lovely streams, is sacred to the Free Churchman, because, in a sense, it was the birthplace of a new order and a free empire. Surely it was one of the ironies of history that the cradle was in a symbolic home of the condemned and dying *régime*. Three hundred years ago, Scrooby was of much consequence as a stage of the Royal Post on the Great North Road. Its "fair palace," or Manor House, was a seat of the Archbishops of York. There, cast down from power and broken in heart, Wolsey had found a retreat. William Brewster

had become postmaster of the Royal service, occupied the house himself, and easily found space within its walls for the meetings of the Pilgrim Church. He was a Cambridge man who had been attached to Davison, the Puritan Secretary of State and Ambassador of Queen Elizabeth to the Netherlands, but, on the fall of his patron, the young Brewster's dream of rapid advance and high office had burst like a bubble. He was intended, in the providence of God, to be the leader and ruling elder of the Plymouth Church. Three miles away, lay the village of Austerfield, where, when Brewster was twenty-three years old, was born, of an honourable family, a man destined to be the statesman and historian of the Plymouth Colony. Governor William Bradford sat as a youth in the congregation of the Scrooby Manor House. Richard Clyfton, of Babworth, had become its pastor, having given up his rectorship about 1603, "a fatherly old man with a great white beard." To them came John Robinson; thus God was preparing the leaders and gathering the forces to carry on His work.

John Robinson was a native of Lincolnshire, and perhaps of Gainsborough. Born about 1575, he was sent to Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, in 1592, and became

Fellow in 1598. Puritanism was strongly represented in the University, and it is certain that the young student must have been influenced by the distinguished lecturer of his own college, the Puritan, William Perkins. He was converted in the Church of England; he began his ministry in the Church of England in Norwich, "or thereabouts," probably as a curate. To be a Separatist was distasteful to him, and "had not the truth been in" his "heart as a burning fire" he would have continued to conform. But every Puritan was now finding the strain upon his conscience as to vestments and ceremonies more serious and intense, and, after the Hampton Court Conference, had to ask himself whether Separatism was not a duty. The whole responsibility for the Separatism of a man like John Robinson rests upon the bishops of the Church of England. So anxious was he to remain an Anglican that, as a *modus vivendi*, he applied to the Norwich Corporation for the Chaplaincy or Mastership of the St. Helen's Hospital, which had been held by Robert Harrison; but he was refused. At last, the censures of the bishop and increasing persecution drove him away. It was natural that his thoughts

should turn to Scrooby. He joined the Congregation in the Manor House, and assisted Clyfton in the pastorate.

The story of the subsequent flight to Holland is in one sense an enigma. The legislation of 1593 enacted the banishment from the realm of persons convicted of persistent Separatism, yet every difficulty was put in their way when, oppressed by fine and imprisonment, they attempted to go. Exile was a familiar idea to them. The story of the Ancient Church in Amsterdam was well known. Church life and worship at Scrooby had become impossible. Their leader, William Brewster, who had been deprived of his position as postmaster, was being hunted for. In the autumn of 1607, therefore, the members of the Manor House Church resolved to leave their native land. The account of how they fared has been set down by Governor Bradford. The first attempt to escape to a more friendly shore was a disastrous failure. The pilgrims hired a vessel to sail from Boston, the quaint old Lincolnshire town, but, when they were all on board, the officers of the law, to whom they had been betrayed by the captain, seized and searched them, robbed them of their money, and finally carried them off

to the magistrates. There was a leaven of Puritanism in the whole district, and the prisoners seem to have been treated with some consideration. They were, however, committed to the cells of the Guildhall; then all were sent back to Scrooby, except seven ringleaders, including Brewster. After communications with the Privy Council, the seven were liberated and bound over to appear at the Assizes.

The second attempt was even more tragically a chapter of accidents. This time the pilgrims resolved to engage a Dutch captain, who assured them that they need not fear, for "he would do well enough." The point of departure was to be between Hull and Grimsby. The men walked across country for nearly fifty miles, and the women and children were conveyed in the Bark down the Trent, then along the Humber to a secure little creek. Unfortunately, their boat was left stranded at low water, so that, when the Dutch vessel appeared, they could not get off. The captain began, therefore, to embark the men, but no sooner had he conveyed one boatload than he saw "a great company both horse and foot with bills and guns and other weapons" running round the coast to capture the fugitives. He swore a great round oath,

and set sail without delay. The poor women raised piteous shrieks as their natural protectors vanished from sight, while the children clung to their mothers, crying and shivering with cold. How they fared, the narrative does not disclose. The magistrates did not like to imprison them; their homes were broken up; they were passed on from one place to another as if they were undesirable aliens. Meanwhile, the voyage of the Dutch vessel to Holland was much like that of St. Paul as recorded in the Acts. For seven days neither sun nor stars appeared. In the midst of a fearful storm, the mariners cried in terror, "We sink! we sink!" but the pilgrims, with heroic faith, answered, "Yet, Lord, Thou canst save." The vessel bore the ark of freedom and could not sink, and at last they reached their desired haven.

It was well that Robinson, Brewster, and Clyfton had not been in the first boatload. Quietly, in twos and threes, they smuggled the remainder of the pilgrims out of the country. They were among the last to leave, and, in the summer of 1608, all were in Amsterdam. The entry in Zachary Clyfton's Bible is profoundly interesting. "Memorandum. Richard Clyfton, with his

wife and children, came into Amsterdam in Holland. August, 1608."

The stay of John Robinson and his party in Amsterdam was very brief. We can readily imagine that the atmosphere of the Ancient Church, with its miserable disputes and impending troubles, was utterly distasteful to a man of his wide outlook and lofty and benignant nature. Nor would Bradford, the future statesman and Governor of the Plymouth Colony, be interested in the apparel of Mrs. Thomasine Johnson. In February, 1609, Robinson addressed to the Burgomaster and Court of the city of Leyden, on behalf of himself and about a hundred persons of the Christian reformed religion, a request to be permitted to live in that city and to carry on their trades. The Court replied that they refused free ingress to no honest persons; and so the Pilgrim Church removed to Leyden.

Beautiful Leyden, the fairest city of Holland, had played no small part in the terrible struggle with Philip II., which had issued in the Netherlands Republic. It had successfully resisted its memorable siege; it had broken down its sluices and driven back the desperadoes of Spain before the advancing sea. It had now entered upon a period of

extraordinary peace and prosperity. At this very time, the young Rembrandt was within its walls. William of Orange, in recognition of their heroic defence, had offered the citizens the alternative of the remission of taxation for a period or the founding of a University, and they had chosen the latter. A city of broad and well-kept streets, beautifully paved, lined with lindens and elms, it must have seemed a sweet refuge to the weary exiles. Yet they had to discover some means of livelihood. They became craftsmen and artisans. Bradford was a fustian worker. Brewster gave lessons in English, and later set up a publishing house. Robinson became a professor in the University. The Church rapidly increased. In 1611, Robinson, with his brother-in-law and two others, purchased a large house and garden, where the pilgrims henceforth met for worship. The site is marked to-day by a marble slab, bearing the inscription: "On this spot lived, taught, and died, John Robinson, 1611–1625."

We may well pause to inquire what was the secret of the unbroken peace of this, the first Congregational Church which we can regard with unqualified joy and pride. For the fellowship was an idyllic one. "Such was the true piety, the humble zeal, and fervent

love of this people towards God and His ways," says Governor Bradford, "and the single-heartedness and sincere affection one towards another, that they came as near the primitive pattern of the first Churches as any other Churches of these later times have done." Replying to Bernard's "contemptuous upbraiding" of the Separatists, Robinson wrote: "For ourselves I tell you that if ever I saw the beauty of Sion and the glory of the Lord filling His Tabernacle, it hath been in the manifestation of the divers graces of God in the Church, in that Heavenly harmony and comely order wherein by the grace of God we are set and walk." It attracted the friendly confidence of some distinguished men like Miles Standish, who afterwards went out in the *Mayflower*, and of the young English gentleman, Edward Winslow, who, visiting Leyden, was so charmed with their fellowship that he joined them, and afterwards wrote: "I persuade myself never people upon earth lived more lovingly together, more sweetly than we, the Church at Leyden, did." They had a high reputation in the city for honesty and industry. What was the secret of their fellowship? for human nature is pretty much the same everywhere. It was, first of all, in the nobility and wisdom of John

Robinson himself and also of the leaders of the Church. It was, further, in a free and sagacious interpretation of Congregationalism. There was no autocracy or oligarchy. Robinson had no sympathy with the rigidness of Johnson or the elaborate order of Barrow, and he even simplified the polity of Browne. His sympathies were with full publicity, the knowledge and consent of the people. Spirit was infinitely more to him than form, "and none did more offend him than such as would be stiff and rigid in matters of Outward Order and inveigh against the evils of others."

Want of space forbids us to refer other than cursorily to Robinson's enormous literary activities and to the great part he played in the controversies of his age. The bitter struggle between Calvinism and Arminianism daily agitated the city of Leyden. It even shook Europe and England. Robinson was present at the synod of Dort. He went constantly to lectures at the University. He silenced Polyander in public debate, and "became terrible to the Arminians." He wrote sixty-two essays of a non-controversial kind, besides many other works, and these were free from the virulence which was characteristic of current theological litera-

ture. We shall note presently some surprising elements in his Congregationalism, but we may point out that the root of the matter was in him. He contended for the proper discipline of the Church; that the Church meant the people and not the officers or elders; that government can never suffer by being in the hands of the people; that the people alone must choose the man who is to stand to them in the sacred and affectionate relation of pastor; and that the true Church could not correspond to the mixed parish assemblies of the Church of England. He had, however, no objection to liturgical forms of prayer.

"After they had lived in Leyden some eleven or twelve years," the thought began to take shape among them of founding a colony in the New World. Such a scheme was attractive to the adventurous young Englishmen of that day. Moreover, the life at Leyden was hard and anxious, but the chief reason was, says Bradford, that they "had a great hope of laying some good foundation for the propagating and advancing the Gospel of the Kingdom of Christ in those remote parts of the world." After long negotiation with James and the Virginia Company, it was agreed to send forth the younger and

stronger members to that part of the long Atlantic seaboard, which had been discovered by Raleigh and named in honour of Elizabeth, and to which Elder Blackwell, in 1618, had fared forth on his ill-fated expedition. No assurance of liberty of worship could be obtained, but the King, having been told that the Separatists would support themselves by fishing, replied, "Very good; it was the apostles' own calling," and, pleased with his wit, he did not refuse to let the exiles go. First of all, however, they were required to submit a statement of their religious opinions, which they did in seven Articles, signed by Robinson and Brewster. Early in 1620, a day of humiliation and prayer was held. The pastor preached from 1 Sam. xxiii. 3, 4, "And David's men said unto him, Behold, we be afraid here in Judah; how much more then if we come to Keilah against the armies of the Philistines? Then David inquired of the Lord yet again." In July, they called another day of humiliation, on which the pastor preached for some hours, the rest of the day being spent in prayers and tears. On Saturday, July 22nd, Robinson said farewell to them, with truly apostolic words. The pilgrims, with such grief that the Dutch strangers could not hold back their tears,

sailed away from Delft Haven, on the *Speedwell*. Bradford, Brewster, Winslow, and Standish were the leaders of the expedition. It was the intention of Robinson to go later on. When the *Speedwell* reached Southampton, it was joined by the *Mayflower* and a party of Separatists from England. Soon the *Speedwell* sprang a leak. The two vessels made for Plymouth Harbour, and thence, on September 6, 1620, the pilgrims, of whom there were a hundred and two, set sail, on the *Mayflower*, for the New World. Across terrible and stormy seas they beat their way. On November 11th, they found themselves at Cape Cod, and, after three explorations of the country, settled permanently at Plymouth, which had been so named by the adventurer, John Smith. But it was outside Virginia, with its laws and concessions, and so before they landed, in the cabin of the *Mayflower*, they drew up the Charter and Constitution of the new Commonwealth, which was signed by forty-one men. They were not only the pioneers of a Church, but also of a State. The *Mayflower* Compact is so important that we transcribe it :—

"In the name of God, Amen. We whose names are underwritten, the loyal Subjects

of our dread sovereign Lord, King James, by the grace of God, of Great Britain, France, and Ireland King, Defender of the Faith, etc.

"Having undertaken, for the glory of God and advancement of the Christian Faith, and honour of our King and Country, a Voyage to plant the first Colony in the Northern parts of Virginia, do by these presents solemnly and mutually in the presence of God, and of one another, covenant and combine ourselves together into a civil body politic, for our better ordering and preservation and furtherance of the ends aforesaid; and by virtue hereof to enact, constitute, and frame such just and equal Laws, Ordinances, acts, constitutions, and offices from time to time, as shall be thought most meet and convenient for the general good of the colony, unto which we promise all due submission and obedience. In witness whereof we have here-under subscribed our names at Cape Cod, the eleven of November in the year of the reign of our sovereign Lord, King James of England, France, and Ireland the eighteenth, and of Scotland the fifty-fourth. Anno Domini 1620."

All the pilgrims landed on December 21st, John Alden being the first, according to tradition, to leap ashore upon the Plymouth Rock.

John Robinson lived only five years after the departure of the pilgrims, and was buried in Leyden on March 4, 1625. One utterance of his, often quoted, may be reckoned among the great words of human history. It was spoken in farewell to the pilgrims, and is recorded thus by Winslow :—

"HE WAS VERY CONFIDENT THAT THE LORD HAD MORE TRUTH AND LIGHT YET TO BREAK FORTH OUT OF HIS HOLY WORD."

Perhaps Robinson was thinking only of Church polity, and if so, the saying is true in a wider sense than he intended. At least, it is certain that, while a convinced Congregationalist, he was a large-minded and charitable one. He did not allow differences of organisation to prevent communion with the reformed Churches of the Continent. Yet we cannot read the seven Articles, which he signed for submission to James I., without astonishment. After making every allowance for the fact that they were intended to minimise as much as possible the

differences from the Church of England, and to present the Separatists in a favourable light, it is still clear that Robinson was a Separatist solely on the ground of vestments and ceremonies. He assented to every Article of the Church of England. He accepted the Royal supremacy, and was willing to render passive obedience to the King, even in things contrary to Scripture. While careful not to admit the office of a diocesan bishop to be scriptural, he had no objection to the civil appointment of bishops by the King for the oversight of the Churches.

It lies outside the scope of this book to follow the fortunes of Congregationalism in New England, yet some explanation must be given of the fact that very shortly it was dominated, shaped, and directed by Puritanism. All through the period with which we have dealt, England became less possible as a home for the Puritans. The high hopes they had cherished at the accession of James of Scotland had been rudely dispelled, and they soon discovered that he had the Stuart failing of duplicity. Their chosen representatives at the Hampton Court Conference were derided and insulted, though they made such simple proposals as that the sign of the

cross in baptism and the use of the surplice should be optional. The King thoroughly enjoyed himself as president of a theological assembly. He sat, a ludicrous figure, with rolling eyes, slobbering tongue, and head too large for his body, while exultant bishops hailed their champion with ecstasy, and Whitgift cried, "Doubtless your Majesty speaks by the special assistance of God's Spirit." He had suffered much from the Scotch Presbyterians, and he made the mistake of confusing Puritanism and Presbyterianism together. He broke up the Conference with the threat, "I will make them conform, or I will harry them out of the land, or else do worse."

The drift of Puritanism from the Church of England was increased by the extravagant claim which now began to be made by Anglican bishops, that episcopacy was not simply necessary to the *bene esse*, but even to the *esse* of the Church. That it served a good and useful purpose, or was permissible as a form of Church government, many Nonconformists were ready to admit, but they became fiercely antagonistic when Bancroft, Bilson, and Laud claimed that it was essential and indispensable, and that, without it, there could be no Church at all.

Anglicanism blindly pursued its course. It seemed to triumph; but there are victories which are more disastrous than defeats. In July, 1604, a stricter subscription, *ex animo*, was enforced, and though only about three hundred clergy refused, the resentment was wide and deep. The bishops made common cause with the enemies of popular liberty and justice, supporting the hateful powers exercised by the High Commission, and also the claims for an unrestricted Royal prerogative. At the same time, they set themselves against the Puritan House of Commons. The judges quashed a decision of the High Commission, but the Archbishop appealed against the judges. The Royal "Declaration of Sports" was ordered to be read from the pulpits on Sunday. Then came Laud, first, as Bishop of London, the most Puritan diocese in the kingdom, and, in 1633, as Archbishop of Canterbury, with the policy of the Church of England in his hands. He set himself to root out Puritanism. He restored vestments, removed the table to the chancel, and railed it off as an altar. He was Arminian, the Puritans were Calvinistic; he desired Sunday to be divided between Church services and sports; they thought that it ought to be like the

Jewish Sabbath. "Instead of being a statesman," says Bishop Boyd Carpenter, "he was an industrious pedlar in State affairs; instead of being a great prelate, he was an episcopal martinet. Coke delighted in law; Laud delighted in laws. The law in Coke's hands became the palladium of liberty; in Laud's it was an engine of oppression." Moreover, to fines and deprivation he added horrible cruelties. However wicked and mistaken, it was strictly in accordance with the spirit of the times when, in 1612, Legate was burnt as an Arian, and Wightman, the poor crazy creature, who announced himself to be the Holy Ghost. But to the Puritans it was a wholly different thing when Dr. Alexander Leighton, the Scotch divine, and father of the future archbishop, was tortured with Red Indian ingenuity for writing *Sion's Plea against the Prelacy*. One ear was cut off, half his nose slit, his cheek branded; he was tied to a post and whipped so that every lash brought away flesh, then, seven days later, the other ear and cheek were treated in like manner. When sentence was pronounced, Laud lifted his cap and thanked God. His own penalty was paid later on, but our point is, that through this dark time, it was borne

in upon the Puritans that England was no place for them.

Thus it came to pass that they began to emigrate to the New World, and that they came to New England in such numbers as completely to swamp the Pilgrim Church. The Puritans had disliked the Congregationalists, but now they all became Separatists together. They formed the great colony of Massachusetts, and were able to realise their conception of a Christian State. The Independents were not enamoured of religious liberty, but the Puritans were resolved that no one should have it but themselves. Thus the Puritan State was a theocracy, in which no one was admitted to the rights of citizenship who was not a Church member. No toleration was extended to episcopacy or to heretical opinions. Provision was made for the ministry out of public taxation. Roger Williams, the erratic and fiery young Welshman, ventured to advocate the doctrine of religious liberty, and was compelled to flee, but found a refuge in Rhode Island, where he formed the first free colony. To the outsider, the colony must have seemed self-condemned, for it quickly became a Cave of Adullam, to which repaired the advocates of every crank, eccentricity, fad, and extra-

ordinary opinion, and all were allowed to prophesy and proselytise to their hearts' content. It was a surprising, daring, and far-seeing experiment, for only after long travail and agony has the world come to see that free speech is best, and "that truth is so much larger and stranger, and more many-sided than we know of, that it is very much better at all costs to hear every one's account of it." Yet the Baptist, Roger Williams, felt this, and in 1644—the same year in which Milton, in organ tones, pleaded for "liberty of unlicensed printing"—he expressed it in the *Bloody Tenent of Persecution for Cause of Conscience*, and declared that truth "must have no sword, helmet, breastplate, shield, or horse, but what is spiritual and of a heavenly nature."

VIII

HENRY JACOB

THE MOTHER CHURCH

NO movement, which has for its leaders narrow, extreme, and violent men, can be widely or permanently successful. The extraordinary and rapid growth of Congregationalism, in its two sections of the Independent and Baptist Churches, was largely due to the fact that the Puritan party was driven more and more to take sides with the Separatists. The most striking illustration of this was, of course, much later on, and Congregationalism owes its great place in English life and thought, in no small degree, to the expulsion, in 1662, of the Puritan clergy from the Church of England, among whom were some of the noblest, the most eloquent and saintly divines, of whom any

Church in any age could boast. But even at the beginning of the seventeenth century, in Puritanism "there were great searchings of heart." In a sense, Henry Jacob epitomised his party. His misgivings, his reluctance to separate, his convictions, and his hopes of reform in the Established Church were shared by many, but his significance as a pioneer is in the ominous fact that he founded a Congregational Church in London, on the advice, and with the approval, of a number of the most eminent Puritan clergy.

Henry Jacob was an Oxford man and a graduate of his University. It has been mistakenly supposed by some writers that, in 1590, he became a Brownist, and in 1593 fled to Holland. The facts of his career are somewhat wrapped in obscurity, but it is certain that, in 1596, he was one of the Puritan clergy who had personal conference with Francis Johnson in the Clink, and urged him to conform. Jacob argued that the Articles of the National Church contained sufficient to make a true Christian, and said, therefore, "you ought not to separate from us nor to condemn us as wholly abolished from Christ." He hinted plainly that the imprisonment of the Separatists was imposed upon them by their own unnecessary scruples

and not by Christ. Men like Johnson and Jacob have little in common, and the conferences could only issue in wider alienation. In 1599, Jacob carried the attack into the Separatists' own country of Middleberg, by publishing there two treatises in defence of the Church of England, specially for the benefit of Johnson's following. But in all this, he was really like Saul of Tarsus, "kicking against the pricks." In his heart, he was profoundly dissatisfied with Anglicanism, and, in 1603, took a leading part in promoting the Millenary Petition to King James. This being rejected, he could no longer remain in the State Church, and, in 1604, he was silenced. Thereupon, he published *Reasons taken out of the Word of God for Reforming the Church of England*, asserting that the only visible Church on earth was the particular Church, which should be self-governing, and that, for two hundred years after Christ, the Churches were Congregational in order, and the bishops parishional, not diocesan. In 1609, he addressed a *Humble Supplication* to James as one of "the silenced and disgraced ministers," and the King's copy still remains, with marginal notes in the Royal hand. A visit to Leyden, in 1610, brought him into

contact with John Robinson. The two men were of the same mould. Deeply spiritual and earnest, by temperament linked to Anglicanism, but by conviction impelled towards Congregationalism, both of them utterly alien from what was trivial or violent, both of them with a touch of that world of rank and power from which the Separatist was excluded, it was certain that the Leyden pastor would profoundly influence the troubled Puritan. Six years later, Jacob returned to London as a Congregationalist, held many meetings with godly and learned clergymen, and, after much prayer and fasting, the time and the circumstances having been seriously weighed, it was concluded by most of them that it was warrantable and commendable to set up a Church in London. Jacob "was willing to adventure himself, and the rest encouraged him." Thus, in 1616, during the weak archbishopric of Abbott, he founded a Congregational Church in Southwark. It was not, as the *Dictionary of National Biography* mistakenly suggests, "the first Congregational Church in England," but it was the first which took root and endured on English soil. It was a significant event, and marked a new temper and attitude in Puritanism.

Jacob remained as pastor of the Southwark Church, which has been variously known as the "Jacob" or "Jessey" Church, till 1622, when he resigned with the intention of removing to Virginia. Two years later, in 1624, he died, according to the contemporary Jessey Records, in Virginia; the *Dictionary of National Biography* asserts that he returned to London and died in the parish of St. Andrew Hubbard, but an examination of the parish register does not support this statement. Probate of his will was given on May 5, 1624, in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury. As a British subject in the British Colony of Virginia, his will would, at that time, have to be proved in that Court, as, indeed, was the case with regard to the will of Christopher Lawne.

For the story of the Jacob Church and for some important facts of early Baptist history, we are indebted to two chief sources. First, the Jessey Records and the Kiffin MS., often called the Stinton Papers, because they were copied by Stinton, to whom Richard Adams, the minister of Devonshire Square Baptist Church, had lent them. The genuineness of these papers, which has been much questioned, cannot, after the inquiries of Lofton and Burrage, be seriously open to doubt.

The second chief source is the "King's Pamphlets," the wonderful collection which George Thomason, of the "Rose and Crown," began to make in 1641, a task which he continued for twenty years.

In the Records appear a number of names of extraordinary interest, some of which are very familiar in English history. Among the Congregationalists, we may note John Lathrop, the successor of Jacob, who united courage with meekness, and who, at last, by the persecutions of Laud, was compelled to flee to New England; Praise-God Barbon, the leatherseller, pastor of the Church which met in his shop, "The Lock and Key," in Fleet Street, and whose name stood first in the list of that Cromwell Parliament which was nominated by the Baptist and Independent Churches of the land. Among Baptists, special mention is due to Henry Jessey, "the oracle and idol of his faction," the Cambridge graduate and clergyman who succeeded Lathrop in the pastorate of the Jacob Church, and afterwards, having accepted believer's baptism, was baptized by Knollys; Hanserd Knollys, also a Cambridge graduate and clergyman, who was led to build, "not on works but on grace"; he migrated to New England, but, having advocated religious

liberty, incurred persecution, and came back saying that he "might as well be knocked about in old England"; last, but not least, the grand old strict communionist Baptist, William Kiffin, the wealthy merchant, the keen debater, and the faithful pastor. "Great as was the authority of Bunyan with the Baptists," says Macaulay, "that of William Kiffin was still greater." James II. vainly tried to cajole the sturdy old man with flattering courtesies and honeyed words. In 1701, he passed away at the age of eighty-six, leaving behind him a record of suffering and fidelity and of devoted service to his generation.

The evolution of the Jacob Church can be represented most clearly in diagrammatic form. It has been called "the mother Church of the Independents." It became a Baptist Church, first, with open, and then with strict, membership. Of the six Churches which sprang from it, five became Baptist. The separations and developments which took place were, most of them, the result of friendly conference, and arose from the rapid growth of the Church or from differences on the question of baptism, which now began seriously to agitate the Separatists. The baptismal controversy passed through three

distinct and successive stages, which must be noted with the utmost care. The first question was as to the administrator, or, who should baptize; the second, as to the subject, or, who should be baptized; the third, as to the mode, or, how should baptism be administered. (*See diagram*, pp. 184–5.)

We have reached the point, then, at which we find the first Calvinistic or Particular Baptist Church. It must be borne in mind, however, that the term Baptist at this stage is only used as to the essence of the Baptist contention, viz., that the proper subject is the believer, and not as to the mode of baptism. It has been the custom, in popular usage and also of Baptist historians, such as Crosby, Evans, and Lofton, to apply the term in this way. The Baptist Church in Newgate Street, transplanted to London by Helwys and Morton in 1611, was Arminian. Considering the position of Calvinism in England, Calvinistic Baptist Churches were sure to arise. It is, however, important to notice that there was absolutely no fellowship between the two sets of Churches, nor ever has been. The old General Baptist Churches, for the most part, became Unitarian, and still keep up a shadowy legal existence, having no intercourse whatever with the Baptist body.

The General Baptist New Connexion, formed in 1770, and amalgamated with the Particular Baptists in 1891, had a different origin and history. The Calvinists are the real forefathers of the modern Denomination.

The origin of the Particular Baptists has been dated 1633; but this is a mistake. It has rested upon Crosby's version of an extract from the Kiffin and Jessey papers, which has misled subsequent writers. Crosby places the quotation in inverted commas, as though it were an exact extract, but he has really fused together, and, doubtless unintentionally, garbled different passages taken from the Jessey Records and from the Kiffin papers, and has even quoted the words "as they believed that Baptism was not rightly administered to infants," which are dated 1638, and joined them on to words taken from an extract dated 1633. The discrepancy between Crosby's version and the record in the Jessey and Kiffin papers is clearly shown in the following:—

JESSEY RECORDS.

" 1633	There having been much discussing these denying truth of the Parish Churches, and the Church being now become so large	1633

that it might be prejudicial, these following desired dismission that they might become an Entire Church, and further the Communion of those Churches in Order amongst themselves: which at last was granted them and performed September 12th, 1633. . . .
Mr. Eaton with some others receiving a further Baptism. Others joined to them.

1638 These also being of the same judgment with Sam Eaton, and desiring to depart and not to be censured, our interest in them was remitted with prayer made in their behalf, June 8th, 1638; they having first forsaken us and joined with Mr. Spilsbry."

KIFFIN MS.

"Sundry of the Church whereof Mr. Jacob and Mr. John Lathrop had been pastors, being dissatisfied with
1633 the Church's owning of 1633
English Parishes to be true Churches, desired dismission and joined together among themselves."

. . . .

"Mr. Thomas Wilson, Mr. Pen, and H. Pen and three more, being convinced that Baptism was not
1638 for infants but professed 1638
believers, joined with Mr. John Spilsbury, the Church's favour being desired therein."

Compare with this Crosby's version :—

"The Church, considering that they were now grown very numerous, and so more than could in these times of persecution conveniently meet together, and believing also that those persons acted from a principle of conscience, and not obstinacy, agreed to allow them the liberty they desired, and that they should be constituted a distinct Church ; which was performed the 12th Sept. 1633. And as they believed that Baptism was not rightly administered to infants, so they looked upon the baptism they had received in that age as invalid ; whereupon most or all of them received a new baptism. Their minister was Mr. John Spilsbury."

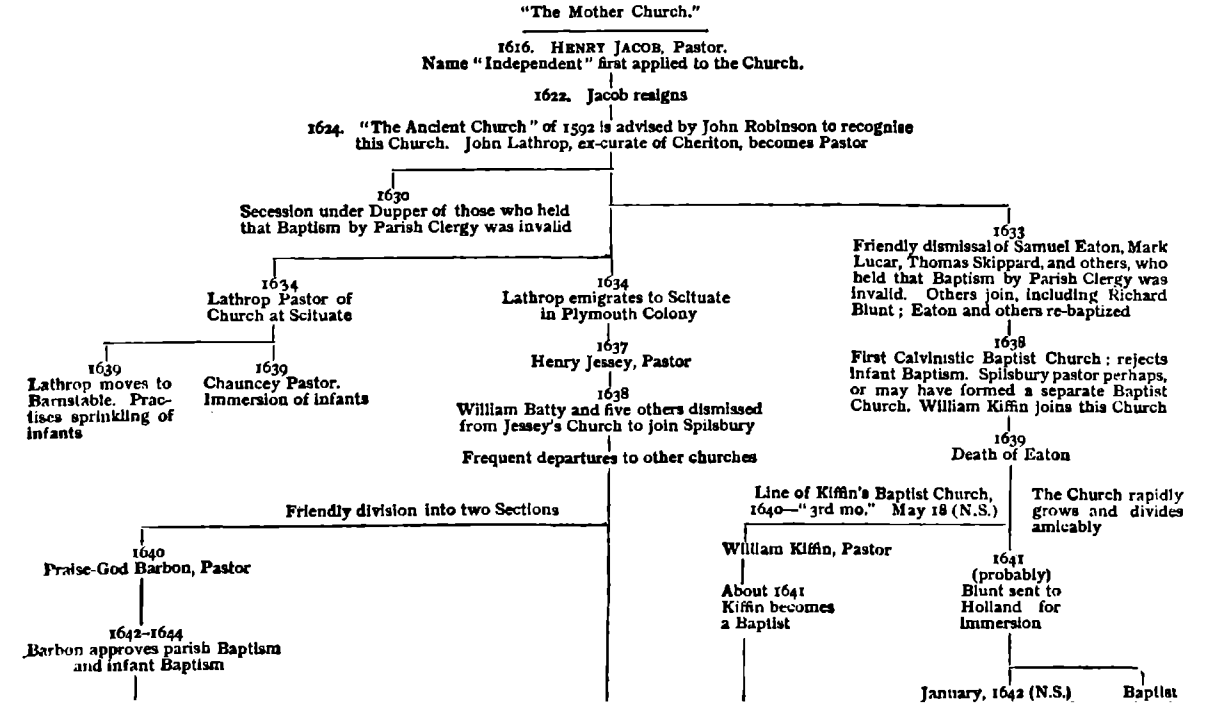
Let us try to reconstruct the story from the originals. During the pastorate of Lathrop, in 1633, some members of the Jacob Church, who held that baptism by the parish clergyman was invalid, not because it was infant baptism, but because it was received in the Church of England, were dismissed to form a separate Church. Samuel Eaton, the button-maker, joined them, and was rebaptized, as also were some others. John Taylor (*A Swarme of Sectaries*, 1641) tells

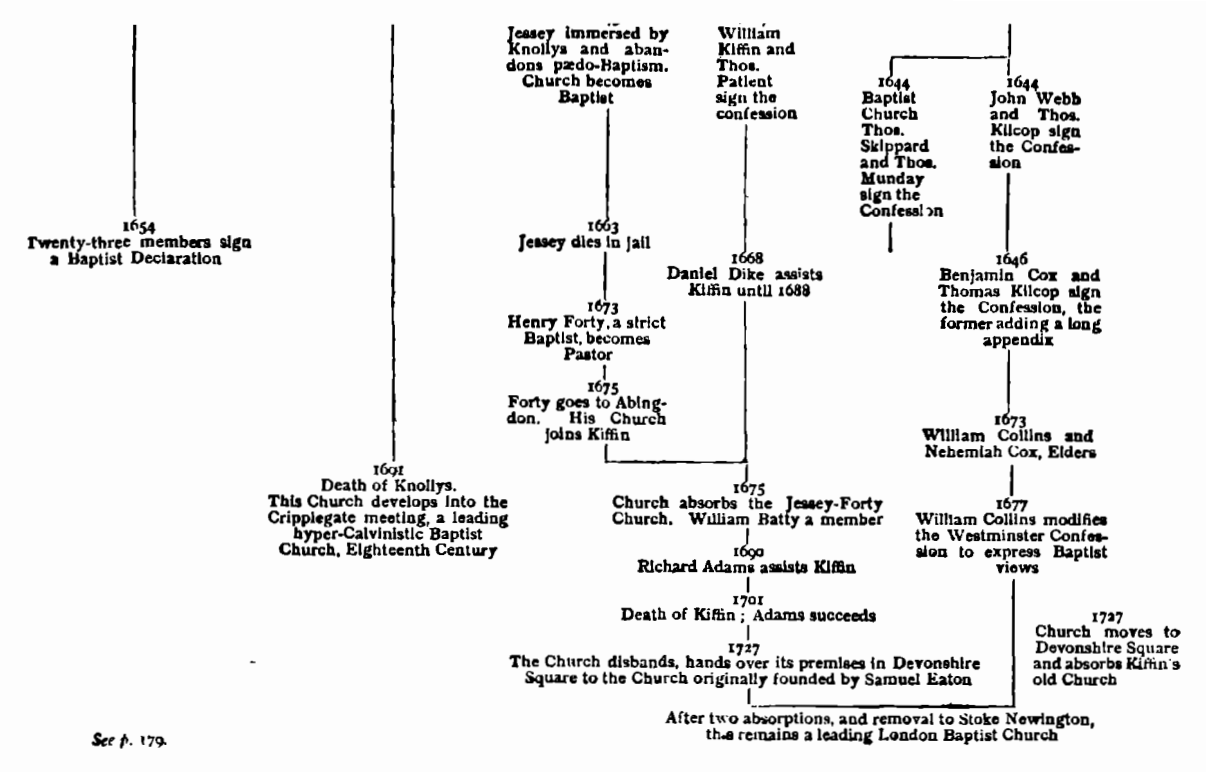
us that Spilsbury baptized Eaton in "Anabaptist fashion." Crosby states that Spilsbury was pastor of the Eaton Church, but no weight can be attached to his confused record. But, in 1638, the second stage of the baptismal controversy was reached. A further dismissal took place from the Jacob Church of some who, rejecting infant baptism, joined with Mr. Spilsbury, and were "of the same judgment with Samuel Eaton." In the present state of the evidence, we may say with certainty that, in 1638, there was either the first Calvinistic Baptist Church, with John Spilsbury as its pastor, containing Samuel Eaton, Mark Lucar, and others, or that, in the same year, there were two Calvinistic Baptist Churches in London, the one under John Spilsbury and the other under Samuel Eaton. In January, 1642 (N.S.), the third stage in the baptismal controversy had been reached, and the people with Spilsbury and Eaton had become immersionist, some being baptized a third time.

The origin of the Particular Baptist Denomination must be dated, therefore, some time after 1633, and not later than 1638.

The first so-called English Baptist Churches

THE EVOLUTION OF THE JACOB CHURCH FORMED IN SOUTHWARK, 1616.




1654
Twenty-three members sign a Baptist Declaration
Jessey immersed by Knollys and abandons pædo-Baptism. Church becomes Baptist
William Kiffin and Thos. Patient sign the confession
1644
Baptist Church Thos. Skippard and Thos. Munday sign the Confession
1644
John Webb and Thos. Kilcop sign the Confession
1663
Jessey dies in jail
1668
Daniel Dike assists Kiffin until 1688
1646
Benjamin Cox and Thomas Kilcop sign the Confession, the former adding a long appendix
1673
Henry Forty, a strict Baptist, becomes Pastor
1675
Forty goes to Abingdon. His Church joins Kiffin
1673
William Collins and Nehemiah Cox, Elders
1691
Death of Knollys.
This Church develops into the Cripplegate meeting, a leading hyper-Calvinistic Baptist Church, Eighteenth Century
1675
Church absorbs the Jessey-Forty Church. William Batty a member
1677
William Collins modifies the Westminster Confession to express Baptist views
1690
Richard Adams assists Kiffin
1701
Death of Kiffin; Adams succeeds
1727
Church moves to Devonshire Square and absorbs Kiffin's old Church
1727
The Church disbands, hands over its premises in Devonshire Square to the Church originally founded by Samuel Eaton
After two absorptions, and removal to Stoke Newington, the remains a leading London Baptist Church

See p. 179.

were not immersionist, *i.e.*, they held the doctrine of believers' baptism but were indifferent as to the mode.

To deal first with the General Baptists, the practice of the Church of Helwys and Morton was in agreement with that of the Mennonites, for it was reported by the Mennonite ministers who inquired as to the foundation and form of their baptism, "We have not found that there was any difference at all, neither in the one nor the other thing, between them and us." Now, as the result of the protracted and heated controversy in America, known as the Whitsitt controversy, it has been established, beyond the possibility of reasonable doubt, that the Mennonites administered baptism by affusion, until, in 1620, a section called the Collegianten, at Rhynsberg, began to immerse.

As to the adoption of immersion by the Particular Baptists, we read, in an entry in the Kiffin MS., that Mr. Richard Blunt became convinced of baptism that it ought to be by dipping the body into the water, "none having themselves so practised in England to professed believers." Again, that the members of the Church who thought baptism should be by immersion, could not find an administrator in England, "because,

though some in this nation rejected the baptism of infants, yet they had not, as they knew of, revived the ancient custom of immersion." Mr. Blunt, therefore, went over, in 1641, to Holland, received immersion from the Collegianten, and, on his return, baptized Mr. Blacklock, the teacher of the Church, and these two, in January, 1642 (N.S.), baptized fifty-one others.

The date of Mr. Blunt's conversion to believers' baptism and visit to Holland has been hitherto said to be "1640, 3rd month"; but this also is a mistake, and has arisen through confusing two entirely distinct events recorded in the Kiffin MS. The originals show clearly that the date, "1640, 3rd mo.," May 18 (N.S.), applies to the friendly division of the Church. Mr. Blunt's change of view and baptism occurred later, in 1641. This fits in exactly with his return in January, 1642, and the baptism of his fellow-members.

That the mode of immersion seemed strange to the Separatists is clearly shown in a discourse by Praise-God Barbon, in April, 1642, in which we read:—

"The way of new baptizing, lately begun to be practised," and again "but now very lately some are mightily taken, as having

found out a new defect in the baptism . . . so addressing themselves to be baptized the third time after the true way and manner they have found out, which they account a precious truth. The particular of their opinion and practice is to dip." It would be interesting to trace the history of the substitution of pouring or sprinkling for immersion on the Continent and in England, but we must content ourselves with pointing out that, from the twelfth century onwards, apart from the Greek Church, the strong current of opinion and practice on the Continent was against immersion, until at last pouring became almost universal. Few, either of the Continental or English Anabaptists, immersed, and their practice is illustrated in a record dated April, 1525, that:

"Hubmeier called his followers together, and having sent for a pail of water, solemnly baptized 300 persons at one time."

The Reformed Churches and the Presbyterians yielded to the influence of Calvin, and pronounced in favour of sprinkling.

Immersion held its own to a much later date in England, shut off from Continental thought by its insular position. Immersion was never entirely abandoned. But in spite

of determined efforts on the part of ecclesiastical rulers, the Church of England had largely discontinued immersion by the year 1600, though it never took up the extraordinary position of the majority of the Westminster divines that immersion was not a legitimate mode of baptism. Immersion remained in the Prayer Book as the prescribed, though discredited, method, and, even as late as 1630, the infant Prince, afterwards Charles II., was immersed.

The Baptists had now definitely taken up the position with regard to the subject and mode of the ordinance to which they have ever since adhered. In 1644, they adopted, with a view to prevent misrepresentation, a Confession of fifty Articles signed by fifteen ministers, Kiffin heading the list. Two years later, this was revised and supplemented, on behalf of seven English Churches and one French Church, and presented to Parliament. It declared that disciples only ought to be baptized, on profession of faith, and that the manner of the ordinance was to dip or plunge the body under water as a symbol of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. A note added, "yet so as convenient garments be upon both the administrator and subject with all modesty."

From this point, the Baptists and the Independents, side by side, have travelled along that pathway of struggle, advance, and liberty which has led to their present world-wide influence. For a brief period, the freedom of England was in their charge. Together, they made up the most advanced and resolute element in Cromwell's army. Together, they marched to victory at Naseby and Marston Moor. Together, they nominated the Parliament of 1653, probably the one English Parliament absolutely free from vested interests and seeking only the public good. At one time, most of Cromwell's immediate staff of officers were Baptists. Cromwell was an Independent. His great rival, Major-General Harrison, the head of the Army in 1653, was a Baptist. The Baptists and Independents together have played a great part in the making of modern England. Together with the other Free Churches, they offer the surest guarantee of English liberty and of the maintenance and extension of spiritual religion throughout the world.

We have sought faithfully to present the pioneers as they really were, to "extenuate nothing nor set down aught in malice." Essentially they were men of their own age,

often sharing to the full in its narrowness, its bitterness, and its mistaken interpretations of the mind and law of Christ. But we may well ask whether we have their heroic courage and endurance, their fidelity to conscience, and their willingness both to venture all that most men count dear, and to suffer all that intolerance could devise, rather than "alter or neglect" one iota of the Word of God.

Is true freedom but to break
Fetters for our own dear sake,
And, with leathern hearts, forget
That we owe mankind a debt?
No! true Freedom is to share
All the chains our brothers wear,
And with heart and hand to be
Earnest to make others free!
They are slaves who fear to speak
For the fallen and the weak;
They are slaves who will not choose
Hatred, scoffing, and abuse,
Rather than in silence shrink
From the truth they needs must think;
They are slaves who dare not be
In the right with two or three.

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