GOOD NEWS FROM NEW ENGLAND:
THE INFLUENCE OF THE NEW ENGLAND WAY OF CHURCH POLITY ON OLD ENGLAND, 1635-1660

Ph. D.

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

BY

RALPH F. YOUNG

1971

LIBRARY
Michigan State
University

This is to certify that the

thesis entitled

GOOD NEWS FROM NEW ENGLAND:
THE INFLUENCE OF THE NEW ENGLAND WAY OF
CHURCH POLITY ON OLD ENGLAND, 1635-1660

presented by

Ralph F. Young

has been accepted towards fulfillment
of the requirements for

Ph.D. degree in History

Robert Ernest Wall, Jr.
Major professor

Date 4 May 1971

O-7639

The A

in isolation o

on English inst

dant evidence w

a powerful influ

decades of settle

The introduction

and their subseque

tion.

During the

Colony, a number of

to their home land.

ideas concerning chu

and which were known

introduced into the

emerging during the e

ous tracts and pamphl

Presbyterianism or In

the spreading of thes

the New England divin

One of the a

ABSTRACT

GOOD NEWS FROM NEW ENGLAND:
THE INFLUENCE OF THE NEW ENGLAND WAY OF
CHURCH POLITY ON OLD ENGLAND, 1635-1660

By

Ralph F. Young

The American colonies have, for many years, been studied either in isolation or as the offspring of England, dependent in most respects on English institutions, traditions, and ideas. However, there is abundant evidence which indicates that the infant colonies actually exerted a powerful influence on the mother country as early as the first three decades of settlement, especially in the realm of religious ideas. The introduction of these colonial ideas into England at this time, and their subsequent influence there is the subject of this dissertation.

During the first decades of settlement in Massachusetts Bay Colony, a number of the Puritan ministers left New England and returned to their home land. In the process they brought with them the unique ideas concerning church polity which had been developed in the colony and which were known as the New England Way. These ideas also were introduced into the mother country by the pamphlet warfare which was emerging during the early years of the struggle against the King. Numerous tracts and pamphlets were presented arguing for or against either Presbyterianism or Independency of churches (Congregationalism), and the spreading of these throughout the kingdom, along with the influx of the New England divines, produced a deep and enduring effect.

One of the aspects of the New England Way to which considerable

ttention has been
By 1635, in New En
candidates who cou
received saving fa
church covenant.
England, and it is
for this developmen
example, in his New
declared that "from
which hath spread o
many Puritans in ol
members to the chur

The major
categories: firstl
ministers who retur
Weld, Samuel Eaton,
England divines who
sermons, letters, a
(e.g., Thomas Hooke
studied the writing
in the issue of chu
(e.g., John Owen, T
Goodwin, and John G
Nonconformist churc
Anglia) in an effor
was actually adopte
was indeed the case

attention has been devoted in this study is the "test for saving faith." By 1635, in New England, church membership was limited to only those candidates who could present evidence to the congregation that they had received saving faith from God and were thus qualified to enter into the church covenant. By 1640 this practice was beginning to be adopted in England, and it is clear from the available evidence that the impetus for this development came primarily from New England. John Child, for example, in his New Englands Jonas Cast Up at London (London, 1647), declared that "from New-England came Independencie of Churches hither, which hath spread over all parts here," as can be seen by the fact that many Puritans in old England were becoming as selective in admitting members to the church as their brethren in New England.

The major research for this project fell into three distinct categories: firstly I examined the theological writings of New England ministers who returned during the civil wars to England (e.g., Thomas Weld, Samuel Eaton, Isaac Chauncy, Hugh Peter) and also those of the New England divines who did not return to the mother country, but whose sermons, letters, and pamphlets were read by their brethren in England (e.g., Thomas Hooker, John Cotton, and Richard Mather). Secondly, I studied the writings of the English ministers who were interested enough in the issue of church polity to read the works of their colonial brethren (e.g., John Owen, Thomas Edwards, Robert Baillie, Richard Baxter, Thomas Goodwin, and John Goodwin). Finally, I explored the extant records of nonconformist churches in Great Britain (primarily in London and East Anglia) in an effort to determine whether or not the New England Way was actually adopted there. The findings of this study suggest that this was indeed the case.

GOOD NEWS FROM NEW ENGLAND:
THE INFLUENCE OF THE NEW ENGLAND WAY OF CHURCH POLITY ON OLD ENGLAND, 1635-1660

By

Ralph F. Young

A THESIS

Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department of History

1971

I should
Harvard University
the staffs of the
Register of Archiv
the vast bulk of t
Mr. John Creasey, D
often valuable and
locating and deciph
acknowledgment is g
the necessary funds
couragement of Profe
has been invaluable
off the ground.

Many other
the preparation of t
table and nerves; Bo
of his room, paraffi
Andy, Christa, Bob,
lunj;" Gudrun for he
toast; Benyon for his
scholarly reading; Da
Shindah who was such

67037

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I should like to thank the staff of the Houghton Library at Harvard University where I did much of the preliminary research, and the staffs of the British Museum, the Guildhall Library, the National Register of Archives, and the Dr. Williams's Library, all in London where the vast bulk of the research was completed. Special thanks is given to Mr. John Creasey, Deputy Librarian of the Dr. Williams's Library for his often valuable and always kind assistance in the tedious matter of locating and deciphering seventeenth-century church records. Also acknowledgment is given to the Woodrow Wilson Fellowship Foundation for the necessary funds to make this project possible. The advice and encouragement of Professor Robert E. Wall, Jr., as dissertation director, has been invaluable and without which this study would never have got off the ground.

Many other people have, in their own small way, contributed to the preparation of this manuscript. I should like to thank Peter for his table and nerves; Bob and Cecil for their typewriters; Chris for a corner of his room, paraffin heater, and the occasional bowl of soup; Michael, Andy, Christa, Bob, and the Davids for their patient listening at "Roseland;" Gudrun for her reading, typing, Knoedelchen, and Cheese-and-tomato toast; Benyon for his guitar; Don for his letters; Juergen for his quiet, scholarly reading; Dan for his poems; Judi for her perspective; and Shindah who was such a sport throughout it all.

INTRODUCTION .

CHAPTER I. THE

CHAPTER II. THE

CHAPTER III. THE

CHAPTER IV. THE

CHAPTER V. THE RO

CONCLUSION . . .

BIBLIOGRAPHY . .

APPENDIX A. DORCHE

APPENDIX B. YARMOU

APPENDIX C. COVENA

APPENDIX D. DECLARA
SAVING
CATHEDR

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION 1

CHAPTER I. THE NEW ENGLAND WAY 3

CHAPTER II. THE CONTAGIOUS AIR OF INDEPENDENCY 22

CHAPTER III. THE SPREADING OF INDEPENDENCY 44

CHAPTER IV. THE RETURN OF THE SAINTS 74

CHAPTER V. THE ROAD TO ZION 120

CONCLUSION 173

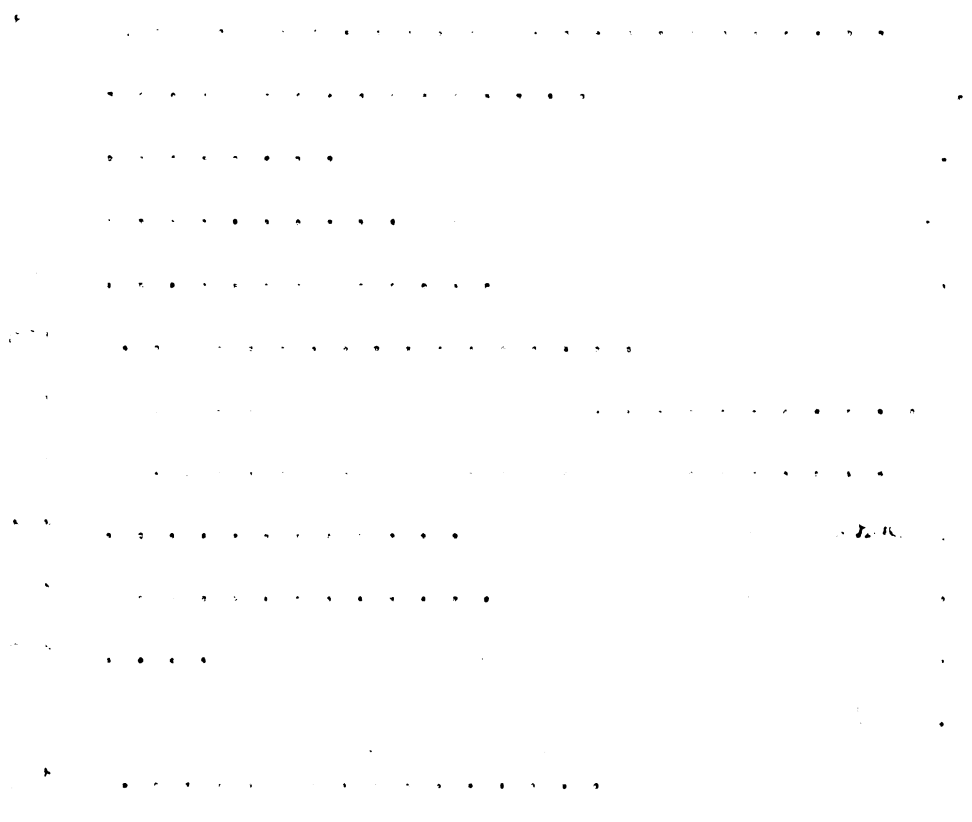
BIBLIOGRAPHY 178

APPENDIX A. DORCHESTER CHURCH COVENANT 191

APPENDIX B. YARMOUTH CHURCH COVENANT 192

APPENDIX C. COVENANT OF CHRIST CHURCH CATHEDRAL, DUBLIN 193

APPENDIX D. DECLARATIONS OF EXPERIENCE IN RECEIVING SAVING FAITH GIVEN AT CHRIST CHURCH CATHEDRAL, DUBLIN 195



NOMENCLATURE, ABBREVIATIONS, AND OTHER MATTERS

Throughout the ensuing pages I have followed the seventeenth-century practice of using the words "Congregational" and "Independent" interchangeably. This is also the case with the terms "New England Way," "Congregational Way," "Independent Way," and simply "new way." Some of the seventeenth-century punctuation and abbreviations have been modernized in those cases where retaining the original form might lead to confusion on the part of the reader, but for the most part have been left intact in order to reserve some of the original spirit of the language. Also italics have been generally omitted except in instances where it is clear that they were employed for emphasis and not as a mere whim of the printer whose supply of type was not unlimited. Dates have been left in Old Style, but the correct year has been added for those dates occurring between January and March. In shortening lengthy seventeenth-century titles, the form used in the Wing Short Title Catalogue has been followed whenever possible.

The following abbreviations have been used:

BM . . . . . British Museum, London

CR . . . . . A. G. Matthews, ed., Calamy Revised, (Oxford, 1934).

DNB . . . . . Dictionary of National Biography

DWL . . . . . Dr. Williams's Library, London

GL . . . . . Guildhall Library, London

NM . . . . . Edmund Calamy, The Nonconformists Memorial, ed. by Samuel Palmer (3 vols.; London, 1802).

Englis

American history

have neglected a

English history,

the seventeenth

the mother countr

religious ideas

the first three d

Harvard

describing the in

the New England P

tanism to the Engl

nation. One of M

his work and empha

that it was Englis

World had the oppo

using the invisibl

to limit church me

England. This chu

eventually caught

dissertation that

INTRODUCTION

English ideas have had a predominant influence on the course of American history, especially during the colonial period. Yet historians have neglected adequately to examine the impact of American ideas on English history, even though there is reason to believe that as early as the seventeenth century ideas were travelling back across the ocean to the mother country. It is the purpose of this study to show that in religious ideas New England exerted a strong impact on England during the first three decades of settlement.

Harvard professor Perry Miller succeeded in discovering and describing the intellectual development of that curious character -- the New England Puritan. He traced the intellectual origins of Puritanism to the English religious and political thought of the early Reformation. One of Miller's students, Yale's Edmund S. Morgan, carried on his work and emphasized the uniqueness of the New England Way; proving that it was English in concept but only those who migrated to the New World had the opportunity to put the concept into practice. The idea of using the invisible church as the pattern for the visible -- of attempting to limit church membership only to the visible saints -- began in New England. This church, that was preached by Thomas Hooker and John Cotton, eventually caught on in England, and it is the contention of this dissertation that the primary factor behind this development was the

influence

New Englan

colonies t

polity tha

both the Ar

influence coming from New England. During the civil wars an influx of New England ministers and publications brought the good news from the colonies that, at last, here was a workable, successful model of church polity that could very easily be set up in England by those who opposed both the Anglican Establishment and the Presbyterian alternative.

The C

were performing

their destiny t

by setting up a

ample to their

work out that co

land and Europe,

back there had a

of this model chu

primarily in the

gation, and the re

this model in New

dents of old Englan

But before that que

what was the New En

of New England set

[1] Perry Mill

Wilderness (New York

CHAPTER I

THE NEW ENGLAND WAY

They shall ask the way to Zion,
with faces turned toward it, saying,
"Come, let us join ourselves to the
Lord in an everlasting covenant
which will never be forgotten."
-- Jeremiah 50: 5

The Congregational Puritans who settled Massachusetts Bay Colony were performing an errand into the wilderness. They believed that it was their destiny to cleanse the Church of England of its popish practices by setting up a pure church in Massachusetts which would serve as an example to their brethren in England. They migrated to America "in order to work out that complete reformation which was not yet accomplished in England and Europe, but which would quickly be accomplished if only the saints back there had a working model to guide them."[1] The practices and polity of this model church differed from those of the churches in old England primarily in the conception of church membership, the power of the congregation, and the relationship of churches one with another. Whether or not this model in New England actually served as an example for the Independents of old England is the question that will be answered in this study. But before that question can be resolved we must first answer the question, what was the New England Way? What was this model which the Puritan divines of New England set up in order to influence their brethren in old England?

---

[1] Perry Miller, "Errand Into the Wilderness," in Errand Into the Wilderness (New York, 1956), p. 11.

When God

covenant with him

perform certain d

ever, this covena

fill his obligati

The terms of this

and give him salv

come as a mediato

of Adam." Since

had come and that

would believe, Go

give him enough g

In seventeenth-ce

nant was still in

Along wi

developed the soc

their "federal" t

society; it was

Since you cannot

society, at leas

will perform cut

prosperity as a

I will destroy y

it became the du

God's law, but a

---

2 Perry

When God created man, according to Puritan theology, He made a covenant with him. If Adam would diligently uphold God's moral law and perform certain deeds, then God would reward him with eternal life. However, this covenant of works was short-lived, for Adam was unable to fulfill his obligation. With Abraham God entered into a covenant of grace. The terms of this new covenant were that God would bind himself to man and give him salvation if he would have faith — faith that Christ would come as a mediator between God and man "and compensate God for the failure of Adam." Since the coming of Christ, man only had to believe that Christ had come and that He was "the 'surety' for the new covenant." If man would believe, God would bind Himself, not only to save man, but also to give him enough grace to enable him to fulfill the terms of the covenant.[2] In seventeenth-century Massachusetts the Puritans believed that this covenant was still in effect.

Along with this fundamental concept of the covenant, the Puritans developed the social and church covenants, thus rounding off the basis of their "federal" theology. The social covenant existed between God and a society; it was a covenant which "concerned this world, not the next." Since you cannot obey me and my commandments, God told the members of society, at least you can outwardly observe my law; "if you as a people will perform outward obedience to my commands, I will give you outward prosperity as a people. On the other hand, if you disobey me outwardly, I will destroy you as utterly as I destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah." Thus it became the duty of every member of society not only to try to observe God's law, but also to be watchful of his neighbor to insure that the law

---

[2]Perry Miller, "The Marrow of Puritan Divinity," in Ibid., p. 62.

would be obeyed.

then the wrath of

tan Massachusetts

The best

ise a church. Th

church, and that

one another. Thu

and form a church

were within the c

"for the carryin

ends."[4] We come

selves solemnly in

his servants here

constantly to walk

We will believe th

Lord, & our onely

try to uphold His

promise to fur

good of each o

come members o

reprehension,

fullnes over co

for the Lord to

Congregation,

to the rules of

[3]Edmund S.

Relations in Seventeenth

[4]Perry Mil

(Boston, 1939), p.

the covenant theolo

[5]Charles H

in New England 1636

would be obeyed. For if anyone broke the law and remained unadmonished, then the wrath of God would be wrought upon the whole community; and Puritan Massachusetts would be in danger of destruction.[3]

The best way to insure obedience to the laws of God was to organize a church. The Puritans believed that grace came to man through a church, and that within a church members would best be able to watch over one another. Thus it was a necessity for godly persons to gather together and form a church covenant. This covenant bound the saints -- those who were within the covenant of grace -- into holy communion with one another "'for the carrying on of Church power and order, and ordinances of Christs ends.'"[4] We come together and make a covenant, they said, to "bind ourselves solemnly in the presence of God himselfe, his holy Angells and all his servants here present that wee will by his grace assisting us endevour constantly to walke togeather as a right ordered Congregation of Christ." We will believe that Jesus Christ is "our onely spirituall husband and Lord, & our onely high priest & Prophet and King." Furthermore, we shall try to uphold His ordinances, and

> promise to further to our utmost power, the best spirituall good of each other, and of all and every one that may become members of this Congregation, by mutuall Instruction reprehension, exhortation, consolation, and spirituall watchfullnes over one another for good; and to bee subject in and for the Lord to all the Administrations and Censures of the Congregation, so farre as the same shall bee guided according to the rules of Gods most holy word.[5]

---

[3]Edmund S. Morgan, The Puritan Family: Religion and Domestic Relations in Seventeenth-Century New England (New York, 1966), pp. 9-10.

[4]Perry Miller, The New England Mind: The Seventeenth Century (Boston, 1939), p. 436. This work is perhaps the best in-depth study of the covenant theology of colonial New England.

[5]Charles Henry Pope, ed., Records of the First Church at Dorchester in New England 1636-1734 (Boston, 1891), pp. 1-2. Hereafter cited as

It was

itself, "to ende

no church existe

Christians (at l

gathered togethe

unto another, an

they solemnly ent

covenant they pr

together in publi

This the

was gathered in M

at least seven Ch

Massachusetts, in

fore, Thomas Shep

and asked how man

assembly said, we

then advised Shep

to "make Confessi

had wrought in th

then by seven othe

to by the members.

the colony whether

Dorchester Church

covenant is found

6 A Platfor

and Agreed Upon by

in the Synod at Cam

hereafter cited as

and Church-Covenant

Plain Dealing; Or,

It was the duty of all believers, if the opportunity presented itself, "to endeavour to joyn themselves unto a particular church." If no church existed, then, as long as there was a sufficient number of Christians (at least three), one should be formed. These Christians then gathered together to "confess their sins and professe their faith, one unto another, and being satisfied of one anothers faith and repentance, they solemnly enter into a Covenant with God and one an other." In this covenant they promised to abstain from worldliness, obey Christ, come together in public worship, and look after one another.[6]

This theoretical pattern was generally followed whenever a church was gathered in Massachusetts Bay. The only deviation was that usually at least seven Christians were required in order to form one. Cambridge, Massabhusetts, in 1635, for example, was organising a new church. Therefore, Thomas Shepard and two other men went before an assembly of churches and asked how many people were necessary to gather a church. Three, the assembly said, were too few, but seven was a reasonable number. They then advised Shepard that those who wanted to join the new church ought to "make Confession of their faith & declare what work of Grace the Lord had wrought in them." This was carried out, first by Mr. Shepard, and then by seven others, after which the church covenant was read and assented to by the members. One of the members then asked the other churches in the colony whether or not they approved of the new church at Cambridge,

---

Dorchester Church Records. The complete text of the Dorchester church covenant is found in Appendix A.

[6] A Platform of Church Discipline Gathered out of the Word of God: and Agreed Upon by the Elders: and Messengers of the Churches Assembled in the Synod at Cambridge in New England (Cambridge, Mass., 1649), pp. 5, 6. Hereafter cited as Cambridge Platform. Richard Mather, Church-Government and Church-Covenant Discussed (London, 1643), pp. 38-39, 43. Thomas Lechford, Plain Dealing: Or, Newes from New-England (London, 1642), p. 2.

whereupon John
of fellowship
for the gather
only for the a
incouragment o

Church
one church into
group of its me
a new church, b
Charles River e
curred in 1667
lived on the oth
the First Church
to cross a river

The peop
into the covenant
with their fellow
John Cotton, the
choosing of church

---

[7]Stephen
at Cambridge in Ne
cited as Cambridge

[8]Don Glea
Deaths, And Admiss
from the Church Re
(Dedham, Mass., 18

[9]Richard
ton 1630-1868," Pub
XXIX (1961), 15.
tute, "Beverly Firs
178. Hereafter cit

whereupon John Cotton, speaking for the churches, extended the right hand of fellowship to them.[7] This same procedure was closely followed in 1638 for the gathering of the Dedham Church. That church, however, asked not only for the approval of other churches, but also for "the countenance & incouragment of the majestrates."[8]

Churches were also formed when it became convenient to split one church into two. In 1632, for example, the Boston Church allowed a group of its members, who lived in Charlestown, to be dismissed to form a new church, because it was inconvenient for them to have to cross the Charles River every sabbath to attend divine services. Another case occurred in 1667 when the Salem Church dismissed some of its members who lived on the other side of the Bass River, in order to allow them to form the First Church of Beverly. They too had found it difficult and tedious to cross a river every Lord's Day.[9]

The people who were called out of this world and entered, first into the covenant of grace with God, and then into the church covenant with their fellow saints, were consequently entrusted with, according to John Cotton, the "Key of Liberty." Among the powers of this key were the choosing of church officers, the approval or rejection of candidates for

---

[7]Stephen Pasehall Sharples, ed., Records of the Church of Christ at Cambridge in New England 1632-1830 (Boston, 1906), pp. 28-29. Hereafter cited as Cambridge Church Records.

[8]Don Gleason Hill, ed., The Record of Baptisms, Marriages and Deaths, And Admissions to the Church and Dismissals Therefrom, Transcribed from the Church Records in the Town of Dedham, Massachusetts 1638-1845 (Dedham, Mass., 1888), pp. 9-12. Hereafter cited as Dedham Church Records.

[9]Richard D. Pierce, ed., "The Records of the First Church in Boston 1630-1868," Publications of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts, XXXIX (1961), 15. Hereafter cited as Boston Church Records. Essex Institute, "Beverly First Church Records," Historical Collections, XXXV (1899), 178. Hereafter cited as Beverly Church Records.

membership, th

Synods.[10]

Once

congregation w

consisted of e

elders, and mi

the pastor, who

teacher, who wa

functions of th

assist the mini

visit the sick,

"inordinately wi

church meetings.

offerings of the

These o

but once they wer

deciding upon the

out the will of G

peoples' vote, and

offense. Once ele

the people, either

through them as th

---

[10]John Co

Church (London, 16

John Cotton, The K

[11]Cotton,

pp. 7-10.

membership, the disciplining of erring members, and the calling of Synods.[10]

Once a church was gathered the first significant function of the congregation was to choose their officers. The officers of the Church consisted of elders and deacons. There were two kinds of elders: ruling elders, and ministers. The ministers in turn were divided into two types: the pastor, whose duty it was to exhort and deal with wisdom, and the teacher, who was to attend to doctrine and distribute knowledge. The functions of the ruling elders were numerous, but the major ones were to assist the ministers in ecclesiastical matters, watch over their brethren, visit the sick, make sure that those outside the church did not live "inordinately without a calling, or Idly in their calling," and moderate church meetings. The deacons' duties were to receive and distribute the offerings of the church.[11]

These officers had to be elected by the people in a free election, but once they were chosen they had to be obeyed, because the people, in deciding upon their elders, ministers, and deacons, were merely carrying out the will of God. It was His will to call the officers through the peoples' vote, and they were not to be removed except for some grievous offense. Once elected, the officer was ordained. This also was done by the people, either directly, or if there were elders in the church, then through them as the representatives of the congregation. Ordination

---

[10]John Cotton, The True Constitution of A Particular Visible Church (London, 1642), pp. 4-5. Hereafter cited as The True Constitution. John Cotton, The Keyes of the Kingdom of Heaven (London, 1644), pp. 37-47.

[11]Cotton, The True Constitution, pp. 2-3. Cambridge Platform, pp. 7-10.

itself was no

which was alre

When

Allin to be the

laid hands on h

did ordaine him

Weld was elected

in 1650 the chur

the ordination o

from other church

church. When Mr.

the pastors of th

ceremony.[14]

Certain t

For example, somet

just a pastor or a

luxury of more tha

trained men to fill

---

[12] Cambridg

Government and Chur

regarded as importa

carrying out the du

his episcopal ordin

voyage to the New W

received a call fro

Winthrop, The Histo

ed. by James Savage

[13] Dedham C

missioners, contain

pp. 170-197. Hereaf

[14] Beverly C

itself was nothing more than the installation of a man into the office which was already his by right of election.[12]

When the Dedham Church was being founded, the people elected John Allin to be their pastor. After he accepted the call, the ruling elder laid hands on him, gave a prayer, and "in the name of Christ & his Church did ordaine him to the office of a pastour in the church." In 1632 Thomas Weld was elected and ordained as the pastor of the church at Roxbury, and in 1650 the church chose Samuel Danforth to this office.[13] On many occasions the ordination of a new minister in a new church was performed by ministers from other churches in order to facilitate the recognition of the new church. When Mr. Hale was ordained as pastor of the Beverly Church in 1667, the pastors of the churches at Salem, Ipswich, and Wenham performed the ceremony.[14]

Certain theories, it seems, were not always followed in practice. For example, sometimes there were not two ministers in a church, but either just a pastor or a teacher. Either the church was too small to afford the luxury of more than one minister, or there was a scarcity of sufficiently-trained men to fill the offices. Consequently the duties peculiar to each

---

[12]Cambridge Platform, pp. 10-12. Also see Richard Mather, Church-Government and Church-Covenant Discussed, pp. 68-69. Ordination was not regarded as important as was election. Election was the prerequisite for carrying out the duties of the office. John Cotton, for example, renounced his episcopal ordination by refusing to baptize his son Seaborn on the voyage to the New World, because at that time he considered that he had not received a call from and been elected by a properly gathered church. John Winthrop, The History of New England, 1630 to 1649 [Winthrop's Journal], ed. by James Savage, (2nd ed., 2 vols.; Boston, 1853), Vol. I, p. 131.

[13]Dedham Church Records, p. 19. A Report of the Record Commissioners, containing the Roxbury Land and Church Records (Boston, 1881), pp. 170-197. Hereafter cited as Roxbury Church Records.

[14]Beverly Church Records, p. 184.

offices began to be exercised by both pastors and teachers. Even as late as 1772 the Cambridge Church had "never had a Teacher distinct from Pastor."[15]

The method of electing the ruling elders and deacons was similar to the procedure employed for ministers. The officer would be elected by a show of hands and then would be ordained by the other officers of the church.[16]

One of the most important responsibilities of the gathered church in New England was to insure the righteousness of its membership. There were two churches, they claimed -- the visible church (which included everyone who appeared to be a Christian) and the invisible church (which included only those who actually were redeemed). Of course only God knew who belonged to the invisible church, and man could never hope to acquire this knowledge; but the Puritans of Massachusetts Bay began a conscientious effort to equate, as far as was humanly possible, the invisible church with the visible. They went about this by applying to each potential member a "test for saving faith," previously devised by the English "covenant theologians"[17] but now first put into practice by these New England Puritans. This test would examine potential members in order to see if they possessed the prerequisites for church membership --"Repentance from sin, & faith in Jesus Christ." Just as the Eunuch from Ethiopia was questioned

---

[15] Boston Church Records, p. xxi. Cambridge Church Records, p. 29.

[16] Numerous examples can be seen in Dedham Church Records, pp. 18-19, 35, Dorchester Church Records, p. 252, and Boston Church Records, p. 29.

[17] William Ames, William Perkins, John Preston, Richard Sibbes. See Perry Miller, The New England Mind: The Seventeenth Century, and "The Marrow of Puritan Divinity" for a complete discussion of the ideas and lives of these theologians.

by Philip reg

too everyone

thoroughly ex

The

somewhat invo

and declare h

God had worke

date was a tr

and knew "com

the intent of

asked if anyo

then the elde

selved. If t

sented to the

would ask if

him. Then th

work of grace

next step was

faith, either

of the confes

objection to

---

18 Ca

19 Usu
the pastor; ho

20 If
in the Apostle
of faith.

by Philip regarding his faith in Christ, the New Englanders reasoned, so too everyone else who desired admittance into the visible church had to be thoroughly examined for evidences of faith and grace.[18]

The procedure used to detect the evidences of faith and grace was somewhat involved. First of all, the candidate had to go to the elders and declare his desire to join the church and, in doing so, relate how God had worked on his soul. If the elders were satisfied that the candidate was a true believer, had been wounded in his heart for his transgressions, and knew "competently the summe of Christian faith," then they would declare the intent of the candidate during a church service. At that time, it was asked if anyone had any offense against the applicant. If there was any, then the elders would review it in order to determine if it could be resolved. If they were successful, then the candidate would again be presented to the church, and if no one found further fault with him, the elders would ask if any member would like to give testimony in favor of receiving him. Then the candidate would be asked to relate "to the congregation the work of grace on his soule."[19] After this confession of conversion the next step was for the prospective member to declare his profession of faith, either in a speech or by questions and answers.[20] At the conclusion of the confession and profession, the elders again asked if there was any objection to the candidate. If there was none, then all those in favor

---

[18]Cambridge Platform, pp. 16-17.

[19]Usually a woman's confession was read to the congregation by the pastor; however, in Salem she spoke for herself.

[20]If the person held to the twelve articles of religion as found in the Apostles' Creed, this would be regarded as an acceptable profession of faith.

of admitting hi

right hands. A

were gathered t

promised to uph

covenant, to th

The av

relating admiss

this procedure

and the persona

it was imperati

order to be adm

communion after

in Dedham John

gracious workin

faith was recei

of the pastor

after relating

of faith, and

---

21 Lec

See also Richa

pp. 23-24. If

against the ca

the elders. S

22 Rox

23 Ded

24 Bos

of admitting him were asked to signify their approval by raising their right hands. After a few members had been admitted in this fashion, they were gathered together and publicly repeated the covenant, which they promised to uphold. Then the elders "promiseth the Churches part of the covenant, to the new admitted members. So they are received, or admitted."[21]

The available church records do not go into as great detail in relating admissions to membership, but they do support, to some extent, this procedure as set forth by Richard Mather and the Cambridge Platform, and the personal observations of Thomas Lechford. One thing is certain; it was imperative for a candidate to present evidence of his salvation in order to be admitted. In Roxbury one Elisabeth Bowen was admitted to full communion after having "personally & solemnly owned the Covenant."[22] And in Dedham John Morse, after "giving good testimony unto the church of the gracious workings of the ordinances upon his hart to the obedience of faith was received" into membership in March, 1640.[23] In 1648 the daughter of the pastor of the Boston Church was admitted into membership there after relating to the congregation her conversion experience, profession of faith, and acceptance of the church covenant.[24] Others had a more

---

[21]Lechford, Plain Dealing: Or, Newes from New-England, pp. 4-11. See also Richard Mather, Church-Government and Church-Covenant Discussed, pp. 23-24. If, at any time during these proceedings, anyone spoke out against the candidate, the case would have to be reviewed privately by the elders. Sometimes it took many months to accept a new member.

[22]Roxbury Church Records, p. 88.

[23]Dedham Church Records, p. 22.

[24]Boston Church Records, p. 51.

difficult time

to persuade th

he was accepte

tion.[25] Durin

member of the

him and demand

this issue wa

Besi

members of th

This could no

church; he co

recommend hi

and were pla

25

26

Saints: Th

after cited

many was ur

to make fu

Wigglesworth

heart that

own heart?

else, he w

phrased:

the way to

I loved Go

it. Yet

delight i

may be su

the sort

Morgan's

its New E

dates for

in a manu

see Edmun

of the C

difficult time in being admitted. At first, Thomas Morse was not able to persuade the church at Dedham that he was among the elect, but finally he was accepted after the church received further evidence of his salvation.[25] During Edward Allen's test for saving faith (also at Dedham), a member of the church revealed some offense that Allen had formerly shown him and demanded reconciliation thereof. Allen was not admitted until this issue was satisfactorily resolved.[26]

Besides accepting or rejecting candidates for membership, the members of the church also had the duty of dismissing their brethren. This could not be done, however, if a member wanted merely to leave the church; he could be dismissed (and receive a letter of dismissal to recommend him to other churches) only if he were moving to another town and were planning on joining another church there. The reason for this

---

[25] Dedham Church Records, pp. 7, 23.

[26] Ibid., p. 8. Edmund S. Morgan presented evidence, in Visible Saints: The History of a Puritan Idea (New York, 1963), pp. 91-92 (hereafter cited as Visible Saints), of the fact that if a candidate's testimony was unsatisfactory in certain areas, then the congregation was obliged to make further inquiries about it. "An exchange recorded by Michael Wigglesworth is typical. A candidate was asked: 'Do you never find a heart that can't prize Christ but had rather walk after the way of your own heart?' If he had answered that he always prized Christ above all else, he would have failed the test. His actual answer was perfectly phrased: 'Yes I have seen it many a time but I have considered that was the way to ruin both me and mine after me. I have searched to see whether I loved God's company or no and I have found indeed my opposition against it. Yet I have found in some poor measure that God hath helped me to take delight in his will.' This was faith in its proper imperfection, and one may be sure that the candidate was admitted." Thus we have an example of the sort of interchange that was often a part of the test for saving faith. Morgan's work has been the pioneer one to treat with and define the test, and its New England origins. The confessions of faith presented by fifty candidates for membership in the Cambridge Church are recorded by Thomas Shepard in a manuscript found in the New England Historic Genealogical Society. Also see Edmund S. Morgan, ed., "The Diary of Michael Wigglesworth," Publications of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts, XXXV (1942-1946), 426-444.

was that "ever
himself as a
refrain from d
Those members
another were c
when presentin
have erred in
admitted, may
considered for
those coming
admit only the

The
out the colon
the effect th
Congregation
Thomas Allen
Charle Towne
church to an
by a relation
admitted to
church. In
at Dorcheste

P. 38. 27R
Camb

28C
Government a

29R

was that "every believer (if possibly he can) is always bound to joyne himselfe as a Member to some particular Congregation or other," and must refrain from departing from his church "without just & weighty cause."[27] Those members who were lawfully dismissed and moved from one church to another were once again compelled to undergo the test for saving faith when presenting themselves to the new church. Their original church may have erred in admitting them, it was reasoned, or "persons regularly admitted, may [have] fall[en] into offence" by the time they were being considered for membership in the new church. If it had to accept all those coming by letter from other churches, then a church's liberty to admit only those whom it regarded as fit would be infringed upon.[28]

The procedure for dismissing a member was quite uniform throughout the colony. Entries in the church records appear again and again to the effect that "our brother Thomas French was with the Consent of the Congregation Dismissed to the Church of Ipswich," or "This day our brother Thomas Allen was with one Consent of the Church Dismissed to the church at Charle Towne upon theire and his desire."[29] Members dismissed from one church to another upon presenting their letters of dismissal accompanied by a relation of their experience in receiving saving faith were generally admitted to membership in the same way as they had been by their former church. In 1658 Mrs. Mather and her daughter were admitted to the church at Dorchester after being "dismissed from the Church at Boston & upon

---

[27]Richard Mather, Church-Government and Church-Covenant Discussed, p. 38. Cambridge Platform, p. 19.

[28]Cambridge Platform, p. 18. Also see Richard Mather, Church-Government and Church-Covenant Discussed, pp. 28-30.

[29]Boston Church Records, pp. 22, 25.

making their relation of the work of faith." In Boston in 1645, Elizabeth Waytes, after giving her confession of faith and "upon letters of Dismission from the Church at Newberry with the consent of our Church taken by their silence," was admitted to membership.[30]

Added to their duty to admit, reject, and dismiss fellow members, these in the fellowship of the church also possessed the "libertie to partake in Sacraments, or seals of the Covenant of the Church,"[31] and "to joyne with officers in the due censure of offenders, and the like."[32] A private offense was to be handled privately between the offender and the offended. If the former was not penitent, the case could eventually be brought before the church, where the guilty party was admonished and suspended "from the holy fellowship of the Lords supper, till his offence be removed by penitent confession. If he still continue obstinate they are to cast him out by excommunication." A public offense, especially a heinous one, was to be immediately handled by public censure. When a case ended in excommunication, the whole church met together and delivered the offender over to Satan.[33] Since this was the most severe punishment the

---

[30] Dorchester Church Records, p. 21. Boston Church Records, p. 43.

[31] John Cotton, The Keyes of the Kingdom of Heaven, p. 30. All members had the right to partake of the Lord's Supper as a sign that they were in covenant with God, and to have their children baptized. Richard Mather, An Answer of the Elders of the Severall Churches in New England unto Nine Positions, Sent Over to them (By divers Reverend and godly in England) to declare their Judgements therein (London, 1643), pp. 63-66. Hereafter cited as An Answer of the Elders.

[32] Cotton, The Keyes of the Kingdom of Heaven, pp. 30, 38.

[33] Cambridge Platform, p. 21. Cotton, The True Constitution, pp. 10-11. Lechford, Plain Dealing: Or, Newes from New England, pp. 12-13.

church could

or the elders

The offender

Excom

offenses. In

revealed that

banished undes

revyler both c

of the Apostle

one eate not."

his wares at e

the pastor, "

speeches, for

tempts of drow

communicated

Congregation

Even

witnesses had

the case in p

were excommun

together befo

found out by

34Ri

pp. 52-53. R

Keyes of the

35Bo

36Ib

church could levy on a member, it could not be pronounced by the minister or the elders without the concurrence of the majority of the congregation. The offender had to be condemned by this "Jury of his Peeres."[34]

Excommunication was carried out in the same way for many sundry offenses. In 1639 a woman from the Boston Church, after two witnesses had revealed that she had claimed that Anne Hutchinson was excommunicated and banished undeservedly, was "Cast out of the Church as a slaunderer and revyler both of the Church and Common Weale . . . according to the Rule of the Apostle I. Cor. 5. 11. If any brother be a Revyler, with such a one eate not."[35] Also in 1639 Robert Keayne was admonished "for selling his wares at excessive Rates." In 1642 Anne Hett was excommunicated by the pastor, "with consent of the Church by their silence," for blasphemous speeches, for idly walking in her calling, and "for sundry scandalous attempts of drowning one of her Children." And in 1657 Sister Hogg was excommunicated for not working in her calling "and for her disturbing the Congregation by her disorderly singing."[36]

Even though treatises on the New England Way stipulated that two witnesses had to testify in a case of excommunication, this was not always the case in practice. For example, in 1654 when John Smith and his wife were excommunicated from the Dorchester Church "for comitting fornication together before marriage" there was only one "witness." Their offense "was found out by the birth of their child albeit they beinge questioned for

---

[34]Richard Mather, Church-Government and Church-Covenant Discussed, pp. 52-53. Richard Mather, An Answer of the Elders, p. 72. Cotton, The Keyes of the Kingdom of Heaven, p. 15.

[35]Boston Church Records, p. 25.

[36]Ibid., pp. 25, 37, 56.

it before the

it upon them

Many

reinstated up

wife of Marti

violence to h

she was cast

was received

for such scan

space of 2 ye

upon himself

sins ranging

restored to c

himself in ac

his open prof

was discharge

previous offe

All

autonomous; t

make binding

to attend to

---

37 Dor

38 Rox

39 Bos

40 Ibid

it before the Church did Conceale their sin: untill god palpably charged it upon them by that means."[37]

Many of the people who were thrown out of the church were later reinstated upon the humble penitential acknowledgment of their sin. The wife of Martin Stebbins "was so vyolent in her passion that she offered vyolence to her husband, which being divulged, was of such infamy, that she was cast out of the Church but soone after she humbled her selfe & was received in againe."[38] In 1639 one James Mattock was excommunicated for such scandals as denying "Coniugall fellowship unto his wife for the space of 2 years," in order to avoid having children and to take "Revenge upon himself for his abusing of her before marryage," and a number of other sins ranging from adultery to drunkenness. Yet, two years later, he was restored to church membership after penitentially and publicly humbling himself in acknowledgment of his sins.[39] In 1646, George Clifford "upon his open professed Repentance to the Churches acceptance by its silence, was discharged of the Admonission" which had been placed upon him for a previous offense.[40]

All churches in the Congregational system were created equal and autonomous; therefore, there could be no authoritative synods which would make binding decisions over them. Officers of each church were only allowed to attend to the duties of their own particular congregations, yet this did

---

[37] Dorchester Church Records, p. 164.

[38] Roxbury Church Records, p. 85.

[39] Boston Church Records, pp. 26-27, 36.

[40] Ibid., p. 47.

not mean that

above, churche

were moving fr

of a new churc

churches other

by calling a c

which concerne

synod, or anot

counsel (not b

ticular church

way that each

error and fell

monish it. If

all the church

synod, admonis

fellowship fro

Gangreene of

Somet

to the religi

request of the

in Massachuset

in 1646 and 1

---

41 Co

91-92. Cotton

pp. 23-25. R

pp. 62-66. T

(Plain Dealin

every church

have power ov

given or beso

not mean that communion between churches was unlawful. As has been seen above, churches had communion with each other by allowing members who were moving from one town to another to be dismissed to the fellowship of a new church. Church members also were free to attend services in churches other than their own. They could also commune with each other by calling a consultative synod which would make decisions on matters which concerned every one, e.g., questions of doctrine or polity. A synod, or another church, could also be called upon to give advice and counsel (not binding decisions) in matters of dissension within a particular church, for churches had to look out for each other in the same way that each member had to look out for his fellows. If a church was in error and fell into corruption, it was the duty of other churches to admonish it. If the offending church did not harken to the admonition, then all the churches in the colony were to be informed and all had to, in a synod, admonish their erring sister by withdrawing the right hand of fellowship from her in order "to prevent the spreading, either of the Gangreene of Heresie, or of the Leprosie of sin."[41]

Sometimes synods which dealt with matters that were important to the religious development of the entire colony were called at the request of the civil authorities. Perhaps the most important synod held in Massachusetts Bay during the first years of settlement (at Cambridge in 1646 and 1648) was called at the request of the General Court in order

---

[41]Cotton, The Keyes of the Kingdom of Heaven, pp. 43-47, 70-71, 91-92. Cotton, The True Constitution, pp. 12-13. Cambridge Platform, pp. 23-25. Richard Mather, Church-Government and Church-Covenant Discussed, pp. 62-66. Thomas Lechford, in his critical view of the New England Way (Plain Dealing: Or, Newes from New-England, p. 14), also related that every church in New England was independent "and no Church, or Officers, have power over one another but by way of advice or counsaile, voluntarily given or besought."

to clear up ma

however, even

too Presbyteria

a stir in sever

order of court,

"the intent to

the sanction of

cluded that the

consent to such

The mos

this time (other

another) occurre

another in order

tween it and anc

members to Hartf

---

42 Natha

party of the Mass

Vol. III, pp. 70

which set forth

representatives

though they did

authority can be

Church finally a

that came out of

43 Accor

of those who opp

In the mother co

(1646) and Engli

towards Presbyter

seemed to lead ir

England practices

new settlers were

not have any bind

such did not enda

to clear up matters of church discipline and church government.[42] Synods however, even consultative ones, struck sensitive Congregationalists as too Presbyterian a concept. The calling of the Cambridge Synod created a stir in several of the churches. "Boston and Salem took offense at the order of court," because it was thought that this synod was called with "the intent to make ecclesiastical laws to bind the churches, and to have the sanction of the civil authority upon them . . . whereupon they concluded that they should betray the liberty of the churches, if they should consent to such a synod."[43]

The most common contact that churches had with one another at this time (other than through members who were moving from one town to another) occurred in cases in which one church gave advice and counsel to another in order to help resolve differences of opinion within it or between it and another church. In 1657 the Roxbury Church sent some of its members to Hartford to help "compose the differences between the church

---

[42]Nathaniel B. Shurtleff, ed., Records of the Governor and Company of the Massachusetts Bay in New England (5 vols.; Boston, 1853-1854), Vol. III, pp. 70-72. The outcome of this synod was the Cambridge Platform which set forth the marrow of the New England Way. Numerous churches sent representatives to this assembly and later approved the platform, even though they did not have to accept it. That the synod did not have binding authority can be seen in the fact that it was ten years before the Dedham Church finally approved of and accepted the platform of church discipline that came out of Cambridge. Dedham Church Records, p. 35.

[43]According to Winthrop, in his Journal, Vol. II, p. 329, most of those who opposed this synod had only recently arrived from England. In the mother country Independency was hardly organized at this time (1646) and Englishmen with Independent leanings were especially hostile towards Presbyterianism. They thus had an aversion to anything that seemed to lead in the direction of Presbyterian polity. Because New England practices were just beginning to take hold in England, these new settlers were not fully aware that in the colonies the synod did not have any binding authority (as did the Presbyterian synod) and as such did not endanger the independency of churches.

there & the di

the church at

requested and

at many times.

Churc

of new churche

often extend t

they had assis

ordination of

elders of othe

Linn: testif

by giving to

thankfull ack

therein."[45]

In c

aspects which

gregational c

---

[44] Ro

p. 34. Bosto

[45] De

of the member

members, choo

by sending re

churches did

commanded by

put ourselves

the liturgy co

will be jealou

ments of Idola

Deut. 5. 25, 2

Cotton, The Tr

there & the dissenting Brethren." Representatives from Dorchester assisted the church at Taunton in 1660, and the Boston Church (sometimes being requested and sometimes on its own initiative) sent help to many churches at many times.[44]

Churches also had communion with each other during gatherings of new churches. As mentioned above, ministers of existing churches would often extend the right hand of fellowship to a newly-gathered church after they had assisted during the ordination ceremony. After the election and ordination of the minister and ruling elder of the church at Dedham, "the elders of other churches present, by Dr. Whiting pastour of the church at Linn: testified their love & approbation of the proceedings of the church by giving to the officers chosen the right hand of fellowship, with a thankfull acknowledgment of the presence of the lord with the church therein."[45]

In conclusion, then, it can be seen that there were two important aspects which made the New England Way unique. First, membership in Congregational churches was limited only to visible saints, and the test for

---

[44] Roxbury Church Records, p. 198. Dorchester Church Records, p. 34. Boston Church Records, pp. 27, 48, 57, 58, and passim.

[45] Dedham Church Records, pp. 19-20. Apart from the specific duties of the members of the churches of New England in admitting and disciplining members, choosing and ordaining officers, and communing with other churches by sending representatives to them or to synods, the services of these churches did not follow any set form of liturgy. A liturgy was never commanded by God and we must be careful, the Puritans would argue, not to put ourselves above God and do that which he does not command. Moreover, the liturgy could be regarded as idolatrous, and if we implement it, God will be jealous because He strictly "commanded his people, that all monuments of Idolatrie and superstition should be abolished from among them: Deut. 5. 25, 26." Richard Mather, An Answer of the Elders, pp. 55-59, and Cotton, The True Constitution, pp. 5-6.

saving faith, w

the Puritan att

Secondly, all c

for they were a

unless he was c

there was no hie

churches to foll

a mixed one. Nc

it was divided b

to the congregat

to the officers

absolute monarch

---

46 Cambr

and Church-Cover

saving faith, which was a prerequisite for admission to a church, was the Puritan attempt to equate the visible church with the invisible one. Secondly, all churches were considered autonomous and equal to each other, for they were all based on a covenant. A minister could not be a minister unless he was chosen to that post by a particular congregation; therefore, there was no hierarchy -- no authoritative synod to make rules for the churches to follow. But the government of the Congregational church was a mixed one. No single group within the church held all the power, for it was divided between the brethren and the officers. Only in relation to the congregation was the church government democratic. With respect to the officers it was an aristocracy. With respect to Christ it was an absolute monarchy.[46]

---

[46]Cambridge Platform, p. 13. Richard Mather, Church-Government and Church-Covenant Discussed, pp. 53-60, 67.

Durin

land, under th

developed a Co

Congregationali

Presbyterian f

church were re

to help one an

every believer

Congregational

byterian one.

requirement fo

prospective c

in their heart

of Puritanism

visible church

whereas Presby

Relat

ters were two

Presbyterianis

---

[1]Geof

1640-1660 (Oxf

[2]Quot

CHAPTER II

THE CONTAGIOUS AIR OF INDEPENDENCY

During the period 1640-1660 many of the Puritan churches in England, under the guidance of a small number of influential ministers, developed a Congregational form of polity. Like the New England Way, the Congregationalism that developed in England differed markedly from the Presbyterian form of church government. Members of the Congregational church were required to be watchful "over each other's conversation" and to help one another in spiritual growth.[1] Moreover, it was the duty of every believer to join a church, and the requirements for admission to a Congregational church were significantly different from those of a Presbyterian one. In the latter, a simple declaration of faith was the only requirement for membership, whereas in joining a Congregational church, prospective candidates had to present "testimony as to the work of grace in their hearts."[2] Thus the major distinction between these two branches of Puritanism can be observed -- Congregationalists sought to pattern the visible church on the invisible by requiring members to be visible saints; whereas Presbyterians did not have such strict membership requirements.

Relationships among churches and the practice of calling ministers were two other ways in which English Congregationalism diverged from Presbyterianism. Congregational ministers usually repudiated their

---

[1]Geoffrey F. Nuttall, Visible Saints: The Congregational Way, 1640-1660 (Oxford, 1957), p. 73. Hereafter cited as Visible Saints.

[2]Quoted in ibid., p. 112.

ordination by

on the will of

church exists

sons qualified

a complete orga

they had to sub

obliged to "kee

with one anothe

merely a recomm

the major aspec

practices alrea

dently the colo

country.

In 16

years in Massa

Robert Child)

England exampl

in the realm o

thousands" of

danger, Child

already "from

spread over al

3Nutt

4Quot

5For

below, Chapter

ordination by Anglicans or Presbyterians, and depended, for their authority, on the will of God and the will of the people. They reasoned that "the church exists before it has a pastor," that the members are the only persons qualified to choose a minister, and when they do, the church becomes a complete organic body.[3] When churches had disputes amongst themselves they had to submit their problems to a body of churches for they were obliged to "keep up discipline among them[selves]" and "love & correspond with one another."[4] However, the decision arrived at by this "synod" was merely a recommendation, not an injunction. It is apparent, then, that the major aspects of English Congregationalism[5] were the same as the practices already existing in the churches of New England, and that evidently the colonial example was exerting some influence in the mother country.

In 1647, after the New England Way had been in effect for several years in Massachusetts Bay, John Child (the brother of the remonstrant Robert Child) published a pamphlet in London which suggested that the New England example was having a strong effect on old England indeed, especially in the realm of church polity. Under the impact of "many hundreds & many thousands" of returning colonists during the civil wars, England was in danger, Child fearfully asserted, of being overly influenced by New England. Already "from New-England came Independencie of Churches hither, which hath spread over all parts here;" many Puritans in old England are now becoming

---

[3]Nuttall, Visible Saints, pp. 85, 86.

[4]Quoted in ibid., pp. 98, 99.

[5]For a lengthier discussion of English Congregational polity, see below, Chapter V.

(like the New

to the church

possible that

hold there a

Joh

New England

work publis

a brief syn

land, which

churches d

Baillie co

New-Englar

to Master

old-Engla

it is sou

continue

people"

John Cot

toward s

for thei

harsher

---

pp. 12,

1645).

Heresio

that th

new way

(like the New England Independents) very selective in admitting members to the church.[6] If England were not particularly careful, then it was possible that the intolerant Massachusetts form of government might take hold there as well.

John Child was not the only notable Presbyterian to stress the New England origins of English Congregationalism. Robert Baillie, in a work published in 1645 condemning the errors of Independency, presented a brief synopsis of the rise of this "heresy" and how it arrived in England, which, on the whole, agreed with Child's account. Independency of churches derived from the Separatists under John Robinson at Leyden, Baillie contended, "a part of them did carry it over to Plymouth in New-England; here Master Cotton did take it up, and transmit it from thence to Master Thomas Goodwin, who did help to propagate it to sundry others in old-England first, and after, to more in Holland, till now by many hands it is sowne thick in divers parts of this Kingdome."[7] It would appear, he continued, that this way which gives "so much liberty and honour to the people" thrives especially well in "the free aire of a new World." Even John Cotton, when he was still in England, did not accept this tendency toward separatism, and he admonished his brethren in Salem, Massachusetts for their erroneous way. But when the persecution of Puritans became harsher in the 1630's, many fled to the New World, including John Cotton.

---

[6]John Child, New Englands Jonas Cast Up at London (London, 1647), pp. 12, 13. Hereafter cited as New Englands Jonas.

[7]Robert Baillie, A Dissuasive From the Errours of the Time (London, 1645), p. 54. Hereafter cited as A Dissuasive. E[phraim] P[agitt], Heresiography (London, 1645), p. 70. In his preface Pagitt also claimed that the Independents have been troubling churches in England with their new way and "pretend that they have a perfect modell of Church-government."

"Here it was wh

of the World."[8]

Shortl

parts, contrary

rapidly became c

his great wit a

refined it,
became the
thousands o
to his frie
lovely to ma
degree of af

Before
London, he h
from some of
nor himself
ration; yet
fell into so
there, that
deal more ze
convert Mast
very little
to follow hi
with so high
to boast of
moderation.

John Co

his account of th

dency traced its

---

[8] Baillie

[9] John Da
mental in foundin
the mother countr
of the Dissenting
from the Presbyte
Independent Way.

[10] Baillie

"Here it was when that new way began first to be dangerous to the rest of the World."[8]

Shortly after his arrival, Cotton, "a man of very excellent parts, contrary much to his former judgement" accepted this new way and rapidly became one of the foremost opponents and propagators of it. "By his great wit and learning," Cotton

> refined it, without the impediment of any opposition, [and] became the great instrument of drawing to it, not onely the thousands of those who left England, but also by his Letters to his friends who abode in their Countrey, made it become lovely to many who never before had appeared in the least degree of affection toward it.
>
> Before his departure from England, by conference in London, he had brought off Master Davenport and Master Goodwin, 9 from some of the English Ceremonies; but neither of these two, nor himself at that time, did minde the least degree of Separation; yet so soon as he did taste of the New-English air, he fell into so passionate an affection with the Religion he found there, that incontinent he began to perswade it, with a great deal more zeal and successe then before he had opposed it: His convert Master Goodwin, a most fine and dainty spirit, with very little ado, was brought by his Letters from New England, to follow him unto this step also of his progresse, and that with so high an estimation of his New Light, that he was bold to boast of it in termes a little beyond the lines of moderation. 10

John Cotton, however, disagreed with Baillie, to some extent, in his account of the origin of the New England Way. He claimed that Independency traced its roots back much further than Robinson or the Brownists:

---

[8]Baillie, A Dissuasive, p. 55.

[9]John Davenport also migrated to New England where he was instrumental in founding the colony of New Haven. Thomas Goodwin remained in the mother country and became a leading Independent in London and was one of the Dissenting Brethren at the Westminster Assembly who, in dissenting from the Presbyterian conclusions of that body of divines, advocated the Independent Way.

[10]Baillie, A Dissuasive, pp. 55-56.

"the way of In

and received i

years before M

separation for

of God which ca

the idea of a p

> we received
> and Dr. Ame
> visible Sai
> whether an
> jection to
> Presbytery
> tices of ou
> Churches.
> but from th
> nesses of J
> like found
> Separatists

Even t

continued, he w

God's truth came

instrument throu

need not "be ash

any other Saints

received."[12] Bu

other men who we

---

[11] John

(London, 1647),

[12] Ibid.

the Errors of the

1655], p. 13; her

Vindicated), Bail

that the Separati

only argued that

separation so hig

"the way of Independency hath been bred in the womb of the New-Testament, and received in the times of purest Primitive antiquity, many hundreths of years before M. Robinson was born." Baillie was wrong to accuse them of separation for it was not the writings of the Separatists, but the word of God which caused them to abandon the Book of Common Prayer. Furthermore, the idea of a particular visible church

> we received by the light of the Word from Mr. Parker, Mr. Baynes, and Dr. Ames; . . . for the matter of the visible Church to be visible Saints; and for the Form of it, to be a mutuall Covenant, whether an explicite or implicite Profession of Faith, and subjection to the Gospel of Christ in the society of the Church, or Presbytery thereof. And these be the chief Doctrines and practices of our way, so far as it differeth from other Reformed Churches. And having received these, not from the Separatists, but from the Lord Jesus, by gracious Saints, and faithfull witnesses of Jesus; the consanguinity of our Tenents with any the like found amongst the Separatists, will not demonstrate the Separatists to be our Fathers. [11]

Even though Independency was not the offspring of Robinson, Cotton continued, he was of some importance to the Independents in that some of God's truth came to them through him. In other words, Robinson was an instrument through which God gave the Independents some light, and they need not "be ashamed, to learn any truth of God from him, or them, or from any other Saints of God, of farre meaner gifts, then he or they had received."[12] But it had to be emphasized, Cotton asserted, that he and other men who went to New England did not, when they embarked, hold views

---

[11] John Cotton, The Way of the Congregational Churches Cleared (London, 1647), pp. 9, 13.

[12] Ibid., pp. 13-14. In his answer to Cotton (The Disswasive From the Errors of the Time, Vindicated from the Exceptions of Mr. Cotton [London, 1655], p. 13; hereafter cited as The Disswasive From the Errors of the Time, Vindicated), Baillie emphasized the fact that Cotton did not really deny that the Separatists influenced the New England Congregationalists. Cotton only argued that "the churches of New-England went not in the poynt of separation so high as Mr. Robinson or his scholars in New-Plimmouth."

of church poli

reasons for go

and thus they

"We did not up

and fall into

so long and ha

trary to our ju

obvious that th

maintenance, a

submit to a cou

selves to Ameri

of liberty."[13]

---

[13]Cott

21. It is diff

Cotton first be

sheds some ligh

Morgan quotes a

to Samuel Skelt

leaning too far

World "'of anot

New Plymouth me

had some connec

and communion pr

is impossible to

at Salem in 163

of reasons he ha

probably occurre

answered Cotton'

seems to have co

a church must be

after the sacram

him to office."

son on the passa

on the boat and

own congregation.

held views of the

to Skelton in 163

here. Baillie be

arrived in the Ne

of church polity that were contrary to the New England Way. One of their reasons for going to Massachusetts Bay was to join with these churches, and thus they were in agreement with the colonists before they arrived: "We did not upon our coming hither, goe contrary to our former judgment, and fall into a liking of this way. For then we would never have taken so long and hazardous a voyage to joyn to Churches, whose way was contrary to our judgments all the while of our abode in England." It is obvious that those of us "who chose rather to forfeit our Ministery, and maintenance, and all our dear relations in our native Countrey, then to submit to a course contrary to our judgments, would never transport our selves to America, to run a contrary course to our judgments in a land of liberty."[13]

---

[13]Cotton, The Way of the Congregational Churches Cleared, pp. 20-21. It is difficult to determine precisely when and where it was that Cotton first became enamored with the New England Way. Edmund S. Morgan sheds some light on this question in his Visible Saints, pp. 87, 96-97. Morgan quotes a letter which Cotton had written, while still in England, to Samuel Skelton, in which he complained that the New Englanders were leaning too far toward Separatism. Skelton and others went to the New World "'of another judgment, and I am afraid your change hath sprung from New Plymouth men.'" Cotton had believed that the Salem Church (which had had some connection with Plymouth) "was too restrictive in its baptismal and communion practices." This was in 1630, and according to Morgan "it is impossible to say exactly when his views changed. In a sermon preached at Salem in 1636 he acknowledged that they had indeed changed . . . because of reasons he had found in his own study of Scripture. But the change probably occurred not long after the receipt of Skelton's letter [which answered Cotton's letter], for by the time Cotton left England in 1633 he seems to have come around to the view [which he previously opposed] that a church must be gathered by explicit covenant, and that a minister can offer the sacraments only to members of the congregation that have called him to office." This was apparent when Cotton refused to baptize his own son on the passage to America because there was no settled congregation on the boat and "'a minister hath no power to give the seals but in his own congregation.' By this account, Cotton at his arrival in Massachusetts held views of the church and ministry that he had condemned in his letter to Skelton in 1630." Thus it is easy to see why there is some confusion here. Baillie believed Cotton was opposed to the New England Way until he arrived in the New World and was thus influenced by Plymouth Separatists.

F

Thomas Goo

have influ

Word and S

Cotton. B

the Englis

Fr

one essenti

a considera

Presbyteria

regarded th

dent church

portray the

dents of fo

and sometim

involved in

and greatly

in the wilde

arguing that

not merely b

Morgan shows

but changed

Therefore bo

of this even

went to New

had opposed

and promote

had begun mor

while still

14Co

Furthermore, Cotton denied Baillie's charge that he misled Thomas Goodwin and John Davenport. He contended that although he may have influenced them to a degree, they were following "the light of the Word and Spirit of Grace" and were thus led by God, and not misled by Cotton. Besides, he asked, "is it a misleading to lead men away from the English Ceremonies?"[14]

From these arguments that were exchanged by Baillie and Cotton, one essential fact emerges quite plainly: the New England Way was exerting a considerable impact on the Puritans of old England. The debates between Presbyterians and Independents in England reveal that both groups, indeed, regarded the New England model as the basis for the formulation of Independent church polity in the mother country. The former continually tried to portray the New England Way as erroneous and accused the English Independents of following this model. The latter sometimes denied this charge and sometimes admitted it; but at all times, it is clear, they were deeply involved in looking to New England for guidance in developing their polity, and greatly respected the New Englanders who were working out the new way in the wilderness. Although Cotton attempted to minimize his role, by arguing that men were brought to the truth by God <u>through</u> other men, and not merely by men alone, it cannot be denied (nor did Cotton deny it) that

---

Morgan shows that Cotton did indeed oppose certain aspects of the new way, but changed his mind, by studying the Scripture, before he left England. Therefore both Baillie and Cotton are correct in their different accounts of this event. Cotton's contention that he was of the new way before he went to New England was accurate, and so too is Baillie's view that Cotton had opposed it and then when he arrived in New England helped to refine and promote it. Baillie was only in error in not realizing that Cotton had begun more fully to accept the New England Way between 1630 and 1633, while still in England.

[14]Cotton, <u>The Way of the Congregational Churches Cleared</u>, pp. 23-24.

the "errar

the way of

One of the

Cotton sta

> many t
> have b
> for whi
> ment in
> confer
> lighter
> conform
> hath be
> ings, a
> reforma

Th

mother coun

Thomas Edwa

"heresies"

sidered John

the "gangrae

ment of the

---

15 I

16 B
of his age,"
Congregations
A.D. MDCLX (
as Historical

17 An
"Dissenting B
Phillip Nye,
terian majori
the five "apo
briefly preser
For a further

the "errand into the wilderness" was succeeding in its attempt to hold up the way of the churches of New England as a model and example to England. One of the fruits of Congregational discipline as exercised in New England, Cotton stated, was that

> many thousands in England in all the Quarters of the kingdome, have been awakened to consider of the cause of Church discipline, for which wee have suffered this hazardous and voluntary banishment into this remote Wildernesse: and have therefore by letters conferred with us about it, & been (through mercy) so farre enlightened, as to desire an utter subversion of Episcopacy, and conformity, yea and the Honerable Houses of Parliament, the Lord hath been pleased to help them so farre to consider of our sufferings, and of the causes thereof, as to conclude a necessitie of reformation of the Ecclesiasticall state. 15

There are other indications that New England was influencing the mother country. Another critic of Congregationalism, the Presbyterian Thomas Edwards (who spent much of his life uncovering and condemning the "heresies" of his time -- anything that was not Presbyterian)[16] also considered John Cotton to be very instrumental in influencing England to adopt the "gangraenous" New England church polity. In a classic 307-page indictment of the 31-page An Apologeticall Narration,[17] Edwards repeatedly

---

[15] Ibid., p. 102.

[16] Benjamin Hanbury termed Edwards "the most notorious heresy-hunter of his age," in his Historical Memorials Relating to the Independents, or Congregationalists From their Rise to the Restoration of the Monarchy, A.D. MDCLX (3 vols.; London, 1839-1844), Vol. II, p. 366. Hereafter cited as Historical Memorials.

[17] An Apologeticall Narration was published in 1643 by the five "Dissenting Brethren" (William Bridge, Jeremiah Burroughes, Thomas Goodwin, Phillip Nye, and Sydrach Simpson) who did not go along with the Presbyterian majority at the Westminster Assembly. In this short narrative, the five "apologised" for their views regarding church government, and briefly presented the Independent Way as an alternative to Presbyterianism. For a further discussion of the careers of these men, see below, Chapter III.

emphasized the fact that New England (and John Cotton) was one of the primary causes for the rise of Independency in the mother country. Basing his critique on the letters and manuscripts of the five Dissenting Brethren which pleaded for their principles, practices, and actions, and also on the published works of the New Englanders, Edwards told the five that the New England Way is "generally taken to be your way." In fact he claimed to have heard William Bridge "since this Parliament openly affirme it, for himselfe and others, we agree with them of New-England, and are of their Church-way: And Mr. Burroughs hath said so too."[18] Thomas Goodwin also fell from the Church and adopted the New England Way after having exchanged "Arguments and Reasons. . . between him and Mr. Cotton and some others."[19]

For a time the Dissenting Brethren had all lived in exile in Holland, and the reason they emigrated there, rather than to New England, according to Edwards, was so they could be on hand to return easily to England if the situation should improve in the mother country. While in Holland, Edwards claimed, the five were not engaged in any way with the reformed churches of Europe; rather, their only attachments were to those who most influenced them; "the Reformed Churches of New-England; and to some prime men in New-England, by a high admiration of them." Furthermore,

> One of you (more especially) was so engaged in his high thoughts of one of the Ministers of New-England . . . that he has said, "there was not such another man in the world againe:" which Minister, after his going into New-England, and falling into the Church-way there, and sending over Letters, began the falling off, and questioning Communion in our Churches: and before these Letters

---

[18]Thomas Edwards, Antapologia (London, 1644), pp. 11-12.

[19]Ibid., p. 17. (This agrees with Baillie's account. See above, pp. 24-25.)

were sent
to divers;
heard, tha

In Ar

discussed what

church polity

of the Reforme

"might not see

tions being ma

the Reformati

mistakes of t

formists, of

the recen
of those
the numbe
judicious
in their
be unto a
. . . a t
and that
purely,

---

20 I
about the ne
William Rath
living in Ho
Brief Narrat
Churches lat
cited as A B
"tell us the
putes and pr

21 T
and William
recent study
the only mem
of the New E
Assembly, "t
spread inter
which the Am
led sporadic

> were sent into England, and the coppies of them communicated to divers; I never by discourse with any of you, nor from others, heard, that you were fallen into the Church-way. 20

In An Apologeticall Narration, the Dissenting Brethren themselves discussed what influenced them. When they developed their principles of church polity they "consulted with reverence" the writings and practice of the Reformed Churches, but they believed that these earlier churches "might not see into all things about worship and government, their inventions being most spent (as also of our first Reformers in England) upon the Reformation in Doctrine." Also they had before them for guidance the mistakes of the Brownists and the conflicts of the first English non-conformists, of which they had to be wary. Thirdly they closely considered

> the recent and later example of the wayes and practices . . . of those multitudes of godly men of our own Nation, almost to the number of another Nation, and among them some as holy and judicious Divines as this Kingdome hath bred; whose sincerity in their way hath been testified before all the world, and wil be unto all generations to come, by the greatest undertaking . . . a transplanting themselves many thousands miles distance, and that by sea, into a Wildernes, meerly to worship God more purely, whither to allure them there could be no other invitement. 21

---

[20] Ibid., pp. 31-32. No doubt the New England minister who wrote about the new way, and thus began its popularity in England, was John Cotton. William Rathband also agreed with Edwards' contention that the Puritans living in Holland were looking to New England for their inspiration. In A Brief Narration of some Church-courses held, in Opinion and Practice, in the Churches lately erected in New England (London, 1644), p. 55, (hereafter cited as A Brief Narration) Rathband stated that the brethren in Holland "tell us they are of the same way with the N.E. brethren. Both their disputes and practices so farre as they are knowne do all look that way."

[21] Thomas Goodwin, Phillip Nye, Sydrach Simpson, Jeremiah Burroughes, and William Bridge, An Apologeticall Narration (London, 1643), pp. 4-5. A recent study of John Cotton indicates that the Dissenting Brethren were not the only members of the Westminster Assembly who recognized the importance of the New England example. Although no New Englanders were present at the Assembly, "the way of the churches in New England became a matter of widespread interest to those assembled. They recognized the experimental role which the Americans had played. Whereas reformed English congregations had led sporadic existences on the continent for a century, in New England a

Edwards contended that when he first read this it reminded him that the five so much admired New England that their original intent was to go there themselves, "(as you may remember some of you told me.) One of you marrying a wife in reference to your going to New-England," but because of her death, did not go. "Another of you, having sent over goods before, (and in particular) books, where he meant to follow after. (I have a very bad memory if these things be not so.) A third, (namely Mr. Simpson) when he desired his dismission from that Church at Rotterdam, he alledged that as a cause, that he was intended for New-England."[22]

At this juncture our heresiographer became quite angered with his Independent brethren for ther overzealous affinity for, and praise of New England. John Cotton, Edwards asserted, was simply not as eminent and worthy a person as the five thought, and for them to say that New England had enough godly men there to the number of another nation was absurd. If this be so, then New England had more godly persons dwelling therein than did England; "for the multitudes of godly persons amongst us, are not almost so many here, as to make another Nation." When one took into account the number of people living in New England, then it is obvious, Edwards informed the Dissenting Brethren, that "your affection is better to New-England

---

group of believers had erected a reformed polity which embraced thousands of people and which was, allegedly, within the confines of the Church of England. Those who favored independence of congregations and regarded An Apologeticall Narration as their manifesto could draw strength from the fact that their polity had been tried in America and had worked, while the Presbyterians realized that one of their chief functions in debate would have to be to show the unsoundness of the New England polity." Larzer Ziff, The Career of John Cotton: Puritanism and the American Experience (Princeton, New Jersey, 1962), pp. 179-180. Hereafter cited as The Career of John Cotton.

[22]Edwards, Antapologia, p. 38.

then your Arti

Even

reverence" bot

New England ex

Edwards maint

in favor of t

this view. T

New England

at it for gu

propounded a

to consult

New England

claimed), b

followed.2

most impor

ment.

non-Presby

10. For

ticks.

professi

voyage

be no o

and bya

inviter

come to

that."

"put ou

then your Arithmeticke."[23]

Even though the five claimed to have impartially "consulted with reverence" both the early Reformed Churches and Scripture, as well as the New England example, in formulating their ideas regarding church polity, Edwards maintained that they were not objective and were very much biased in favor of the New Englanders.[24] Another Presbyterian critic also echoed this view. That the Dissenting Brethren were prejudiced in favor of the New England model is apparent in the fact that they looked very closely at it for guidance: "the ways and practices of those of New England they propounded as examples to themselves, (this is more than with reverence to consult with them)." In other words, they did not merely consult the New England churches, as they did the Reformed churches, (which they claimed), but they used them as an example which was to be diligently followed.[25] The New England churches, then, were considered to be the most important (if not the only) model of the proper form of church government.

Edwards, of course, was rather upset about the eminence of these non-Presbyterian New Englanders. These persons who settled in Massachusetts

---

[23] Ibid., pp. 38-39, 40.

[24] Ibid., p. 42.

[25] Alexander Forbes, An Anatomy of Independency (London, 1644), p. 10. Forbes also denounced (p. 11) "the excessive hyperbolicall encomiasticks, whereby they magnifie the actions and qualities of men of their own profession . . . they tell us, those that went to New-England undertook that voyage meerly to worship God more purely, whither to invite them there could be no other invitement; It seems they must have been very privie to the aym and byas of all these mens spirits; if they had said there was not other invitement, it had been more than they could well affirm. I having known some to have been invited, and others to have gone by other motives besides that." The five were so enamored with the New Englanders that they have "put out the eye of their own common reason."

Bay, he argue

instead they

sulting "with

and by other

the ways of

all the refo

The

their ideas

Brethren. T

works on chu

works promot

of Christ in

of the Disse

a presentati

time might

ministers e

have a hand

26

shortly aft

vealed that

way, for he

its being i

note). It

terian crit

dents with

by the Inde

Congregatio

27

28

29

unto the Rea

Bay, he argued, did not themselves look to the other Reformed Churches; instead they merely developed their own ideas while at the same time consulting "with them of New Plymouth, as appears both by Mr. Cottons Letter, and by other relations."[26] It is a presumption, he continued, "to judge the wayes of a few in New-England, to be better, and more refined, then of all the reformed Churches in Christendome."[27]

There can be little doubt, then, that the New England divines and their ideas about church government were highly respected by the Dissenting Brethren. This also is seen in the fact that many of the New Englanders' works on church polity were published by men in England. One of the key works promoting the New England Way, John Cotton's The Way of the Churches of Christ in New England,[28] was published in England with the assistance of the Dissenting Brethren. No doubt they hoped that by making available a presentation of the New way the divines meeting at Westminster at that time might be influenced to accept Independency. In any case, the five ministers evidently considered the New England Way important enough to have a hand in publishing one of its treatises.[29] Another important book

---

[26]Edwards, Antapologia, p. 43. Cotton's letter to Skelton was sent shortly after the latter arrived in the New World, and in which it is revealed that at this time (1630) Cotton did not completely hold to the new way, for he condemned several aspects of the polity of the Salem Church and its being influenced by the Separatists at Plymouth (see above, pp. 27-28, note). It is well to point out that Edwards, Baillie, and other Presbyterian critics of Independency, continually attempted to equate the Independents with the Separatists -- a charge which was always vehemently denied by the Independents. John Cotton answered these accusations in The Way of Congregational Churches Cleared; see above, pp. 25-27.

[27]Edwards, Antapologia, p. 42.

[28](London, 1645).

[29]This is discussed in The Answer of the Assembly of Divines . . . unto the Reasons given in to this Assembly, by the Dissenting Brethren, of

dealing wi
lished and
with An A
civil wars
out of whi
fairly co
Ireton."3

divines w
comments
Allen's A
written b
London.
reverend,
Times dri
Scripture
and have
now is th

---

their not
Historica

1958), pp
times, w
"to Indep
brought o
who, afte
Street, L

by Willia

dealing with polity (Cotton's The Keyes of the Kingdom of Heaven) was published and commended by Phillip Nye and Thomas Goodwin. This became, along with An Apologeticall Narration itself, especially influential during the civil wars. These pamphlets were among those which engendered controversies out of which "came the general lines of Independent thought. These remained fairly consistent and influenced some political Independents, notably Ireton."[30]

In other New England works the growing esteem in which the colonial divines were held by their English brethren is apparent in the laudatory comments prefixed to these publications. One such publication is Thomas Allen's A Chain of Scripture Chronology (London, 1659) with a preface written by William Greenhill -- a Congregational minister from Sussex and London. Greenhill introduced Allen's work by stating that "many of our reverend, learned, and godly Brethren, being through the iniquity of the Times driven into America, by looking up unto God, and by searching of the Scriptures, received and found much light concerning the Church and Times; and have made us, and Ages to come, beholding unto them . . . amongst whom now is this learned and judicious Authour."[31] Thomas Allen, himself having

---

their not bringing in a Model of their Way (London, 1645), cited in Hanbury, Historical Memorials, Vol. III, p. 24.

[30]George Yule, The Independents in the English Civil War (Cambridge, 1958), pp. 10, 11, 22. An important effect of these treatises, Yule continues, was that if they led to the conversion of an influential minister "to Independency, a powerful congregation or a large part of it would be brought over to the Independent side." This was the case with John Goodwin who, after his conversion reorganized his church at St. Stephen's, Coleman Street, London, along Congregational lines.

[31]Thomas Allen, A Chain of Scripture Chronology, with a preface by William Greenhill (London, 1659), preface.

served as a minister in Charlestown, Massachusetts, returned to the mother country to become a Congregational pastor in Norwich. Once he had returned he too made an effort to promote the New England Way by publishing several of John Cotton's works. He introduced these books by relating the fact that he had lived near Boston, Massachusetts for thirteen or fourteen years and had "thereby the happy priviledge of enjoying the benefit of the precious labours of Mr. Cottons, in his Lecture upon every fifth day in the week." In this way he learned much from the man whose tongue "is as choise silver," and whose treatises were worth their weight in gold. He welcomed the opportunity to publish a second, enlarged edition of Cotton's A Treatise of the Covenant of Grace, because the former edition "had found good acceptance amongst godly and judicious Christians; and . . . [was] much desired and fought for still by divers."[32] Although these works did not deal with polity, the prefaces do present further evidence of the importance of the New Englanders in England.[33]

Many of the treatises that were written by New Englanders urging their brethren in England to accept their way, were actually encouraged

---

[32]John Cotton, An Exposition Upon the Thirteenth Chapter of The Revelation, with an Introduction by Thomas Allen (London, 1655), introduction. John Cotton, A Treatise of the Covenant of Grace, with an Introduction by Thomas Allen (2nd ed.; London, 1659), introduction.

[33]John Owen, one of the foremost English Puritans, also was sufficiently impressed by John Cotton that he was instrumental in publishing one of Cotton's posthumous works to which he added a lengthy preface (longer even than Cotton's work) defending and supporting Cotton and attacking his critics: A Defence of Mr. John Cotton (Oxford, 1658) -- see below, Chapter III. Nathaniel Rogers, Peter Bulkley, and Christopher Scott were also "on terms of great intimacy" with Cotton, and as a consequence the latter edited and published Cotton's A Practical Commentary or an Exposition (London, 1656). T. W. Davids, Annals of Evangelical Nonconformity in the County of Essex, From the time of Wycliffe to the Restoration (London, 1863), p. 504. Hereafter cited as Annals of Evangelical Nonconformity in . . . Essex.

by the Eng

for severa

cerned mir

Kingdome,"

> we pro
> labour
> dome,
> both
> ture
> diver
> forme

These gro

New Engla

exerting

These ter

> are
> confi
> the
> have
> that
> Litu
> per,
> bein
> othe

---

know the
John Ba
(London

content
complai
from th
sidered
that wo
the Lor
equate
the mo

by the English Presbyterians. After the colonists had been in New England for several years we find that a letter was written to them by many concerned ministers in old England. "Whiles we lived together in the same Kingdome," the letter began,

> we professed the same faith; joyned in the same Ordinances, laboured, in the worke of God to gaine soules unto his kingdome, and maintained the puritie of worship against corruptions, both on the right hand and on the left. But since your departure into New England, we heare (and partly believe it) that divers have embraced certain vain opinions such as you disliked formerly, and we judge to be groundlesse and unwarrantable. 34

These groundless and unwarrantable opinions which had developed into the New England Way, were actually beginning to cross the ocean and were exerting a divisive impact on the Puritan movement in the mother country. These tenets

> are received with great applause, maintained with great confidence, and applauded, as the only church way, wherein the Lord is to be worshipped. And letters from New England have so taken with divers in many parts of this Kingdome, that they have left our Assemblies because of a stinted Liturgie, and excommunicated themselves from the Lords Supper, because of such as are not debarred from it. And being turnèd aside themselves, they labour to insnare others. 35

The concerned ministers were rather upset that these ideas were

---

34"The Letter of those Ministers in England, who requested to know the judgement of their Brethren in New England" (1637). Quoted in John Bail, A Tryall of the New-Church Way in New-England and in Old (London, 1644), preface.

35Ibid., p. 19. This illustrates one of the crucial points of contention between the Congregationalists and Presbyterians. The authors complained that many who were adopting the Congregational Way were breaking from the Presbyterian churches whose membership requirements, they considered, were not strict enough. They sought a more pure church -- one that would exclude all who were not visible saints from membership and the Lord's Supper. Thus the attempt (which had begun in New England) to equate the visible church with the invisible one, was now being made in the mother land.

now gaining

proponents

all meekness

that if
deed yo
review
that ha
them up
we shal
if othe
versio

If the Cor

walke
walke
earne
sider
order

strongly

their op

should

found t

new pri

were o

Englan

polity

of be

the

accep

now gaining so strong a grip in England, and thus they challenged the proponents of the New England Way to defend themselves. "Our request in all meeknesse and love is," they wrote,

> that if these, or any of the forementioned opinions, be indeed your Tenents, you would be pleased to take a second review of your grounds, and send us your strongest reasons that have swayed you in these matters: and if we shall find them upon due examination to be such as will carry weight, we shall be ready to give you the right hand of fellowship; if otherwise you shall receive our just and modest animadversions in what we conceive you have erred from the truth.

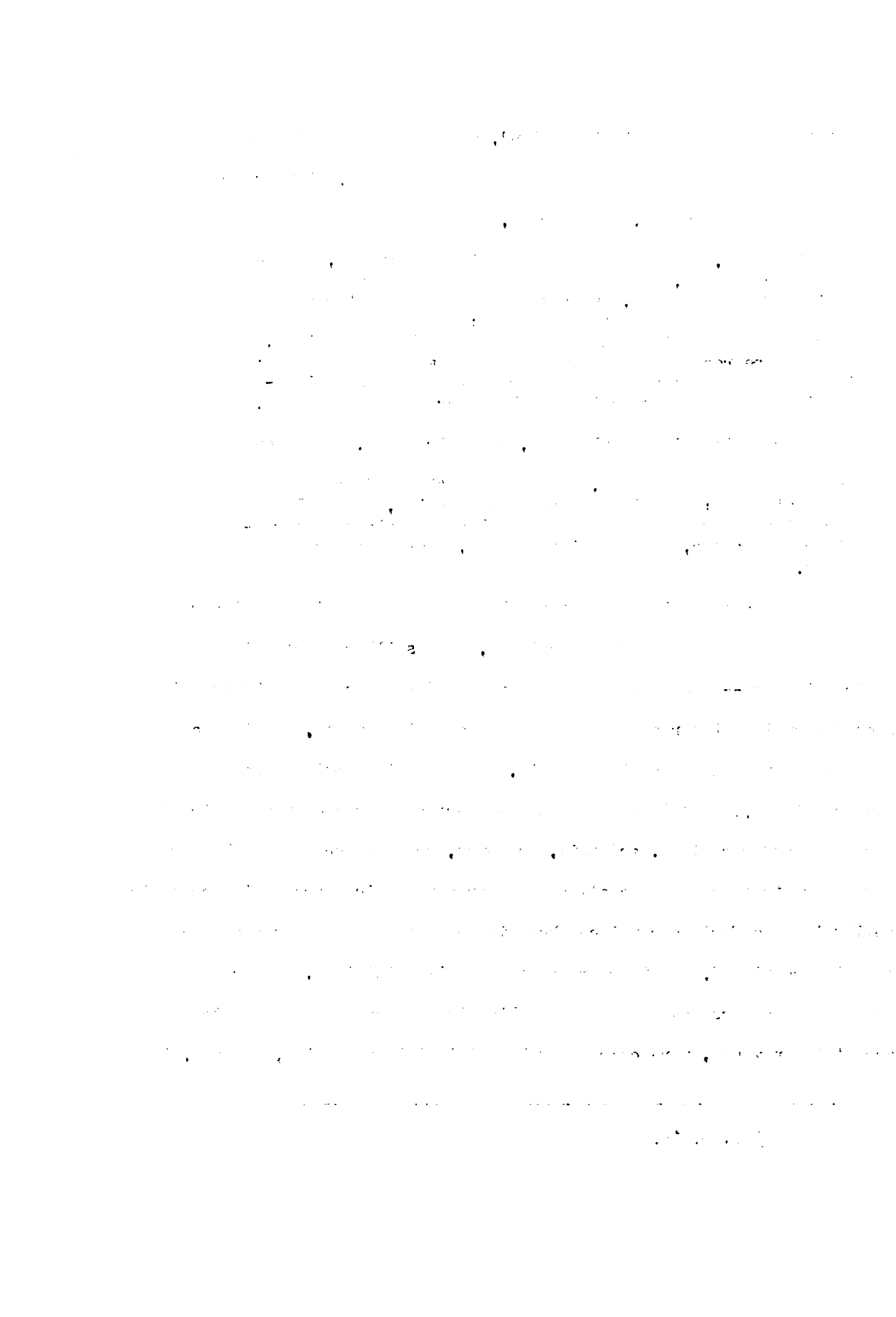
If the Congregationalists could show, by their reply, that they

> walke in the wayes of God, we shall heartily rejoyce to walke with you: but if you have turned aside, we shall earnestly desire that you would be pleased seriously to consider the matter, and speedily reforme, what is out of order. 36

This passage indicates that although these Englishmen disagreed strongly with their New England brethren, they still respected them and their opinions -- enough so that they ventured the hope that the colonists should show them the reasons that they began this new way, and if they found the New England Way to be valid, then they too would embrace the new principles. In this way the English Puritans declared that their minds were open and receptive, and this, no doubt, greatly encouraged the New Englanders to take up the challenge and present logical arguments for their polity in an effort to convince those in the mother country who were capable of being convinced. Whether or not the English ministers, who wrote to the New Englanders that they were willing to be persuaded by them to accept the new way, were completely honest in this assertion, however, is

---

[36] Ibid., p. 19.



a question that cannot be adequately answered.[37]

A further cause of the rise of Independency in England was the return of the exiles from New England after the outbreak of civil war. These men often actively attempted to implement the new way in the mother country, and were also greatly respected and looked to for advice by their brethren after they returned. One such man was John Phillips ("a radical Puritan") who left his home (Wrentham, Suffolk) in 1638 and became a minister in Salem, Massachusetts for four years. After he returned to Wrentham in 1642, and reorganized his old church along Congregational lines, he was consulted by the people of Yarmouth at the gathering of an Independent church there and also "by the gathered Congregational church at Norwich, which freely permitted their members to join the Wrentham parish church, a sign of approval of his Independency."[38] The fact that these churches sought Phillips' advice and looked to this New Englander "as the only man in the neighbourhood in whose judgment and experience they could confide," is significant. It shows that the New England experience was respected by two churches which subsequently became very influential in spreading the Congregational Way throughout East Anglia.[39]

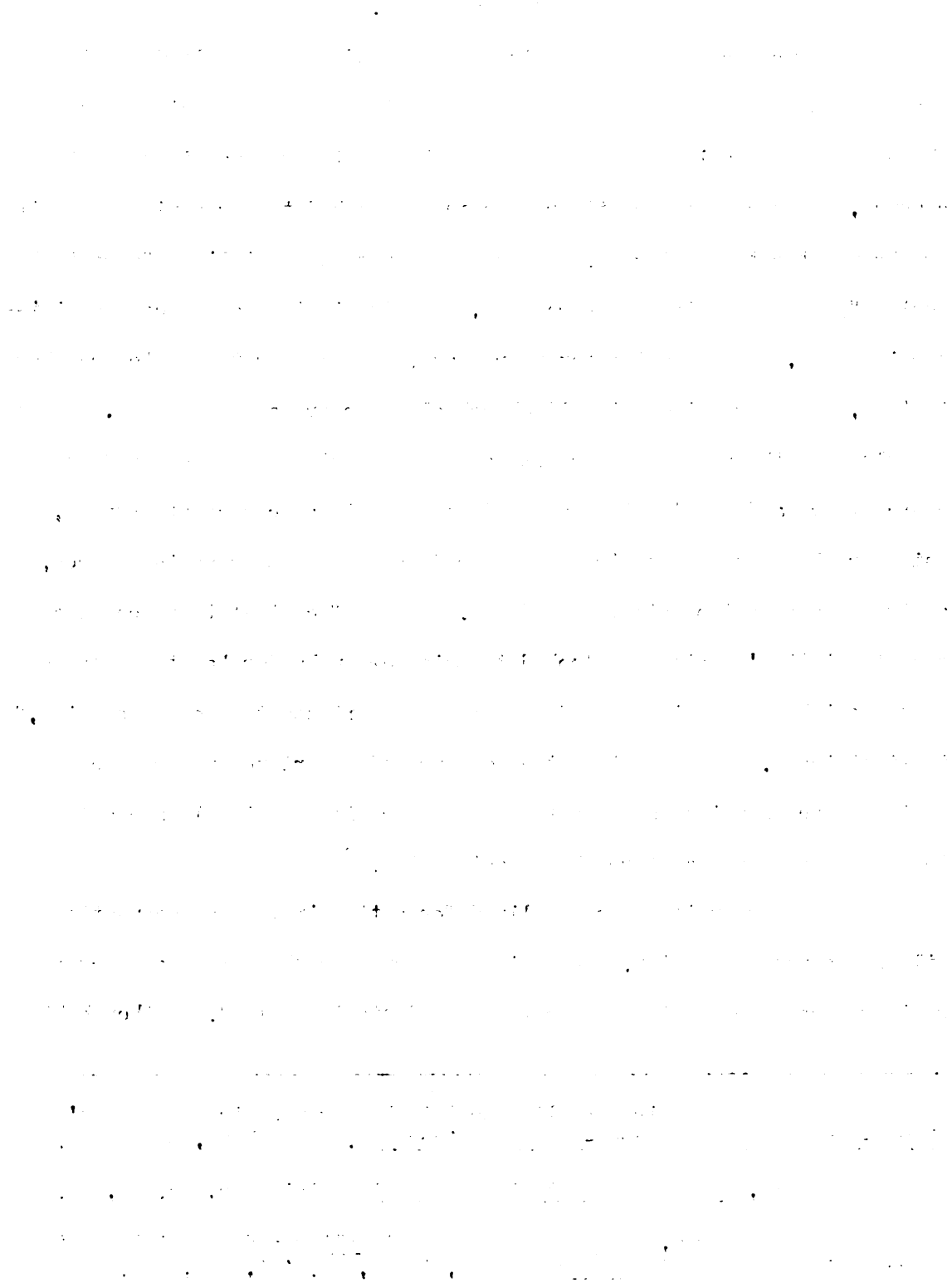
Another Puritan who had lived for a time in the Massachusetts wilderness was Hugh Peter. In 1641 he returned to the mother country and rapidly became one of the foremost Independents in England. Although his

---

[37]One of the first replies to this letter was Richard Mather's Church-Government and Church-Covenant Discussed. See above, Chapter I.

[38]Yule, The Independents in the English Civil War, pp. 22, 40.

[39]John Browne, History of Congregationalism and Memorials of the Churches in Norfolk and Suffolk (London, 1877), pp. 161, 252, 425. See below, Chapter IV.



duties as

some help

Mather's

lished ju

have a pr

would be

these cru

those par

fifty Ha

of these

set up C

actually

Minister

(Urbana

See bel

cations

125.

Sachse,

Histor

Migrat

does a

from N

the mo

Samuel

and Th

more

III.

John

New

Fame

such

duties as Cromwell's chaplain consumed most of his time, he, too, was of some help in promoting the New England Way. He wrote a preface to Richard Mather's Church-Government and Church-Covenant Discussed and had it published just prior to the meeting of the Westminster Assembly in order to have a precise summary of the New England Way available for those who would be considering what form of church polity should be recommended.[40]

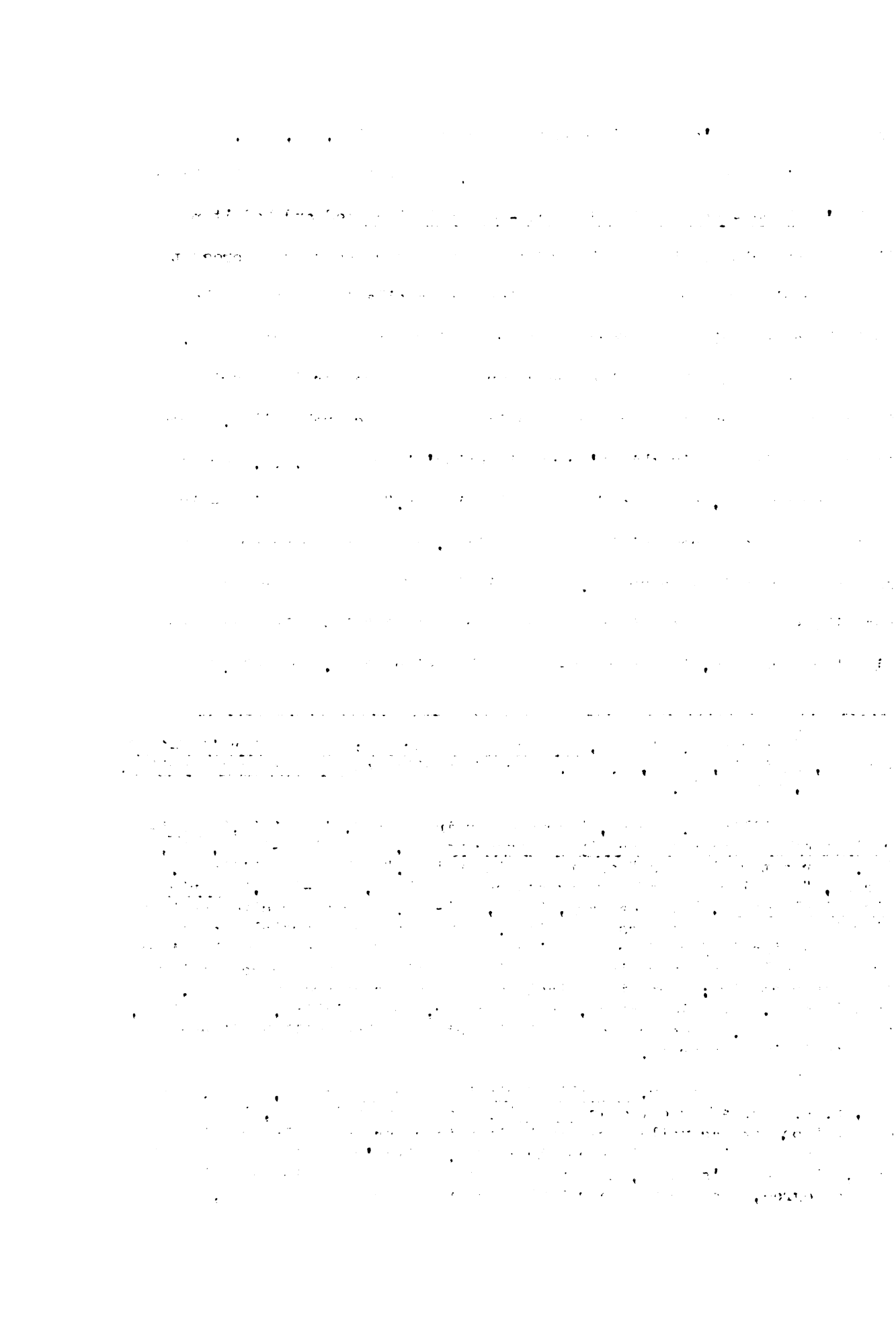
Many other New Englanders returned to the mother land during these crucial decades and promoted their new way of church polity. Among those participating in this "'Great Migration' in reverse . . . were over fifty Harvard men, about half of the alumni body." By 1660 thirty-five of these men had become ministers in England, and many worked actively to set up Congregational churches.[41] The influx of New Englanders was actually so great that Cotton Mather remarked that "Old-England had more Ministers from New, than our New-England had since then, from Old."[42]

---

[40]Raymond P. Stearns, The Strenuous Puritan: Hugh Peter 1598-1660 (Urbana, Illinois, 1954), p. 212. Hereafter cited as The Strenuous Puritan. See below, Chapter IV.

[41]William L. Sachse, "Harvard Men in England, 1642-1714," Publications of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts, XXXV (1942-1946), 119, 125. Hereafter cited as "Harvard Men in England." Also see William L. Sachse, "The Migration of New Englanders to England, 1640-1660," American Historical Review, LIII (January, 1948), 251-278. Hereafter cited as "The Migration of New Englanders to England." In this second article Sachse does an admirable job of briefly discussing some of the many men who migrated from New England and were influential in fomenting the new church polity in the mother country; among those that Sachse touches on are Hugh Peter, Samuel Eaton, Nathaniel Mather, Samuel Mather, John Phillips, Thomas Allen, and Thomas Weld. These men and their impact on England will be discussed more fully in Chapter IV.

[42]Cotton Mather, Magnalia Christi Americana (London, 1702), Book III, p. 4. Hereafter cited as Magnalia. Many New Englanders, including John Cotton, were actually formally invited to return and help promote the New England Way in the mother country: "Mr. Cotton's growing and spreading Fame, like Joseph's Bough, Ran over the Wall of the Anlantic Ocean, into such a Degree, that in the Year 1641 some Great Persons in England, were



There are other examples that can be quoted in which it is clearly shown that the New Englanders made a determined effort to influence their brethren in England, and quite often were successful in that effort. William Rathband, in his critical account of the New England Way, wrote that some of those in England who had gone over to the new way "have, impetously, both in pulpit and press (besides what they have done in private) laboured to promote these their popular Church wayes, as the only wayes of God, and to make all men, they could, to dis-relish and abominate that which . . . we call Presbyterian Government." Not only were these men continuing in this way,

> but also others both Ministers and people out of ignorance or inconsideration were daily drawn aside thereto, new churches were erected according to their module, our Churches and Ministerie, and Gods Ordinances in them began to be neglected, slighted, deserted, yea contumeliously and scornfully reproached as Anti-Christian, Babylonish, false and null, that many were distracted and doubtfull what to hold and doe, and to which side to cleave, some thought better of their wayes, and others worse, then they deserved, and both sorts for want of right information what they were.

By writing a full critical account of the new way, Rathband hoped to

---

intending to have sent over a Ship on purpose to fetch him over, for the sake of the Service, that such a Man as He might then do to the Church of God, then Travelling in the Nation. But although their Doubt of his Willingnesse to Remove, caused them to forbear that Method of obtaining him, with an Importunity for his Return into England." (p. 23). Benjamin Hanbury, in Historical Memorials, Vol. II, p. 155, also presented evidence that several New Englanders (including Cotton) were invited to return to the mother country by those who hoped to set up the Independent Way there. "But the privations and security of an uncultivated foreign land were sweet and consoling to all, who, with Cotton, could say from observation and experience, that the Ecclesiastical Courts at home, were 'dens of lions,' and 'mountains of leopards' . . . . On declining the solicitation to return when 'the snare of the fowlers' was 'broken,' it was, perhaps, that he transmitted certain of his manuscripts adapted to existing exigencies; among which, might be 'The True Constitution of a Particular Visible Church.'"

"make men

involved i

promoters

This succe

that were

anger, ma

by th
God,
which
were
Prela
sojou
fore
where
gener
heart
Air o
Presb
by th
the P
revea
priva
Ameri

This anon

Jesus sak

body of c

by a kind

tery of s

structive

position

go consta

"make men pause awhile," and ask questions before they became too deeply involved in it.[43]

Evidently not enough men paused to make these inquiries for the promoters of the New England Way were quite successful in their labor. This success was noticeable, proclaimed another critic, in the troubles that were then besetting England. Instead of trying to appease the Lord's anger, many clergymen were inflaming it

> by the contentions and Schisms they foment in the church of God, about the establishing of a new way of Church-Government, which they have brought from Holland or America, (where they were constrained to fly by the over-rigorous courses of the Prelacy;) having been infected with this contagious air by sojourning in these parts among Sectaries. . . . It is therefore necessary that Christians should be very circumspect where they flie, because the contagious Air of a perverse generation is apt to be influenced insensibly into their hearts. . . . They having been infected with this contagious Air of Independency, oppose, as much as in them lyeth, the Presbyteriall-Government; not withstanding it is approved of by the Word of God, the practice of the Apostles, and of all the Primitive Churches, And endeavour to bring in this new revealed way, that hath no president but the practice of some private Congregations of Separatists that are in Holland and America, which is as good as nothing at all.

This anonymous Presbyterian then exhorted "in the name of God, and for Christ Jesus sake, all such Independents that have rent in pieces the Mysticall body of our Saviour; by gathering to themselves private Congregations, and, by a kind of Mercenary way, robbed divers of their brethren of the Ministery of some of the fattest sheep of their flocks; to give over this destructive way." The Independents were so skilful in presenting their position that it became impossible for one "to converse familiarly, or to go constantly to hear the Independents Sermons, without one be tainted

---

[43]Rathband, A Brief Narration, preface.

with the contagious air of their Positions."

This, then, led to the rise of Independency, and this non-conformist sect became very dangerous to the organized society, for it was "an incouragement to all the Separatists, Brownists, Anabaptists, Antinomians, Socinians, Libertines, that are in and about the City; for they shelter themselves under their name." These sects are much worse than the Independents, for the difference between Presbyterians and Independents is only in the realm of discipline, whereas "the Sectaries are Erroneous both in Doctrine and Discipline" and are therefore a danger to both the church and the state.[44]

In conclusion, then, the most significant observation to make from these accounts is that contemporaries (especially Presbyterians) claimed that Independency had infected England and that it had come from New England and Holland -- but primarily from New England. But was this claim motivated by fact, or was it merely a clever Presbyterian device to associate Independency with the heresies of the sects? It is this question which this study must attempt to resolve.

---

[44] D. P. P., An Antidote against the Contagious Air of Independency (London, 1644), pp. 5, 6, 12. D.P. P. took great pains to emphasize several times that Independency and the New England Way was the cause of England's tribulations. He re-stated, toward the end of his pamphlet (p. 21), that since the Independents have "come from Holland and America, they have increased our divisions, and retarded by the one moity of the time, the establishing of the Directory of the Discipline of the Church, and of the true Reformation; And their separation, and their gathering of private congregations, hath incouraged the Sectaries in their erronious wayes." John Vicars echoed this view of the origin of Independency and what its consequences to England had been. "My Brethren," he wrote to the English Independents, "ye give us too great cause to set a 'mark' upon you . . . for raising and causing such unjust divisions and offences among us, and to wish ye had all kept in New England and Holland still, than thus to come among us to molest our, at first, so hopeful and happy peace and reformation." John Vicars, The Picture of Independency Lively, yet Lovingly, Delineated (London, 1645), quoted in Hanbury, Historical Memorials, Vol. III, p. 33.

One
polity in E
and upon co
of the Churc
Essex, he pu
regarding po
variety. La
with the Pre
to understan
by me in the
age of 26 or
tary was your
stated on the
gregationall

Owen
after he was
thoroughly co
had done befo
the end of hi
church accord

[1] John
pp. 33-34.

CHAPTER III

THE SPREADING OF INDEPENDENCY

One of the chief proponents of the Congregational Way of church polity in England was the Reverend John Owen. Owen was educated at Oxford and upon completing his education there refused to conform to the ceremonies of the Church of England. Not long after he became pastor in Fordham, Essex, he published The Duty of Pastors (London, 1643) in which his views regarding polity reveal that his nonconformity was of the Presbyterian variety. Later Owen explained that the reason he was at first enamored with the Presbyterian Way was that he was actually too young at that time to understand the issues. The Duty of Pastors, wrote Owen, "was written by me in the yeare 1643. . . . I was then a young man my selfe, about the age of 26 or 27 yeares. The controversie between Independencie and Presbytery was young also; nor indeed by mee clearly understood, especially as stated on the Congregationall side. . . . being unacquainted with the Congregationall way, I professed my selfe to owne the other party."[1]

Owen, however, did not remain a Presbyterian for long. In 1646, after he was presented with the vicarage of Coggeshall, Essex, he "more thoroughly considered and adopted the principles of Independency than he had done before; and he never swerved from them, in honor or dishonor, to the end of his life. On his coming to Coggeshall, he formed a Christian church according to the Congregational order, which continued to assemble

---

[1]John Owen, A Review of the True Nature of Schisme (Oxford, 1657), pp. 33-34.

in the pari
edifice mor
thousand pe
for hours t
became an e
around him.

Be
importance
determine wh
opposed. Ac
mental in hi
the churches
Nature of So
he did not
acquainted
of his conc
these natio
both sides

I perus
another
general
I fixed
examina
maintai
perswas
examina
ticular
was abl
taking.
subject

2B
County of E
Coggeshall.

in the parish church for nearly twenty years. Never perhaps was this edifice more truly the church of the parish than at this time, when two thousand people constantly assembled in it for worship, and often listened for hours to Owen in the prime of his days."[2] At Coggeshall, then, Owen became an extremely able and beloved minister who greatly influenced those around him.

Before attempting to evaluate the extent of Owen's influence and importance in promoting the Congregational Way in England, we must first determine what made him accept those principles which he had previously opposed. According to his own account there was one person who was instrumental in his "conversion" and that was the chief exponent of the way of the churches of New England -- John Cotton. In his A Review of the True Nature of Schisme Owen wrote that while he held to the Presbyterian polity he did not know anyone of the Congregational persuasion, and was only acquainted "with ministers and people of the Presbyterian way." Because of his concern with the controversy which was "then warmly agitated in these nations," he began diligently to study the many books written on both sides of the issue.

> I perused and compared them with the Scripture, and one another, according as I received ability from God. After a generall view of them, as was my manner in other controverses, I fixed on one to take under peculiar consideration, and examination, which seemed most methodically, and strongly to maintaine that which was contrary as I thought to my present perswasion. This was Mr. Cotton's book of the keyes. The examination and confutation hereof, meerly for my owne particular satisfaction, with what diligence, and sincerity I was able, I ingag'd in. What progresse I made in that undertaking, I can manifest unto any, by the discourses on that subject and animadversions on that book yet abiding by me.

---

[2]Bryan Dale, Annals of Coggeshall, Otherwise Sunnedon, in the County of Essex (London, 1863), p. 164. Hereafter cited as Annals of Coggeshall.

In the
and con
wherein
in this
ference
vailed c
had thou

Eve

his "convers

admiration f

the New Engl

lished on chu

John Cotton

Cotton defend

(a Presbyteri

of his works

of the Kingdo

and Seconded

Cotton was he

Sev

the nature o

the impact o

God, and The

of Independe

of the Kingd

cers "is an

3Ow

4Cot

> In the pursuit and management of this work, quite besides, and contrary to my expectation, at a time, and season wherein I could expect nothing on that account but ruine in this world, without the knowledge or advice of, or conference with any one person of that judgment, I was prevailed on to receive that and those principles, which I had thought to have set my selfe in an opposition unto. 3

Even if Owen had not so carefully related the circumstances of his "conversion," it would not be too difficult to discover proof of his admiration for and dependence on the New England example. The extent of the New England impact on him is seen in most of the works that he published on church polity. In 1658 he wrote a preface to A Defence of Mr. John Cotton and had this posthumous work of Cotton's published. In it Cotton defended himself from the charge levied on him by Daniel Cawdrey (a Presbyterian critic of Congregationalism) of contradiction between two of his works -- The Way of Congregational Churches Cleared and The Keyes of the Kingdom of Heaven. It is important that this defense was "Published and Seconded by Dr. Owen,"[4] for it clearly illustrates the esteem in which Cotton was held by Owen, and that Owen supported Cotton's views.

Several of the treatises which Owen wrote outlining his views on the nature of church government also contain much which clearly reveals the impact of John Cotton. In both A Brief Instruction in the Worship of God, and The True Nature of a Gospel Church, Owen presented a discussion of Independent church polity which reads remarkably like Cotton's The Keyes of the Kingdom of Heaven. Owen maintained that the calling of church officers "is an Act of the power of the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven. . . .

---

[3]Owen, A Review of the True Nature of Schisme, pp. 32, 33-36.

[4]Cotton Mather, Magnalia, Book III, p. 29.

these Keys
John Cotton
hold the "K
priviledges
Owe
two offices
between thes
their primar
role was to
the pastors
yet there wa
pastor's dut
"to attend u
On
Cotton had u
when a churc
the Churches
into the Cau
in Doctrine

5J.
6C.
7[
1667), pp.
8C
of Heaven,
Pastors,"

these Keys are originally and properly given unto the whole Church."[5] John Cotton earlier had presented this view that all members of a church hold the "Key of Liberty" and one of the powers of this Key is the "power, priviledges and liberty to choose their officers."[6]

Owen also echoed Cotton's distinction between the duties of the two offices of pastor and teacher. He claimed that there was a difference between these two officers in the approach that they were to exercise to their primary duty of "labouring in the word and doctrine," the teacher's role was to teach, the pastor's to exhort.[7] Cotton had also argued that the pastors and teachers were supposed to "labour in word and in Doctrine" yet there was a distinction between their approaches to this duty. The pastor's duty was to exhort and deal with wisdom, and the teacher's was "to attend upon Doctrine, and therein to dispence a word of knowledge."[8]

On the subject of synods Owen also upheld the same views that Cotton had urged earlier. Synods are to be called, Cotton contended, when a church falls into a heresy or error. When this happens, then "all the Churches thereabouts may meete together, and after judicious inquiry into the Cause, may by the Word of God confute and condemne such Errours, in Doctrine or practice, as are found offensive, to prevent the spreading,

---

[5]John Owen, The True Nature of a Gospel Church (London, 1689), p. 71.

[6]Cotton, The Keyes of the Kingdom of Heaven, p. 37.

[7][John Owen,] A Brief Instruction in the Worship of God ([London,] 1667), pp. 155, 160. Hereafter cited as A Brief Instruction.

[8]Cotton, The True Constitution, p. 2. In The Keyes of the Kingdom of Heaven, p. 68, Cotton said that ministers could either "exhort as Pastors," or "teach as Teachers."

either of t
church does
draw commun
same argume
either by e
trations, d
require an a
communion fr

The
Cotton's and
of those ide
plain that O
the New Engl
on that New
tation of th
It is signif
to Owen for
Congregation

Owe
his "convers
was his desi
. . . to set
Communion, t

9Co
dom of Heave

10O

either of the Gangreene of Heresie, or of the Leprosie of sin." If the church does not heed the synod then the admonishing churches may "withdraw communion from" the offending congregation.[9] Owen also presented the same argument as one reason for calling a synod. "In case any Church either by errour in doctrine, or precipitation, or mistake in other administrations, do give offence unto other Churches, those other Churches may require an account from them, admonish them of their faults, and withhold communion from them, in case they persist in the errour of their way."[10]

The examples that could be cited here of the similarity between Cotton's and Owen's ideas regarding church polity and of the presenting of those ideas are innumerable. From what has been related, it is quite plain that Owen, according to his own account was influenced to accept the New England Way by reading Cotton's works, and also greatly depended on that New Englander's treatises, both in the ideas and in the presentation of them, when publishing his own pamphlets dealing with polity. It is significant that Cotton's New England Way was the major inspiration to Owen for the latter eventually became one of the leading exponents of Congregationalism in England.

Owen began to promote this new way as early as 1646 (soon after his "conversion") by publishing A Vision of Unchangeable free mercy. It was his desire, he stated, "to work and draw the mindes of all my brethren . . . to set in, for a thorow Reformation, and for the obtaining of holy Communion, to keep off indifferently the unworthy from Church priviledges,

---

[9]Cotton, The True Constitution, p. 13; and The Keyes of the Kingdom of Heaven, p. 7.

[10]Owen, A Brief Instruction, p. 226.

and prophan

that there

in the
profess
and upr
with Ch
one bod
ingagem
walk in
beseeme

Once a suffi

"called to

consent and

"to watch o

teaching, e

for things

who, after

be admonish

of the cong

if they so

second chu

the church

only such,

partake of

taken, tha

insincerit

---

p. 55.

requiremer
did not ex

and prophaning of holy things."[11] In order to do this, Owen first argued that there should be

> in the name of Christ, and the fear of God, a gathering of professours, (visible Saints, men and women of good knowledge, and upright conversation, so holding forth their Communion with Christ) by their own desire, and voluntary consent, into one body, uniting themselves, by vertue of some promissory ingagement, or otherwise, to perform all mutuall duties, to walk in love and peace, spirituall and Church Communion, as beseemeth the Gospel.

Once a sufficient number of people were thus assembled, let ministers be "called to teach and rule in the Church . . . by vertue of their voluntary consent and Election." The duties of these ministers, once elected, were "to watch over this flock, every one according to his abilities, both in teaching, exhorting, and ruling, so often as occasion shall be administ'red, for things that concern Ecclesiasticall rule and Church order." Members who, after their admission, were found to be walking in errour, were to be admonished and, if still persisting, excommunicated "by joint consent" of the congregation. Members of one church should be received into another if they so desired to be admitted and if they were "thought fit" by the second church. Finally, Owen advocated that the rules for admission into the church should "be Scriptuall, and the things required in the members, only such, as all godly men affirm to be necessary for every one, that will partake of the Ordinances, with profit and comfort, speciall care being taken, that none be excluded, who have the least breathings of soul insincerity [sincerity?], after Jesus Christ."[12] This brief outline for

---

[11]John Owen, A Vision of Unchangeable free mercy (London, 1646), p. 55.

[12]Ibid., pp. 60-61. Owen did not specify, in this treatise, what requirements "all godly men affirm to be necessary for every one," and thus did not explain exactly how easy, or difficult, it was for a candidate to

church polity, then, virtually echoed the way that Cotton and other New Englanders put forth as the way of the churches of New England, (see above, Chapter I), and illustrates the fact that the way Owen was promoting in old England was the same as that which he learned from reading Cotton's The Keyes of the Kingdom of Heaven.

The consequence of Owen's acceptance of the New England Way and his subsequent efforts to propagate it throughout England, were far-reaching indeed. He gathered a church on Congregational principles at Coggeshall, and his influence among other nonconformists

> was very extensive. . . . He was looked up to by his brethren, both near and at a distance. . . . He was consulted by his brethren, in the ministry, when they were perplexed about the path of duty; and churches also applied for the assistance of his counsel and advice, when differences occurred in them which they found it difficult

---

fulfill the membership requirements. However, he did outline the admittance procedure in a later work -- A Brief Instruction. In order to be admitted, Owen said, the elders had to question the candidate in an effort to "discern and judge by the rule of truth applied in love, between sincere professors and hypocritical pretenders." Those who satisfied the elders were to be recommended to the church (p. 213). The candidate was then required to prove to the satisfaction of the church that he was "of a conversation free from blame in the world," (p. 215). If a person did not possess "saving light" it was impossible for him "to evidence that he is delivered from that blindness, darkness, and ignorance, which all men are under the power of in the state of nature. Such a measure then of light and knowledge, as whereby men are enabled to apprehend aught of the person and offices of Christ . . . is expected in them who desire to be admitted into the fellowship of the Church," (p. 216). Thus, "it is required that these things be testified by them unto the Church, with the acknowledgement of the worke of Gods grace towards them, and their resolution through the power of the same grace to cleave unto the Lord Christ with full purpose of heart, and to live in all holy obedience unto him," (p. 217). After this "test for saving faith" it was the congregation's duty to reject or receive them in love "according as their condition is known, reported, or testified unto them," (p. 214).

It seems certain that John Cotton and the New Englanders would have approved of Owen's presentation and would have agreed that these requirements were not harsh, but only such "as all godly men affirm to be necessary."

to set
beyond

Ev

1679 the Ir

woman to ch

to a contro

fulfilled t

After much

because the

to the chur

When the di

cussion in

vice: "no

[Teacher of

wrote each

matter.[15]

M

that Owen

fore we ne

mined. Ge

1

Derions, O

as Memoirs

pact on En

1

tant Disse

Davey, Dr.

Hereafter

1

DwL, Harme

to settle. Thus his usefulness must have extended greatly beyond the sphere of his personal labours. 13

Even after the Restoration Owen's influence was still felt. In 1679 the Independent Church at Watesfield, Suffolk was about to admit a woman to church membership who had never been baptized. This gave rise to a controversy over whether this woman should be accepted (for she fulfilled the membership requirements) or not until she was first baptized. After much discussion it was finally decided that she should be baptized, because the method of baptizing an unbaptized person just prior to admission to the church was a method that "was approved & practised by Dr. Owen."[14] When the distinction between pastor and teacher created some confused discussion in the church at Norwich, once again Owen was called upon for advice: "no less persons than Dr. Owen & Dr. Goodwin consulted by Mr. Asty [Teacher of the church c. 1675] upon the occasion of these differences, wrote each of them a letter" to the church in an effort to resolve the matter.[15]

Much has been written by William Orme and others of the impact that Owen made in England on the rise of Congregationalism there. Therefore we need not dwell too long in repeating what has already been determined. Geoffrey Nuttall recently very adequately summed up Owen's role

---

[13]William Orme, Memoirs of the Life, Writings, and Religious Connexions, of John Owen, D.D. (London, 1820), pp. 78, 466. Hereafter cited as Memoirs . . . of John Owen. For a brief sketch of Owen's career and impact on England see the DNB, Vol. 42, pp. 424-428.

[14]A Copy of the Church Book belonging to the Congregation of Protestant Dissenters assembling at Watesfield, Suffolk, transcribed by Joseph Davey, Dr. Williams's Library, London (DWL), Harmer MSS. 76. 15, p. 12. Hereafter cited as Watesfield Church Book.

[15]Thomas Harmer, "Nonconformity in Norfolk" (unpublished MS, 1774) DWL, Harmer MSS. 76. 10, p. 40 Hereafter cited as "Nonconformity in Norfolk."

when he wr

"the centr

become lea

Owen at so

New Englan

Bulkley, w

(at one re

the Vicar o

and a great

'in all his

Owen.'" Th

Owen, and s

at Bedford,

"Owen has

divines an

Commonweal

leader, an

churches,

A

1

1

important

has became

that they

the source

English Co

18

when he wrote that in studying the rise of the Independent Way in England "the centrality of John Owen" is quite apparent.[16] Many men who were to become leading Independent ministers had come under the influence of John Owen at some time during their careers. John Sams, "after a sojourn in New England, had succeeded Owen as Vicar of Coggeshall; another was John Bulkley, who, again, after a sojourn in New England, had succeeded Owen (at one remove) as Rector of Fordham;[17] while yet another, William Sparrow, the Vicar of Halstead, was 'Early in declaring for the Congregational Way; and a great Correspondent of Dr. Owen's.'. . . [also] Thomas Browning 'in all his Work did faithfully follow the Advice given him once by Dr. Owen.'" Thomas Hardcastle was another minister who was in contact with Owen, and so too was the renowned "John Bunyan, then pastor of the church at Bedford, [who] was a friend of Owen." Thus it is not surprising that "Owen has been termed . . . 'the leading figure among Congregational divines and prominent in the ecclesiastical and political life of the Commonwealth.' After the Restoration his position as a Congregational leader, and thus as a link between the now scattered and persecuted churches, became, if it were possible, yet more striking."[18]

A lengthy example that illustrates the extent of Owen's influence

---

[16]Nuttall, Visible Saints, p. 39.

[17]One wonders why New Englanders succeeded Owen in these two important positions. Could it be that the people of Coggeshall and Fordham became so enamored with the new polity presented to them by Owen that they sought men who had themselves been in New England and close to the source of the Congregational Way, as successors to the "father of English Congregationalism"?

[18]Nuttall, Visible Saints, pp. 39-40.

on the ris

and through

brought Cha

Scottish Pr

Jaffray rev

accompanied

through him

dent Way.

nal reveal

time he ha

after
that
clear
and t
makir
humar
men
main
chie
hear
Thus
as
qui

After h

in Engl

ism ma

use of

a
o
w
t

on the rise of Independency is seen in his impact on Alexander Jaffray, and through him, on Scotland. Jaffray was one of the commissioners who brought Charles II to Scotland. During the battle of Dunbar in 1650 this Scottish Presbyterian was captured by Cromwell's army. In his journal, Jaffray revealed that he frequently conversed with John Owen (who had accompanied Cromwell to Scotland as chaplain) during his captivity and through him saw the error of his beliefs and was converted to the Independent Way. After Jaffray was released and returned to Aberdeen, his journal reveals, he did not forget his conversation with Dr. Owen. Up to this time he had always "been zealous for Presbytery," but now

> after seeking God for direction, and the use of all means that I could attain unto for information, I did then clearly discover this their way to have been a sad snare and temptation; which hath led them forth, not only to the making of the Covenant at first, but to all the ways of human prudence and policy, that the wits of godly and pious men could invent for maintaining the same. And . . . the maintaining of Presbytery was one, if not the main and chief end proposed by those that were most honest and single-hearted, in contriving and carrying on the covenant. . . . Thus, having found that we were so engaged to Presbytery, as the only way of Christ, I was necessarily led on to inquire about the thing itself, if indeed it was truly so.

After he completed his deep inquiry into the matter of church government in England and Scotland, Jaffray became fully persuaded that Presbyterianism may be a way of Christ, but not the only way. True, Christ did make use of the Presbyterial Way,

> as formerly He had done of Episcopacy, until the upholders of that way became so insolent as to impose it as the only way of Christ upon the consciences of his people; yet, sure, I may say, without doing Presbyterians any wrong, it is not the only way of Christ, as they would have it. . . . Yea, I may say further, without offence, that it is very far from being the only way of Christ; though I think, if it were soberly managed, it may be looked on as a step nearer to the way of Christ than Episcopacy; yet it is, in my apprehension, after the most diligent search that I could make, but a

human

J

but quickl

that he ha

in Aberdee

After firs

mitted ther

hope that

to present

has no chu

holy ordi

profane m

stitution

looked to

They did

land, in

with tho

attempte

colleagu

Owen) f

gospel

which w

gation

the Co

487 49

human invention. 19

Jaffray was not content merely to reject the Presbyterian Way but quickly set about accepting and promoting the new Congregational Way that he had learned from Owen. In 1652 he, and several of his neighbors in Aberdeen, formulated a document which stated their view on the matter. After first informing the reader that their consciences no longer permitted them to remain silent in Presbyterian Scotland, and expressing the hope that no offense would be taken from this statement, they proceeded to present their position, "It is far from our thoughts to say, the Lord has no church in Scotland; but we must crave leave to say . . . that the holy ordinances of Jesus Christ have been prostituted amongst us to a profane multitude: yea, and for ought we understand, the rule of constitution of gospel churches, according to the word, has never been so looked to as it ought -- and so, at best, we are but an impure church." They did not mean to criticize the early reformers of the church in Scotland, indeed, if these reformers were alive today, they would be offended with those of us "who have sat down in their dawning light" and not attempted to continue the reformation they had begun. Jaffray, and his colleagues, then presented their ideas (which had derived to them from Owen) for setting up a pure church that would be more like the early gospel churches than the present Presbyterian Church in Scotland (and, which was basically similar to the way of the churches of New England).

After a comprehensive study of the Word they decided that the

---

[19]Alexander Jaffray, Journal, quoted in John Waddington, Congregational History, 1567-1700, In Relation to Contemporaneous Events, and the Conflict for Freedom, Purity, and Independence (London, 1874), pp. 487-495. Hereafter cited as Congregational History.

most impor

church mem

members of

join such

in a ratio

were the c

us as appe

purchased

Ja

overflowed

becomes the

our chu
the ful
men will
convinc
tures,
as the
of with

This, then, i

For a long t

and question

the cong
Word tha
Christ h
with com
selves;
Matt. xv
there s
as is c
classic
gation.

Th

most important and effective way to purify the church would be to limit church membership to the elect. "None should be admitted as constituent members of a visible church, but such as with a profession of the truth join such a blameless and gospel-like behaviour, as they may be esteemed, in a rational judgment of charity, believers and their children. Such were the churches founded by the apostles, which ought to be patterns for us as appears by the titles given to them: 'Saints, sanctified, justified, purchased by the blood of Christ,' etc."

Jaffray continued that, being convinced that "our churches are overflowed with a deluge of profane Atheists," he was sure that "holiness becomes the house of our God." He was certain that

> our churches were not constituted according to this rule, in the full extent of it: yea, alas! few of our most precious men will [even] acknowledge it to be the rule. But our consciences convince us that we are under a sinful snare by reason of mixtures, there are some of the most holy ordinances of Jesus Christ, as the sacrament of the Supper, which we know not how to partake of without sin, with our multitude.

This, then, is the legacy of the Presbyterial church government in Scotland. For a long time Jaffray had upheld this polity, but after having studied and questioned this position, he was convinced that

> the congregational way comes nearer to the pattern of the Word than our classical form. And to us it appears, that Christ has furnished a congregation, with their elderships, with complete power of jurisdiction and censure within themselves; as . . . in particular from that remarkable text, Matt. xviii 15-18, "Tell it unto the Church," the church there spoken of had complete power of binding and loosing, as is clear from verses 17, 18; but that church is not the classical presbytery, but the eldership with the congregation. 20

Thus we can see one example of John Owen's impact on British

---

20 Ibid., pp. 496-500.

Puritanism. He was an important Puritan, who after his "conversion" to the New England Way by John Cotton, became very influential throughout England and Scotland in leading others to accept (and later themselves promote, as in Jaffray's case) the new Congregational form of church polity. Owen's efforts to promote the Congregational Way were so great that, toward the end of the Commonwealth period, Richard Baxter accused him of being one of the chief obstacles in the way of "ecclesiastical accomodation."[21] It was Owen who (along with Nye) "increased the flame, & kept open our wounds, & carried on all, as if there had bin none but they considerable in the world."[22] Owen's importance was so significant that he was even invited by the colonists to migrate to New England and bless the saints there with his ministry.[23]

---

[21]Nuttall, Visible Saints, p. 13.

[22]Richard Baxter, Reliquiae Baxterianae, manuscript in the British Museum, London (BM), Egerton MSS. 2570. 27. Quoted in Geoffrey Nuttall, "The MS. of Reliquiae Baxterianae," Journal of Ecclesiastical History, VI (April, 1955), 78. (Nuttall discusses and compares the MS with the published edition edited by Matthew Sylvester [London, 1696] which differ greatly from each other because Sylvester attempted to ease some of Baxter's criticism of Owen.) It is no wonder, then, that George Vernon, in a letter criticizing Owen, called him "the Prince, the Oracle, the Metropolitan of Independency." George Vernon, A Letter to a Friend Concerning some of Dr. Owens Principles (London, 1670), p. 58.

[23]It is not surprising that Owen's reputation reached back across the Atlantic to New England. After he was silenced by the Act of Uniformity, he was invited by the New Englanders to emigrate to Massachusetts Bay to succeed John Norton in Boston. Because he so greatly admired New England, Owen seriously considered this invitation; he "had gone so far as to ship himself, with Intents to have taken this Country [New England] in his way to his Eternal Rest: It must have been our singular Advantage and Ornament, if we had thus enjoyed among us, One of the Greatest Men, that this last Age produced." But the plans of "that Incomparable Person Dr. John Owen" were interrupted, much to "the Disaster of New-England." Cotton Mather, Magnalia, Book III, p. 4. Also see Davids, Annals of Evangelical Nonconformity in . . . Essex, p. 564.

Although Owen was the "leading figure" of English Congregationalism, he was not the only important minister who helped to spread this way in England, nor was he the only one who was influenced by John Cotton and other New Englanders. The Dissenting Brethren who were to write An Apologeticall Narration also became leading figures in promoting the new way. Of the five, two, at least, thought highly of John Cotton and after having met him personally accepted Independency. Thomas Goodwin, and Phillip Nye (along with John Davenport) had a meeting with Cotton in London prior to the latter's departure for New England in an effort to convince him of the error of Independency. As a consequence of this confrontation "instead of bringing Mr. Cotton back to what he had now forsaken, he brought them off altogether from what they had hitherto practiced: Every one of those eminent Persons, Dr. Goodwin, Mr. Nye, and Mr. Davenport, now became all that he was." After arriving in the free air of the New World Cotton helped to revive "with more of Exactness" the church order there, and also wrote letters to his "converts" in England in order to remain in contact with them and so that they would be informed of the progress of the new church order. Cotton, in his correspondence, invited Davenport and Goodwin to join him in Massachusetts Bay; the former did so, while the latter remained and along with Nye and others became instrumental in promoting the New England Way in the mother country.[24]

---

[24]Cotton Mather, Magnalia, Book III, pp. 20, 21. Baillie, A Dissuasive, p. 56. Edwards, Antapologia, pp. 31-32. This is discussed in more detail in Chapter II, above. Also see Nuttall, Visible Saints, p. 15; Ziff, The Career of John Cotton, pp. 68-69; and Dorothy Williams, "London Puritanism: The Parish of St. Stephen Coleman Street," The Church Quarterly Review, CLX (October-December, 1959), 477-478, regarding Cotton's influence on the City of London ministers. The latter work is hereafter cited as "London Puritanism."

however,

[Congrega

dam,"[25]

gational

Cotton rec

for New En

and subseq

were later

the Disse

Jeremiah

gational

can be c

Cotton

of which

associa

their a

to and

beeck,

663;

Baillie

The fi

Peter

frame

Engla

Before they became propagators of Congregationalism in England, however, Nye and Goodwin emigrated to Holland. There they "gathered a [Congregational] church at Arnheim in association with the church at Rotterdam."[25] The Rotterdam Church had been formed by Hugh Peter along Congregational lines, "according to a Dutch contemporary, on instructions from Cotton received by letter from New England."[26] After Peter left Rotterdam for New England (eventually he returned from thence to the mother country and subsequent historical immortality) three men joined his church who were later to become, with their neighbors in Arnheim, Nye and Goodwin, the Dissenting Brethren -- William Bridge, who succeeded Peter as pastor, Jeremiah Burroughes, who became teacher there, and Sydrach Simpson.[27]

It has already been shown that Goodwin and Nye accepted the Congregational Way after speaking and corresponding with John Cotton. Also it can be concluded that Bridge, Burroughes, and Simpson were influenced by Cotton -- at least they were sympathetic to his polity, along the lines of which Peter had gathered the Rotterdam church; and their continued association with this church after Peter left would certainly indicate their approval. According to Thomas Edwards all five were greatly indebted to and admired the New England Way, and, indeed, Edwards even mentioned

---

[25]Nuttall, Visible Saints, p. 11.

[26]Ibid., p. 15. Nuttall's evidence comes from Johannis Hoornbeeck, Summa Controversiarum Religionis (Trajecti ad Rhenum, 1653), p. 663: "Cottoni, ut creditur, litteris ex Nova Anglia instructus." Robert Baillie echoed Hoornbeeck's claim that Peter was influenced by Cotton: The first Independent church in Holland "was that of Rotterdam, which Mr. Peters did draw from its ancient Presbyteriall constitution, to that new frame which it seemeth he also learned by Mr. Cottons Letters from New England." A Dissuasive, p. 75.

[27]Nuttall, Visible Saints, p. 11.

Simpson b

the five

looked fo

their own

England Wa

published

realizing

the Kingdo

did not c

the subst

fruit
is T
gene
Brow
tise
the
peop
majo
prin
of
Jur
tio

Nye, Bu
Also se
An Apol
both o
and ab
things
and wa
of the
If Edw
not on
Apolog
Indepe

Simpson by name as having a great affection for New England. Furthermore the five themselves discussed in their An Apologeticall Narration that they looked foremost to the New England model as a guide to follow closely in their own churches.[28]

Other examples of the high consideration of the five for the New England Way can be seen in the various works of New Englanders which were published and commended by them. Goodwin and Nye, for example, probably realizing their indebtedness to Cotton, published Cotton's The Keyes of the Kingdom of Heaven, adding a commendatory Preface to it. Although they did not completely agree with all of this work, they did maintain that the substance of the

> fruitfull and pregnant Labours of the worthy Authour. . . . is That very Middle-way (which in our Apologie we did in the generall intimate and intend) between that which is called Brownisme, and the Presbyteriall-government, as it is practised; whereof the one doth in effect put the chief (if not the whole) of the rule, and government into the hands of the people, and drowns the Elders votes (who are but a few) in the major part of theirs; And the other, taking the chief and principall parts of that rule (which we conceive is the due of each Congregation, the Elders and Brethren) into this Jurisdiction of a common Presbyterie of severall Congregations, doth thereby in like manner swallow up, not only the

---

[28]Edwards, Antapologia, pp. 11-12, 17, 28-34, 38-43. Bridge, Nye, Burroughes, Simpson, and Goodwin, An Apologeticall Narration, p. 5. Also see above, Chapter II. "Gangraena" Edwards claimed that before writing An Apologeticall Narration, the five had "many meetings and consultations both of writing letters into New-England for their help and furtherance, and about what you should doe, and how to order matters . . . how these things might be managed and carried for the best advantages of your cause and way . . . [and consequently] was not this Apologeticall Narration one of the Products of your consultations?" (Edwards, Antapologia, p. 224.) If Edwards is to be believed (and it should be kept in mind that he was not one who refrained from hyperbole) then this would indicate that An Apologeticall Narration itself, which was highly regarded by English Independents, was inspired by the influence of New England.

> interests of the people, but even the votes of the Elders of that Congregation concerned in the major part thereof.

This passage is significant, because it indicates that not only did Goodwin and Nye publicly declare that their polity was, in essence, the same as that of Massachusetts Bay, but also by thus commending and publishing this convincing defense of New England Congregationalism, they were attempting to promote it in England.[29] Another treatise by a New Englander (Samuel Eaton) was attested to by Nye and Simpson, and later "Nye and Goodwin further collaborated in editing posthumous works by" several other Puritan theologians including Thomas Hooker, who shared pre-eminence with John Cotton as a formulator of the New England Way.[30]

There are other indications which establish connections between New England ministers and the Dissenting Brethren. Before he emigrated to New England John Wilson was greatly esteemed by many younger Puritans who later became important in the development of English Congregationalism; among those who frequented his ministry were William Bridge, Thomas Goodwin, and Jeremiah Burroughes.[31] Bridge also had a personal relationship with another eminent New England divine, Thomas Shepard. On his way to Massachusetts Bay, Shepard stayed for a time with Bridge in Yarmouth and

---

[29]Cotton, The Keyes of the Kingdom of Heaven, preface. At least this work was convincing enough to persuade Owen.

[30]Nuttall, Visible Saints, p. 14. All five of the Dissenting Brethren also were instrumental in publishing John Cotton's The Way of the Churches of Christ in New England; at the very least they "had a hand in showing or communicating the written copy, or a transcript thereof, either before or since it came to the Assembly." See above, Chapter II, p. 34.

[31]Davids, Annals of Evangelical Nonconformity in . . . Essex, pp. 166-167.

it would

between

opportu

learning

which h

found t

been re

given h

of putt

come th

the lea

actuall

on this

most ab

Cotton.

turned

way, an

So succ

in sett

"that n

of our

it would not be unreasonable to expect that a mutual respect existed between them.[32]

While the five were in exile in Holland they had their first opportunity to practice a few of the ideas of polity which they had been learning. Goodwin and Nye could experiment at Arnheim with those ideas which had been given them by John Cotton. Bridge, Simpson, and Burroughes found themselves to be key figures in the Rotterdam Church which had just been reorganized by Hugh Peter according to the Congregational pattern given him by Cotton.

After returning to England the opportunity finally came to them of putting into practice there those principles with which they had become thoroughly familiar. Of the five, Thomas Goodwin, perhaps, became the leading champion of the New England Way. Baillie, indeed, would actually give him pre-eminence over John Owen; "of the Independent party on this side of the American seas, I counted him Thomas Goodwin ever the most able and eminent; as on the other side of these seas Reverend M. Cotton."[33] Nevertheless, each of the five, added to those who had returned from New England,[34] became very influential in promoting the new way, and the impact of their influence was felt throughout the country. So successful were they in thwarting the efforts of the Presbyterians and in setting up Independency, that, exasperated, Edwards exclaimed, would "that neither you five, nor they of New-England had heard of the revolution of our times and Gods visiting us in mercie, till the Church and government

---

[32]Waddington, Congregational History, p. 299.

[33]Baillie, A Dissuasive, p. 77.

[34]See below, Chapter IV.

had been.

promoting

definitel

other pub

tionalism

people, bu

times, mos

preached

Fast Serm

Burroughe

was Simps

Blackfri

entitled

preached

Parliame

in a se

Congreg

Indepen

privat

in the

member

had been settled."[35]

Although the Dissenting Brethren denied that they were actively promoting the New England Way, Edwards angrily exclaimed that they definitely argued very convincingly in An Apologeticall Narration and in other publications, as well as in sermons, for the adoption of Congregationalism. "You have not been silent in the Pulpits, and among the people, but in many sermons, and in divers Congregations and at sundry times, most of you have both plainly, particularly, and at large. . . preached your Church-way."[36] In sermons before Commons (for example, East Sermon, pp. 20-31) William Bridge advocated Congregationalism, and Burroughes also "preached for his way, at Mildreds-Breadstreet." Nor was Simpson idle, for he spoke for Independency at several churches: Blackfriars, Westminster, Fishstreet Hill, and in a published sermon entitled Reformations Preservation (pp. 25-27). Thomas Goodwin also preached for the acceptance of Congregationalism in his sermons before Parliament (for example, Zerubbabels Encouragement, pp. 18, 29-44), and in a sermon on Ephesians 1: 22-23.[37]

Finally the five engaged in one other effective way of promoting Congregationalism in England -- the actual gathering of churches along Independent lines. Some of them held "meetings on the Lords day, in private houses preaching the word and administring the Sacraments even in the times of the publike Assemblies, where besides your own Church members, have resorted to your meetings many other persons, some members

---

[35] Edwards, Antapologia, p. 191.

[36] Ibid., p. 249.

[37] Ibid., pp. 214-217. The citations are Edwards'.

of Church

Since Sir

his way,

Gentleme

Rector o

Cambridg

it is e

out the

than hi

develop

in Simp

London,

penden-

that de

a fair

the pa

first

the pa

church

ever si

[Nye] &

at St.

Library,

of Churches in New-England and others belonging to the Church of England." Since Simpson's return from Rotterdam he has "well acted for himselfe and his way, in getting such a rich and numerous Church consisting of so many Gentlemen and Gentlewomen, rich Virgins, &c."[38] Afterwards he was in turn Rector of St. Bartholomew Exchange, London, and Master of Pembroke Hall, Cambridge.[39] Even though he died shortly after returning to England (1655) it is evident that he did work actively to spread Congregationalism throughout the last seven years of his life.

Phillip Nye had a longer time to advance the New England Way than his colleague Simpson and eventually had a greater impact on the development of English Congregationalism. In 1654 Nye became a minister in Simpson's gathered church in the parish of St. Bartholomew Exchange, London, and thus helped to guide the church in continuing along the Independent path. Not a great deal is known of this church, but the records that do exist indicate that by the time of the Restoration it had acquired a fairly substantial membership -- substantial enough, at least, to cause the parish authorities some concern. This was apparent in 1657 when the first mention of this gathered church is made in the vestry minutes of the parish. The vestrymen complained about paying tithes "when our church was taken up and our pewes filled with strainge Congregacõns" ever since the Lord Protector Cromwell had given "the church to mr Noy [Nye] & his Congregacõn."[40] Again in 1659 Nye's gathered congregation in

---

[38] Ibid., p. 222. This was an Independent congregation gathered at St. Mary Abchurch, London.

[39] Nuttall, Visible Saints, p. 12.

[40] St. Bartholomew Exchange, Vestry Minutes, 1647-1676, Guildhall Library, London(GL), MS. 438/2, p. 252.

the midst

Nye did

gregatio

evidentl

to keep

ship for

repair t

thereby

for repa

Nyes Co

admitt

the Chu

Exchang

divine

and at

those

others

impeac

return

the pa

church

well-r

the midst of their parish is mentioned. Along with John Loder "Phillip Nye did officiate in the parish Church every Lords day to a gathered Congregation whom they brought thither." By this time the congregation had evidently become a threat to the parish, for the latter made every effort to keep the Independents in a subordinate position, even if it was a hardship for them. For example, they would not allow the Independents to repair the damage they caused in the church for fear that they would thereby acquire a vested interest in the building. "Upon a Motion made for repaires of the Church & Bells, & the Pewes miserablye torne by Mr. Nyes Congregation who wold have repaired them but the parish wold not admitt them soe to doe, least they shold claime thereby an interest in the Church & pewes."[41] Nye continued his ministry at St. Bartholomew Exchange until the Restoration when he, like so many other Congregational divines, was silenced.[42]

Upon his return Thomas Goodwin also "acted for himself and way, and at least in the least attempted to increase a party, when besides those of his Church at Arnheim, that came over from thence, there are others here in London have gone to his Church meetings."[43] After the impeachment of Archbishop William Laud by Parliament in 1640, Goodwin returned to London and gathered an Independent church in Anchor Lane in the parish of St. Dunstan's-in-the-East. Through his preaching at this church his ideas reached a great many people. Evidently his efforts were well-rewarded, for this church (of which he was pastor for ten years) still

---

[41] Ibid., p. 287.

[42] Ibid., pp. 298, 299.

[43] Edwards, Antapologia, p. 223.

exists

1650 an

Restora

in his

Indeper

made a

in Lond

helped

East A

England

comple

subseq

Suffol

includ

4, 6.

model w

Goodwin

England

from 16

landers

self co

member

sometime

insignif

his son

done by

the-worl

nate fel

rather t

except t

Memorials

pp. 6, 8,

exists as the City Temple Congregational Church.[44] Goodwin resigned in 1650 and later became president of Magdalen College, Oxford. At the Restoration, although he lost this position, he was still ardent enough in his Congregational principles to return to London and gather another Independent congregation.[45]

William Bridge, upon his return to England from Holland, also made a great impact. Instead of gathering an Independent congregation in London, as the other dissenters had done, he went to Yarmouth and helped to found one of the most important Congregational churches in East Anglia -- an area long famous as the center of nonconformity in England. Fortunately the records of this church still exist and are complete enough to give us a satisfactory picture of its gathering and subsequent influence on many other Independent churches in Norfolk and Suffolk. After the calling of the Long Parliament many East Anglians, including Bridge, returned to Norfolk, and went about reorganizing a

---

[44]Albert Clare, The City Temple, 1640-1940, (London, 1940), pp. 4, 6. A further indication of how highly the New England Congregational model was regarded in England can be seen in the fact that following Goodwin's ministry in this church, three of his four successors were New England men: Thomas Harrison, John Collins, and Nathaniel Mather. Thus from 1640 to 1697 this church was under the guidance of three New Englanders and Thomas Goodwin -- a leading English Independent who had himself come to this position through the influence of John Cotton.

[45]This was the Fetter Lane Church. Perhaps the most famous member of this church was the Parliamentarian Praise-God Barebones, who sometimes preached there. Barebones was a rather remarkable person, and, insignificant as it is, it is curious to recall that Praise-God named his son Christ-came-into-the-world-to-save, and this chap, not to be outdone by his father, named his own son If-Jesus-Christ-had-not-come-into-the-world-to-save-sinners-thou-hadst-been-damned Barebones. This unfortunate fellow eventually discovered that his family's nonconformity was rather trying, and "finding that people dropped all of his Christian name except the last word, assumed the name of Nicholas." Arthur Pye-Smith, Memorials of Fetter Lane Congregational Church, London (London, 1900), pp. 6, 8, 9.

church there. First these godly men secured dismissions from their previous church (many of them had been members of Peter's and Bridge's church at Rotterdam) and then went about deciding whether to settle their new church in Yarmouth or Norfolk. After some debate it was concluded that "Yarmouth was safer in regard of the dangerous times for the present, & therefore thought fitt the Church should reside there, untill it should further appeare where most libertie & opportunity should concurre." In June 1643 ten people (it had been agreed that ten or twelve would be a sufficient number to constitute a church) "entered into Covenant" and thus formed one of the first Independent congregations in old England.[46] In September 1643 William Bridge was chosen to the office of pastor in much the same manner as pastors were chosen in the gathered churches of New England.[47]

The Yarmouth Church and its pastor became exceptionally influential throughout East Anglia during the next seventeen years. They were instrumental in the gatherings of Congregational churches in Norwich, Couchly, Wattesfield, and Beccles, and in giving advice to those of Albee, Woodbridge, and Hapton, among others.[48] By 1649 there were six Congrega-

---

[46]Copy of the Original Record of the Yarmouth Congregational Church 1642-1855, typescript by J. Duncan, DWL, Harmer MSS. 76. 20, pp. 1-3. Hereafter cited as Yarmouth Church Book. For a lengthier, more detailed discussion of the polity of this church (and others) see below, Chapter V. The church covenant is quoted in Appendix B.

[47]Ibid., pp. 4-5.

[48]Ibid., pp. 8, 25, 34, 36. See also Harold Greenwood, "The Origins and Early History of Independency in Suffolk to 1688" (unpublished B.Litt. thesis, 1949), DWL, Typescript MSS. 201. 29, p. 113. In Nonconformity, the Development of a principle (London, 1852), p. 10, Samuel Wilton Rix argued that most of the Congregational churches of Norfolk and Suffolk "all received encouragement and direction" from William Bridge. This view was also echoed in a Letter from Joseph Davey to Rev. Thomas Scales, 5 Sept.

tional churches in East Anglia; this increased to over thirty by the Restoration. Thus William Bridge, who, as one of the Dissenting Brethren acknowledged that the New England example was a useful guide, and who was the successor to Hugh Peter in the church at Rotterdam, which itself had been modelled on the New England pattern, was a very significant influence on the development of the Congregational Way in old England.[49] Indeed, he was so highly respected that he was invited to become Chaplain of the Council of State in 1649. He did not remove to London, however, because "the interests of his beloved people in Yarmouth constrained him to refuse this honourable office."[50]

The fifth Dissenter who co-authored An Apologeticall Narration was Jeremiah Burroughes. His influence upon England was, like Simpson's, not as significant, primarily because he died rather soon after returning to the mother country. Nevertheless, although he was not instrumental in gathering a Congregational church, his influence was felt. He became morning lecturer at Stepney, Middlesex and was closely connected with the founder of that church, William Greenhill. The latter, who was evening lecturer, had also admired the New England Way (see above), and

---

1849, in "Correspondence principally related to the History of Nonconformity in Norfolk and Suffolk," DWL, Harmer MSS. 76. 12, p. 92.

[49]John Browne, History of Congregationalism and Memorials of the Churches in Norfolk and Suffolk, p. 164. Geoffrey Nuttall calls Bridge the "founding father" of the Congregational churches of East Anglia in Visible Saints, p. 35.

[50]Lyon Turner, "Relation of the City Authorities to the Religious Life of London" (unpublished MS), DWL, Lyon Turner MSS. 89. 1, p. 16. This manuscript is also entitled: "Light from the Guildhall Crypt on the Religious Life of the City of London during the Commonwealth."

together Burroughes and Greenhill were held in high esteem; the attendance at their lectures was rather large, for the preaching of "the 'Morning Star,' and the 'Evening Star' of Stepney. . . . was much sought after."[51]

As has been previously discussed, Burroughes' colleague, William Greenhill also looked to the New England model for guidance, and actively promoted the new way. This he did by several means: by joining himself with the Dissenting Brethren in co-authoring The Independents Declaration Delivered in to the Assembly (London, 1647), writing a preface (commending the New England Way) to Thomas Allen's A Chain of Scripture Chronology, and by gathering an Independent congregation at Stepney. The records which are still extant reveal that the polity of this church, indeed, closely resembled that of the New England churches. The church was gathered by the "mutual consent and agreement of six persons, to walk in all the ways of Christ held out to them in the Gospel." Henry Burton (pastor of a Congregational church in London) was present at the gathering in order to extend the right hand of fellowship unto the new church. This illustrates two fundamental principles of Independency -- "the right of Christian believers to associate together to observe Christ's ordinances and to govern themselves according to their own apprehension of Christ's law," and the obligation churches have to communicate and counsel with other Independent churches.[52]

There were other aspects of polity in which this church was

---

[51]Nuttall, Visible Saints, p. 12. A. T. Jones, Notes on the Early Days of Stepney Meeting, (1644 to 1689) with a preface by John Kennedy (London, 1887), p. 12. Hereafter cited as Stepney Meeting.

[52]Jones, Stepney Meeting, pp. i, ii.

similar to the churches of New England. Officers were chosen by the congregation and were divided into teacher, pastor, elders, and deacons. An erring member was disciplined by admonishment and, if "continuing in the same gross actions [e.g., drunkenness or swearing] to the great dishonour of God," the church would agree "to cut him off as a rotten member" and have the pastor "deliver him up to the world" declaring "him to be no member of us." Membership requirements also appear to be the same as in New England -- those who desired admission had to satisfy the congregation that they were "fit to be admitted" before they could become members.[53]

The gathered Stepney Church itself had a good deal of influence on other Puritans throughout the realm. Greenhill's and Burroughes' reputation was widespread, and their preaching was quite popular; some members of the church even lived as far afield as the City and Westminster, yet diligently attended Greenhill's sermons.[54] Also one of the members of this church, Katherine Chidley, was herself influential in spreading the new polity, for she was present and ready to give advice at the gathering of the important Congregational church at Bury St. Edmunds, Suffolk, and approved of the strict membership requirements that were put into effect there.[55] These requirements (like those in New England)

---

[53] Ibid., pp. 20, 22-23, 24-28, 31. For further discussion of the church order at Stepney, see below -- Chapter V.

[54] Ibid., pp. 12, 15.

[55] Thomas Edwards, in Gangraena; or a catalogue (London, 1646), part III, p. 170 (hereafter cited as Gangraena), bitterly complained that Katherine Chidley and her son were simply "not content with spreading their poyson in and about London, [and now they] goe down into the Country to gather people to them, and among other places have been this Summer at Bury in Suffolke, to set up and gather a Church there, where . . . they have gathered about seven persons, and kept their Conventicles together."

specified that the prospective member had to give a satisfactory account to the congregation of how God led him to a saving knowledge of Him, before he could be admitted to the church.[56] It is not surprising that Mrs. Chidley approved of the introduction of this practice in Bury St. Edmunds, for she had earlier published a defense of many aspects of the New England Way and attacked Thomas Edwards' critique of the specific New England practice of admitting only those to membership who professed their faith and submitted themselves to the church. "I pray you," she challenged Edwards, "answer me to these two questions: the first is, how men of yeares of discretion, may . . . be admitted into fellowship, and not professe their faith? Secondly, how men may be accounted, to be of the Church, and not submit unto the orders of the Church?"[57]

Among the many other leading English Puritans who were influenced by the New England Way and subsequently preached it throughout Britain, the name of John Goodwin also figures prominently. "As early as 1633," Goodwin "inclined to independency under the influence of John Cotton," and soon after his acceptance of the New England principles he gathered an Independent congregation within his church at St. Stephen's, Coleman Street, London.[58] The struggle between Presbyterian and Independent was reflected in this parish church -- a struggle which "strongly affected the fortunes of John Goodwin, who was sequestered from the vicarage in 1645, became the invited pastor of an Independent congregation, and was

---

[56]Nuttall, Visible Saints, p. 27. Greenwood, "The Origins and Early History of Independency in Suffolk to 1688," pp. 87-110.

[57]K[atherine] C[hidley], The Ivstification of the Independent Chvrches of Christ (London, 1641), p. 35.

[58]DNB, Vol. 22, pp. 145-147. Edwards, Antapologia, p. 96. Yule, The Independents in the English Civil War, p. 22.

later restored to his old parish living."[59] Upon his reinstatement to the parish church, Goodwin made certain that membership in his gathered congregation and subsequent admittance to the sacraments would be as restrictive as the practice of the churches of New England.[60]

Throughout his career as an Independent John Goodwin labored effectively to promote the Congregational Way in England, both by gathering an Independent congregation, and by publishing defenses of Independency in general and of the New England Way in particular. Goodwin was a very effective "earnest and diligent pastor and his preaching made so deep an impression" that many of his sermons were published with his numerable other works so that others might be exposed to his Congregationalism.[61] In one of Goodwin's key works he defended Independency from

---

[59]Williams, "London Puritanism," 481.

[60]St. Stephen's, Coleman Street, Vestry Minutes, 1622-1726, GL, MS. 4458, p. 161. Indeed, visitors to the Congregational services could not "without their admission and pre consent . . . put themselves among them or offer to communicate with them." Thomas Edwards asked (in Antapologia, p. 96) for the reason why "so many godly persons of his [John Goodwin's] own parish could not be received in by him as church-members, nor accounted so, without yielding to some rules and conditions which they, being members of Christ -- and, some of them, none of the meanest,-- could not condescend unto?" Goodwin replied that it was only fair that members should condescend unto the new polity of the church; after all "there were no such 'rules' or 'conditions' required to be condescended unto, by ther persons he [Edwards] speaks of which they 'could not' condescend unto; but only such as they might and ought to have condescended unto." John Goodwin, Anapologesiates Antapologias. Or, The inexcusablenesse (London, 1646), p. 227. Goodwin admitted that since he "fell (or rather rose up) into the Church-way" parishioners could not be allowed to participate in the sacraments in his gathered congregation. "Membership in this Parish-Church" was not enough qualification for admittance into the sacraments; rather it was "either . . .their known, or supposed godliness" that was of primary importance (p. 53). This work is hereafter cited as Anapologesiates Antapologias.

[61]Lyon Turner, "Coleman St. Ward" (unpublished MS), DWL, Lyon Turner MSS. 89. 3a, p. 9. For Goodwin's significance at St. Stephen's, also see Williams, "London Puritanism," 464-482.

the aspersions levied upon it by Thomas Edwards. First of all, John Cotton, Goodwin claimed, was a great man of sound learning and not, as Edwards complained, merely a man of "wit and fancy." Furthermore, he revealed that he respected and admired not only John Cotton, but the whole New England model itself. New England, he exclaimed, refuting Edwards, is no more likely to be ruined by "the effect of the Church-way-Government," then "the Heavens are in danger of falling by meanes of the singing of the Larke."[62]

John Owen, John Goodwin, and the Dissenting Brethren, were by no means the only English Puritans who became Independents after having contact with propagators of the New England Way. There were innumerable others who had accepted the new way, but whose fame was not as widespread as that of the leaders of English Independency. It is revealed in the journal of John Beadle, for example, that he had been led to accept Congregationalism by the influence of Thomas Hooker.[63] It would be too tedious to attempt to give an account of all those in England who were

---

[62]John Goodwin, Anapologesiates Antapologias, pp. 10, 182, 225-226. It is a curiosity of human nature that when one's intellectual adversary achieves a strong position, criticism will often go beyond the realm of ideas and become an illogical, irrelevant, and personal attack. John Goodwin's ideas were unpopular with Thomas Edwards, and it is indicative of Goodwin's strengthening position that, at one point, Edwards complained about his personal appearance instead of keeping his criticism on the intellectual level. In words that could have been written in more recent times, as well as in the seventeenth century, by those who fear individuals whose freedom becomes a threat to them, Edwards criticized "Mr John Goodwin and several of his Church, [for] they wear strange long hair, [and] go in such fine fashionable apparell beyond their places as 'tis a shame." Edwards, Gangraena, part I, p. 73.

[63]J[ohn] B[eadle], The Journal or Diary of a Thankful Christian (London, 1656). In the preface, John Fuller compared Beadle unto a young "Elisha (not to powre water on the hands, but) to be watered by the droppings of that great Elijah, that renowned man of God in his generation, Reverend Mr. Thomas Hooker, and hath had ever since the blessing and favour of much of his spirit resting on him, as was said of Elisha."

influenced by their New England brethren, even if there is enough evidence in existence to do this. Let it be sufficient, then, for the scope of this study to deal primarily with these leading figures of English Congregationalism. These eminent theologians who recognized their debt to John Cotton and other New Englanders, were leaders whose impact was so far-reaching that more people attended their private meetings "than went to the publick Parish Churches."[64] None of them who accepted "Mr. Cottons or New-Englands way have ever been willing to serve either as officers or live as members in any congregation of old England; But their labour alwayes has been to this day to erect where they were able new congregations, and to dissolve the old."[65]

As important as these men were for the spread of Independency, their impact was not the only force at work in the mother country. There was another group whose influence was felt at least as strongly as that of these English divines -- the returning New Englanders. With the arrival of these ministers it became virtually impossible for opponents to halt the inexorable rise of the Congregational Way.

---

[64]Richard Baxter, Reliquiae Baxterianae (London, 1696), III, p. 19. Also see Nuttall, Visible Saints, pp. 16-17.

[65]Baillie, The Disswasive From the Errors of the Time, Vindicated, p. 15.

CHAPTER IV

THE RETURN OF THE SAINTS

The leading English Independents, as has been seen, brought many in England over to the New England Way of church polity, after being influenced by the chief colonial proponents of that way. There was, however, another development which had an outstanding effect on the growth of Congregationalism in England. This was the return to the mother land, during the two decades following the outbreak of the struggle against Charles, of a large number of New England ministers. The number of men who made this journey was considerable,[1] for England, at this time, was very alluring indeed to New England divines who hoped for ministerial positions. When the Puritans came to power many Anglican clergy were ejected from their posts, thereby creating "a great dearth of accredited ministers." These conditions proved fortunate for the returning New Englanders, "and the high esteem in which many influential Englishmen were disposed to hold them was an added boon."[2] Thus they left the wilderness and eagerly came to England in such numbers that by the end of the century there were more New England ministers in old England than old England ministers in New England.[3]

---

[1]This topic has been treated by William L. Sachse in two articles: "Harvard Men in England," and "The Migration of New Englanders to England." See above, p. 40, note 41.

[2]Sachse, "The Migration of New Englanders to England," 263.

[3]Cotton Mather, Magnalia, Book III, p. 4. See above, p. 40.

Perhaps the most famous of the New Englanders to return to England and become important in the history of the Commonwealth was Hugh Peter. While being educated at Trinity College, Cambridge, Peter had, like many of his contemporaries fallen under the influence of several of the ablest Puritans of the time -- Richard Sibbes, John Preston, William Ames, and notably, two who were to become the leaders of the New England Way, John Cotton and Thomas Hooker. Peter's Congregationalism, however, did not mature until after he went into exile, first in Holland and later in the Bible Commonwealth -- New England.[4] In Rotterdam he first reorganized the English church there along Congregational lines, after corresponding with John Cotton in New England, and also had a considerable impact on the English Puritans there -- most significantly the Dissenting Brethren.[5] In 1635 he arrived in New England where he subsequently spent "the most active and, on the whole, the most constructive years of his life."[6] During this period he had much practical first-hand experience with the New England Way, especially in his role as pastor of the church at Salem and in personal contact with those who were developing that way. In 1641 he and Thomas Weld were sent to England on a mission to raise funds for Harvard College and for the conversion of the Indians, to secure tax concessions for ships involved in the New England trade, "and to advance the 'glorious reformation' of church and state which the Bay Colony understood had at last begun in England." There is little doubt

---

[4]Stearns, The Strenuous Puritan, pp. 19-20, 52.

[5]Hoornbeeck, Summa Controversiarum Religionis, p. 663. Nuttall, Visible Saints, pp. 9, 11, 15. Also see above, p. 58

[6]Stearns, The Strenuous Puritan, p. 153.

that Hugh Peter considered the third objective to be the most important part of his mission, and to this end (promoting the continued reformation by urging the acceptance of the New England Way) he conscientiously devoted his efforts for the rest of his life.[7]

Instead of gathering a church, as so many other returning ministers did, the urgent needs of the Civil War led Hugh Peter to become the personal chaplain of Oliver Cromwell. This position was not only important enough to cause him continually to postpone his return to New England, but it also gave him a platform from which he could spread his views throughout England without being limited to a specific group of people or geographical area. Thomas Edwards, who thoroughly enjoyed publishing critiques of the New England Way and the Independency of churches that was consequently increasing in England, wrote at some length about Peter's efforts to proselytize in England. As Cromwell's chaplain, Edwards argued, Peter was able to spread Independency throughout England, for now he was "an Ubiquitary here and there, in this Countrey, and that Countrey, in the Army and at London: when ever the Independents or some other Sectaries are about any great designe or

---

[7]Raymond P. Stearns, "Hugh Peter and His Biographers," Annual Proceedings of the Bostonian Society (1935), 36, 37. Also see Stearns's The Strenuous Puritan, p. 159, where he asserts that Hugh Peter definitely welcomed this opportunity to advance the "glorious reformation" now under way in England. "Indeed, Hugh Peter's zeal for advancing the reformation was a source of danger as well as strength to the mission. . . . To Hugh Peter the most important object was to drive on the work of reformation in England, and he made this his own peculiar responsibility. What more praiseworthy design -- what could reflect greater credit upon the Bible Commonwealth -- than to overthrow Archbishop Laud's popish-smelling prelacy which, after all, had been the cause of exile and suffering to thousands of godly people and was still the effective barrier against further English Reformation? Moreover, to whom could English reformers turn for advice better than to New Englanders, who had more than a decade's experience in applying the principles of true godliness? It was a supreme opportunity to do the work of God and, granting the truth of his premises, Hugh Peter rightly felt that he could not neglect it."

businesse, he must be sent for." "Master Peters," furthermore, "is carefull to propagate his Church-way at home as well as abroad, and that in all haste, and at once to over-spread the Kingdome with it."[8] To his adversaries, Hugh Peter soon became notorious as a much-too-effective promoter of Congregationalism. He was known "in the camps of the enemy and in the mouths of the Presbyterians as a great seducer of persons to the Independent cause."[9] And Ewards bitterly noted that many of the Congregationalists in England, by 1646, had come to their positions through contact with Peter -- for example, there were many Independents in Sussex, "some of the chiefe being Mr. Peters Converts, as one Mr. Bunniard, Minister; one Mr. Postlethwait, one Mr. Crafts." "Would they in New-England," Edwards lamented, "endure one or more Presbyterians to live among them, and to go up and down their Countrey, and in chief Towns and places to preach against, cry down their Churches and Church Government, and to extoll and cry up a contrary way, as Mr. Peters and others do here?"[10] Although Edwards may be using hyperbole when he called Peter "the Vicar Generall and Metropolitaine of the Independents both in New and Old England,' there is no question that, "by scores of sermons...,

---

[8]Edwards, Gangraena, I, pp. 130-131; III, p. 131. "It was as an army chaplain that Peters exerted the widest influence." DNB, Vol. 44, p. 71.

[9]Stearns, The Strenuous Puritan, p. 40.

[10]Edwards, Gangraena, III, p. 105; I, pp. 60-61. There is little doubt that Peter constantly promoted the New England Way by extolling its virtues to his English brethren. It was not uncommon for him to speak in high regard of his seven years "exiled" in New England, living "amongst those faithfull, learned, godly Brethren, whose way of worship if we professe, it will not be groundlesse, when their writings are examined." In Mr. Peters Last Report (London, 1646), p. 15.

by pamphlets, and by speeches to Parliament, Hugh Peter, from 1645 until 1649 was a prime leader of Independency."[11]

There are other indications that Hugh Peter was effectively propagating the New England Way at this time. As has been mentioned above (Chapter Two) he was responsible for the publication of one of the most important treatises on the New England Way. In 1637 several English Presbyterians hoped to confute the New England divines who had been establishing the new Congregational Way by sending A Letter of Many Ministers in Old England, requesting The judgment of their Reverend Brethren in New England concerning Nine Positions. By 1642 the Presbyterians had expanded their questions to thirty-two, when Richard Mather (with the approval of other New England ministers) sent a reply to England. This work found its way into Hugh Peter's hands who added an introduction to it and published it in June 1643 under the full title of Church-Government and Church-Covenant Discussed, In an Answer of the Elders of the severall Churches in New-England to Two and thirty Questions, sent over to them by divers Ministers in England, to declare their judgements therein. It was rather clever of Peter thus to time the publication to coincide with the opening of the Westminster Assembly in order that a precise summary of the New England Way be made available

---

[11]Edwards, Gangraena, II, p. 61. Stearns, The Stremuous Puritan, pp. 39, 213-214. See also Nuttall, Visible Saints, pp. 15-16. Although Peter wrote prefaces to important works of other Congregationalists (notably John Cotton and Richard Mather) as well as several treatises of his own (see below), he did not participate too deeply in the pamphlet warfare then being waged. As is indicated here his most effective means of advancing the New England Way was through the sermon and by personal contact with the people of the nation. That he was successful in this endeavour is suggested by the unrelenting vehemence of the attacks upon him by such noted Presbyterian alarmists as "Gangraena" Edwards.

to those divines who would be considering the form of church polity (Scottish Presbyterianism or New England Congregationalism) that should be recommended for adoption in England.[12]

In introducing Mather's treatise[13] Hugh Peter began by earnestly beseeching his Presbyterian brethren to be open-minded and willing to grow:

> The onely way I know to reach Gods mind in Worship will bee to love the truth for its owne sake: yea to love it when it shall condemne our practises and persons also; who hath not observed that the first step to error is the declining the truth in love to it? . . . we would earnestly desire that none would call that unseasonable or unreasonable, which God seemes even now to call for, at the calling of this Synode, and will carry so much Reason with it, as God and his truth will owne more tendernes and respect to our Brethren, we know not how to show, who sent us these 32. Questions, no other dealing would we have from our brethren consenting with us. Some Rivers have bin noted to differ in the Colours of the water, yet running in the same Channell: let Jesus Christ be lifted up by us all; Let us love him whilst wee dispute about him."[14]

Peter then pressed the case for the adoption of the New England Way. Since Episcopacy in England had been successfully rooted out, he claimed, there are only two ways left to be considered -- Independency and Presbyterianism. It is actually inaccurate to call Congregationalism "Independency," Peter argued, for "'we know not any Churches Reformed, more looking at sister Churches for helpe than ours doe.' But Independents have found no word of God to authorize any superior power, in the final analysis, than the particular congregation:

---

[12]Stearns, The Strenuous Puritan, pp. 211, 212.

[13]For some of the ideas presented by Mather, see Chapter I.

[14]Quoted in The Strenuous Puritan, pp. 212-213.

'We need not tell the wise whence Tyranny grew in Churches, and how Common wealths got their pressure in the like kind.' Only let self be conquered in England and these truths will be recognized." Peter urged his brethren to look at the New England example and consider it carefully.

> Know (good Reader) we do not hereby go about to whistle thee out of any known good way of God. Commonly Questions and Answers cleare up the way, when other Treatises leave us to darkness. Read them, and what we say for a Church-Covenant, it may save charge and time in reading other Bookes, remember wee strive not here for masteryes, but give an account of our practise, wherein if thou know'st we faile Candidus imperti; if we agree let us worke by our plat-forme; and may thy soule flourish as a greene heath or watered garden.[15]

In another treatise[16] Hugh Peter even advocated certain political reforms in England based primarily on those already prevalent in Holland and New England. He believed that good men rather than good laws should be the guiding forces in society, and, for him, the "philosopher king" was the visible saint who would seek "to advance true Religion." For this reason he was concerned with the role of higher education and of a trained, educated clergy. "Godlie and tractable" men, regardless of class or social position, should be supported by scholarships and educated for the ministry. Once they were qualified they would be elected to ministerial office in gathered congregations "according to that way of New-England set forth by Hooker and Cotton."[17] This would be one aspect of a saintly commonwealth that Hugh Peter hoped would be set up

---

[15] Ibid., p. 213.

[16] Hugh Peter, Good Work for a Good Magistrate (London, 1651).

[17] Quoted in The Strenuous Puritan, pp. 371, 372.

in England modelled on the New England pattern. In an earlier work[18] he advocated yet another reform. A committee of godly men should be formed, he urged, in order to examine "'men of honesty, holinesse, and parts' to be set out as itinerant preachers, two or three into each county, paid by the state. Magistrates should foster religion and administer details of the church organization, but they were not to 'meddle further then as a nursing Father, and then all children shall be fed, though they have severall faces and shapes.'" It is significant to note that Peter's expression here, "except for his inclusion of toleration, is almost identical with that of the Cambridge Platform of 1648 in New England,"[19] for it shows both that he espoused New England ideas in old England so closely as to follow the actual wording of them, and that he was beginning to diverge from the Bay government on the question of toleration.

Toleration was the issue over which Independency in New England and in the mother country eventually parted. The intolerant attitude of many of the New England Congregationalists did not catch hold among those who were otherwise carefully following the colonists' example. No doubt this resulted from the fact that the situation in England differed from that in New England; in the mother country the Congregationalists were in a minority and thus tolerance of other dissenting groups was required for its success. Whereas in Massachusetts Bay Independency was the majority party and had to maintain this majority for its continued pre-eminence; thus intolerance of "erroneous" opinions became necessary.[20]

---

[18]Hugh Peter, A Word for the Armie (London, 1647).

[19]Quoted in Stearns, The Strenuous Puritan, pp. 307-308.

[20]For a fuller discussion of the divergence of the two Englands

Hugh Peter himself realized this, for when he was in New England he was vigorously intolerant of those opinions which appeared to be a threat to the existence of the "Holy Commonwealth" there.[21] However, after he returned to the mother land, he learned that in order for Independency to succeed in setting up another holy commonwealth, a policy of toleration would have to be adopted so that the aid of other dissenters could be enlisted in overthrowing the King and in continuing the Reformation. Thus, Hugh Peter, while significantly promoting New England church polity throughout England, accepted a broader toleration -- a concept which he entreated his New World brethren to adopt as well. In a letter which indicates the powerful influence New England had on the mother country, Peter lovingly pleaded: "Ah sweet New England! & yet sweeter if divisions bee not among you, if you will give any incouragement to those that are godly & shall differ etc. I pray doe what you can herein, & know that your example in all kinds swayse here."[22]

It is evident then, that even though New England was not sufficiently tolerant, Hugh Peter believed that its influence was strong enough to sway Englishmen into establishing a Bible Commonwealth "analogous in many ways to that which he had helped to establish in New England. . . . With an unshakeable belief in the Bible as a full and complete guide for man, he sought to construct a Christian society in accordance with

---

over the issue of toleration see Perry Miller's essays, "Errand Into the Wilderness" and "The Marrow of Puritan Divinity," See above, Chapter I, notes 1 and 2 for the full citation.

[21]Most notably in the Antinomian controversy.

[22]Quoted in Stearns, The Strenuous Puritan, p. 183.

the law of God."[23] There were, however, critics who were sceptical of his good intentions, who believed that what Peter advocated was rebellion, and who complained that this "new Gospell" which he brought "over from New-England, the Land of Canaan," "teacheth us (as he saies) to rebell and resist the King."[24] Thomas Edwards, as would be expected, also was quick to present a similar opinion. He did not consider the government of New England to be a holy commonwealth and consequently vigorously objected to the effort to bring "arbitrary government" to England. Edwards believed that the magistrates of Massachusetts Bay exercised arbitrary powers because there were no lawfully-fixed penalties for offenses in the colony, and it was "left to the discretion and wisdome of the Magistrate what he thought fit to inflict in case of such and such crimes." This produced enough fear among the colonists "that some in New-Engl. when they were going to Boston, or speaking of going thither, would say, lets take heed what we do there, least we loose our heads, for what offences the Governour shall think and deserves beheading." Edwards warned that godly men in the mother country must be careful to prevent this arbitrary form of government from catching on there as well.

> Now as Independency, and many other opinions being first broached in New-England have come over into old, so I have reason to suspect by the Arbitrary Government exercised by too many in these times, and the great workings of many to uphold Arbitrary power, and to keep all things from being setled in Commonwealth as well as in Church, there are some Sectaries of that opinion among us, especially when I lay to that opinion broached in New-England, some passages preached in a Sermon by Master Peters, August 2. 1646. at Islington . . . in which sermon Master Peters speaking of perfect men, used these words, and

---

[23] Ibid., pp. 381-382.

[24] Edward Dobson, XIV Articles of Treason (Oxford, 1643), pp. 2-3.

> such like, Yea talk of Laws, Laws; the Kingdome is not to be maintained by Lawes, but by perfect men. [25]

Edwards simply could not condone Peter's view, for he differed over the question of which "perfect men" should be rulers.

Hugh Peter, however, was not the only minister responsible for bringing the New England Way to old England. There were, as well, other Massachusetts divines who played a significant part in this flow of ideas -- one of whom was Peter's colleague on his mission to England, Thomas Weld. After having been a pastor in Essex, Weld migrated to Boston in 1632 where he subsequently served for nine years as pastor of the First Church in Roxbury. Even before his mission with Hugh Peter he began to urge the nonconformists of England to accept the polity of the New England churches as their own. Within a year after his settling in the Bay colony, he wrote a letter to the brethren of his former church at Tarling, Essex, which reveals the enthusiasm with which he greeted life in Massachusetts Bay, and suggests that he wholeheartedly accepted the New England Way. The Holy Commonwealth of New England, he proclaimed, is a paradise because the churches there practice that form of polity which is set forth in Scripture. Weld began by thanking God for His kindness in leading him to the New World and delivering him safely upon its shores:

> O how hath my heart been mad glad with the comforts of his house and the spirituall days in the same wherein all things

---

[25] Edwards, Gangraena, III, pp. 111, 112. Also see John Child's New Englands Jonas (quoted above, Chapter II). The significance of this is not the question of whether or not Hugh Peter and other returning New Englanders were attempting to set up an arbitrary government in the mother country, but that the Presbyterians recognized that the Congregational Way had derived from New England and that they were fearful that other aspects of New England society might successfully be imported into England. (This fear still persists in twentieth-century Britain -- the fear of being overly-influenced by America.)

> are done in the forme & patterne shewed in the mount, members provided church officers elected & ordained. Sacrament administered. Scandalls prevented censured, Fast days & holy dayes & holy fast days and all such things by Authority commanded & performed according to the precise rule. Mine eyes blessed be God do see such administration of Justice in Civile government All things so righteously so religiously and impartially carried. . . . praised & thanked be God who moved my heart to come and made open the way to mee. And I profes if I mite have my wish in what part of the world to dwell, I know no other place on the whole globe of the earth where I would be rather then here. 26

In New England, he continued, "the greater part are the better part," and here the godly are not persecuted, nor does swearing fill the air. Yet, though life in the wilderness was heavenly, Weld did emphasize that his fellow saints there did not consider themselves to be pure or perfect. "God knowes wee think ourselves the poorest and vwordiest [unworthiest] of all his servants . . . , only we desier to breath after perfection and to know what is the rule & to walke in it." In conclusion Weld reminded his brethren in old England of his love for them, praying that they too would soon see the light as it is given unto them in New England. We shall never forget you, "yet we cannot but mourne for the spotts and blemishs that are among your meetings."[27]

During the next eight years Weld zealously learned and preached the New England Way, and became deeply involved in the religious life of the colony by participating in the trial of Anne Hutchinson heartily condemning the Antinomian views espoused by her and her brother-in-law John

---

[26] Thomas Weld to the people at Tarling, Essex, BM, Sloane MSS. 922, ff. 90-93 [endorsed A Letter of Master Wells from New England to Old England to his people at Tarling in Essex: It is a Letter Setting forth the great Mercies of God with praise and thanks giving, 1633].

[27] Ibid.

Wheelwright.[28] Finally, in 1641, Weld left Massachusetts Bay with Hugh Peter on a sojourn from which he was destined never to return to the only "place on the whole globe of the earth" where he wished to live.[29]

At first Weld devoted his efforts to securing assistance for the colony, but, like Peter, eventually became involved with spreading the Congregational Way. Weld and Peter were, it is known, involved in the publication of Congregational treatises, most notably several works by John Cotton.[30] Also about this time, Weld published two significant pamphlets of his own in which he argued very strongly for the New England Way.[31]

In order to reply to a critique of New England Congregationalism published by William Rathband,[32] Weld wrote An Answer to W. R. in which he contended that the New England system was the only correct model of church polity, for it was patterned on the "wholsome words written in the Scriptures." To Rathband's strong indictment of the New England practice of limiting church membership to the elect, Weld exclaimed that it was

---

[28]DNB, Vol. 60, p. 160. Also see the biographical sketch of Weld in Calamy Revised, ed. by A.G. Matthews, (Oxford, 1934), pp. 517-518; hereafter cited as CR.

[29]See above regarding the reasons for the Weld-Peter Mission.

[30]Stearns, The Strenuous Puritan, p. 214.

[31]An Answer to W. R. His Narration (London, 1644) -- hereafter cited as An Answer to W. R. -- and A Brief Narration of the Practices of the Churches in New-England (London, 1645).

[32]A Brief Narration. Rathband vehemently condemned those ministers who laboured "impetuously, both in pulpit and press" to convince England to adopt the New England Way. See above, pp. 31n, 41-42.

proper to desire to have all church members of a high "spirituall stampe and character" and to endeavour "by tryall" to distinguish the truly saved from the hypocrites, and after discovering "such, for keeping them from polluting the holy seales and other Ordinances of God to his dishonour, and their own ruine" and if we, finding "them sound in faith," encourage, comfort, and receive "them, what hurt is in all this?"[33]

The test for saving faith, which was used to separate the wheat from the chaff, Weld continued, was neither harsh nor unfair. Even if candidates did not know "the time, order, and manner of their conversion," as long as they were able to show that Christ was "now in them by the workings of his Spirit . . . though they know not how Christ came into them, it is sufficient." Those who denied the church covenant, though, were not admitted, but this was only a logical procedure, for "how can we possibly admit him into our church-covenant, that denies the church-covenant? Can we make him do what he denies to do? Since God's people must be a 'willing' people, Psal. cx. 3; or, if he doubts of the lawfulness of it, is it lawful for him to enter into it doubtingly, or for us to offer it, seeing 'whatsoever is not of faith is sin,' Rom. xiv, 23? But to say," as Rathband did, that "our 'church-doors' are 'for ever' shut against him" is an untruth.[34] In conclusion, then, it should be emphasized, Weld maintained,

---

[33]Weld, An Answer to W. R., pp. 11, 17-18.

[34]Ibid., pp. 22, 23. In his defense of the New England practice of limiting membership to the elect, Weld revealed a good deal about the nature of the test for saving faith. It is apparent that a candidate had to prove , not only that he was truly saved, but also that he accepted the Congregational form of polity. This of course was implicit in the candidate's acceptance of the entire procedure by going through the process of allowing his sincerity to be tested. This, then, would indicate that Thomas Edwards, William Rathband, and other Presbyterian critics of New England and English Independency were right in their claim that the test

that limiting the membership by such means is a just and charitable practice, for it insures that all men have the equal opportunity to enter the church covenant. Only those who possess saving faith, regardless of their position in society, will be accepted into membership. "We accept Christians of the lowest form, and never reject any for want of parts, or eminency of grace, if we can discern in them a heart smitten with a sense of sin and need of Christ, joined with a blameless conversation, though very weak in knowledge and faith, etc., we dare not refuse but embosom them in the Lord."[35]

Weld went on to elucidate further aspects of New England church polity in answering Rathband's critique. One of the most important points he made was that the New England churches were truly independent, and not, as Rathband chided them in his attack on the Cambridge Platform, the same as the Presbyterians by having formulated a set discipline. Weld claimed that a set form of discipline did not mean that the churches were not independent, for in agreeing to adopt the discipline voluntarily, they were not forced to accept that which was repugnant to them. The agreements that existed among the churches of New England were not binding rules, but merely canons; and canons were agreements among the people of those

---

for saving faith consisted of an approval and acceptance of the church-covenant idea. In other words, those who believed in and accepted Christ, and yet did not accept the Congregational interpretation regarding church polity, were barred from membership in the church. In this respect the New England Way did keep a number of godly men outside the church in a rather unchristian manner, merely for a disagreement over an external, nonessential (for salvation) matter. For a fuller discussion of the test for saving faith as practiced in New England, see above, Chapter I. The following chapter will show that this test was practiced in old England as well.

[35] Ibid., p. 18.

churches to obey what they voluntarily wished to obey. Independency meant that a church was not subject to the power of another church or presbytery, but was independent to govern itself according to the law and power of Christ.[36]

Throughout this work, and indeed in all of his activities in the mother country, Weld made a conscious appeal to his countrymen to look to the New England model, and to adopt the new way of polity in their own churches. Because of his connection with New England he considered himself to be one of the leading authorities, then residing in England of the proper polity. Not only did this position make him qualified to write authoritatively for the New England Way, but also gave him the conviction that it was his duty to advance Independency in England. "I am," he claimed, "one of the nearest kinsmen to those Churches of any other man in these parts & therefore I take my selfe bound to keepe alive the name of my Brethren, and not let it die through my neglect." There are very few, if any, living now in England, who "have had more experience of New-England Church courses then my selfe, through many years continuance with them, (to whom also I am returning when God makes way:) and am therefore able to speake on certainty, and with confidence [about the Way of the Churches there, and] where W.R. departs from the truth in his relations."[37]

---

[36] Ibid., 11, 30, 34. In this point regarding the relationship among the Independent churches of New England, as in other respects, Weld concurred with the other principal proponents of the New England Way. There was communion between churches in the way of advice and assistance, but not binding decisions -- consultative synods, but not authoritative ones. (See above, Chapter I.)

[37] Ibid., preface.

That he was convinced of his duty, there can be little doubt, for soon after his Answer to W. R. began circulating throughout England, Weld authored another pamphlet[38] which described and promoted that polity which he was determined "to keepe alive." By 1644 it seemed apparent to Weld that his efforts were beginning to be rewarded -- that England was coming closer to adopting the New England Way. To Rathband's charge that no other churches in the world followed the New England Way, Weld wrote that so far from opposing it, "many thousands doe see and follow it. . . . And even England is comming neerer it by many steps of late then before; He that hath brought them from Episcopacy, Imposed Formes, and Popish Ceremonies, &c. can carry them on further."[39]

For several years after his return in 1641, when not striving to keep alive the name of his brethren, Weld spent considerable effort trying to find a means whereby he could rejoin them in Massachusetts Bay. But always his efforts seemed to be thwarted by the circumstances of those crucial times. In 1643 the ship in which they planned to sail for New England was delayed so long that Weld and Hugh Peter, fearing the effect a winter voyage would have on their families, decided to remain in England and sail at a more propitious time. In a letter which Weld wrote to the General Court explaining the reasons for their delay, he also revealed that another reason kept them in the mother country -- the fact that their brethren considered their assistance to be essential in

---

[38] A Brief Narration of the Practices of the Churches in New-England, (London, 1645).

[39] Weld, An Answer to W. R., p. 11. Weld dismissed those who had still not accepted the New England Way as simply not having given it a fair hearing.

continuing the Reformation; especially at this time when the Independent cause was at an ebb. "The present condition of this kingdom, that is now upon the Verticall point," Weld explained,

> togeither with the incredible importunities of very many godly Persons, great & smale (who hapily conceive we by our presence doe more good here, then we ourselves dare imagine that we doe) have made us, after many various thoughts, much agitation, & consultation with god, & men, unwillingly willing to venter ourselves upon Gods Providence here, & be content to tarry one six moneths longer from your & our churches most desired presence with whom our hearts are, without the least wavering, fixed. Things can not long stand at this passe here, as now, but will speedily be better or worse. If better, we shall not repent us to have bene spectatours & furtherers of our Dear Cuntries good, & to be happy messingers of the good newes thereof unto you. If worse, we are like to bring thousands with us to you.
>
> If yourselves were here & favor all things as they stand, & heard all arguments on both sides, we presume you would advise, at present, not to disert the cause of Christ, & discourage so many 1000ds at once, as will (say they) be weakende by our departure. [40]

Thus, to Weld it was apparent that the success or failure of the Reformation was at stake, and since it was obvious that "many thousands" were beginning to come over to the New England Way, it is not surprising that neither he nor Hugh Peter could desert the cause for which they had long striven. The continuance of the Reformation prevented Weld from leaving England, but no doubt the success of his efforts became a means of consolation to offset the disappointment of not being able to return to his beloved New England.

During the ensuing years he was partly occupied with defending the Bay colony by supporting the way in which the saints there handled the Antinomian controversy,[41] but finally, in 1649, perhaps realizing

---

[40] Quoted in Stearns, The Strenuous Puritan, p. 169.

[41] Weld published A Short Story of the Rise, Reign, and Ruin of the Antinomians (London, 1644) in which it is argued that these disorders were not the result of Independency -- as Presbyterian critics (e.g. William

that he was not to return to New England, he accepted the sequestered post of Rector and Pastor of St. Mary's, Gateshead, Durham. Besides continuing to promote the New England Way from here he also made a determined effort to maintain the strong position that the Congregationalists had acquired, by attacking those who broke "their covenant bonds of fellowship" and separated themselves from the church -- most notably, the Quakers.[42] Furthermore, Weld was watchful over the Congregational purity of neighboring churches. For example, he and several colleagues discovered and exposed that one Thomas Ramsay, who had been admitted to membership in the nearby Congregational church at Hexham, was in fact an imposter whose confession of faith was fraudulent.[43] Now that his efforts (and those of others) to promote the New England Way in England were meeting with some measure of success, Weld believed that it was necessary to hold on to what had been achieved.

Because the rectorship of Gateshead was a sequestered living, it should be made clear that Weld's primary significance in helping to establish the New England Way in the mother country was not as pastor of the Congregational church there, [44] but in the influence his preaching

---

Rathband) had claimed -- but that heresies of this sort were most easily crushed by Independency.

[42] Nuttall, Visible Saints, pp. 24-25, 125.

[43] Ibid., p. 113. Ramsay later admitted that he was sent by the Jesuits in order to seduce the English to Catholicism. Weld, somewhat overzealously, exposed this "plot" in a pamphlet written in collaboration with Cuthbert Sydenham, Samuel Hammond, and William Durant, under the full title of A False Jew: or, A Wonderfull Discovery of a Scot, Baptized at London for a Christian, Circumcised at Rome to act a Jew, rebaptized at Hexham for a Believer, but found out at Newcastle to be a Cheat (Newcastle, 1653), and thus helped to maintain the "sanctity" of a Congregational church.

[44] In Weld's A Vindication of Mr. Weld (London, 1658), it is

and publications had on those who, during the 1640's, had to decide for Presbyterianism or Congregationalism.[45] Nevertheless, even as a minister who was not overwhelmingly accepted by the people of his congregation, Weld did make a strong attempt to introduce and exercise many features of the New England Way in Gateshead. Toward the end of his ministry, he published a vindication of himself aimed at those who criticized the practices he had inaugurated at St. Mary's. In this brief pamphlet (written in the third person) it is revealed that even in the face of heavy opposition he continued to promote the way of the churches of New England. Out of the parish church he gathered a visible church the membership of which consisted of those who could be ascertained as truly regenerate. In order to distinguish "the pretious from the vile" Weld tarried for some

---

apparent that there was much opposition to his ministry in Gateshead. He defended himself by arguing that he was invited to be minister there by over 140 people (p. 6), but it was obvious that there were also many who not only criticized his ministry, but also made an effort to get him to resign by making his work there an unhappy one. His salary, for example, was lowered (p. 9), and his living conditions were made nearly unbearable: "they . . . suffer a filthy dunghill (even growing to a great mountain) where all their dung, garbage, and very carryon is layd under his nose, and to his very dore, to stink him, (if it may be) out of his habitation; and after many requests made by him, they still let it lye." (p. 10). There is little doubt that because he was an "intruder," who attempted to limit the sacraments to only the members of his gathered congregation, Weld was not overwhelmingly respected in Gateshead. Also see CR, p. 518.

[45]One such man who was influenced by Weld to accept the New England Way was Thomas Browning (later Vicar of Desborough, and then Pastor of the Rothwell Congregational Church). Nuttall, Visible Saints, p. 38. That Weld's works were widely read is also indicated by the fact that many Presbyterians quoted passages from his publications in their general critiques of Independancy. For example, this was done by Richard Hollinworth in his A Rejoynder To Master Samuel Eaton (London, 1647), part II, pp. 17, 19-20. Weld's works were thus well-known by those who were engaged in the burning controversies of these times.

time after coming there before gathering the visible saints of the church "in Christs way." It was necessary to be certain that those admitted to membership and the sacraments were indeed visible saints -- "Churches of Christ are not made up of the rubbish of Parishes; he [Weld] would take time to know what stones were to be layd in the building: Churches are not heaps, but made up of pretious stones." To those who were not admitted, and thus not permitted to partake of the Lord's Supper, Weld answered, merely "being Parishioners of Gateshead hath no Scripture warrant to make you members of a Church of Christ; it is not habitation makes you a Spouse of Christ."[46] Thus it is quite clear that Weld attempted, at different times and in various ways (either through publishing defenses of the New Englanders, or by instituting some of their practices into the government of his new church in Gateshead) to advance that way of church polity which he had practiced in New England. As noted above, he had taken it upon himself "to keepe alive the name of my Brethren, and not let it die through my neglect," and in this endeavour he, and others, were quite successful, for "many thousands" now "doe see and follow" the New England Way; "England is comming neerer it by many steps of late then before."[47]

Hugh Peter and Thomas Weld had returned to England on a specific mission as agents of Massachusetts Bay Colony. There were other ministers who made the journey at this time either on their own volition or at the

---

[46]Weld, A Vindication of Mr. Weld, pp. 20, 22, 24. He mentioned Owen, Cotton, Hooker, Shepard, and the Dissenting Brethren as his authorities among learned divines.

[47]Weld, An Answer to W. R., p. 11, and preface.

express invitation of their brethren in England.[48] Among them were Samuel Eaton, Thomas Harrison, John Phillips, William Ames, Jr., and countless others.

Samuel Eaton spent three years as John Davenport's colleague in the church at New Haven, Connecticut, after migrating to the New World. Knowing that there was an important work to be done in England then, he returned home in 1640 and soon after "showed himself a vigorous asserter of independency." One of the ways in which he asserted this cause, as did other New Englanders in England, was by publishing several treatises promoting the Congregational Way. To Sir Thomas Aston's book Remonstrance against Presbytery (London, 1641) he attached a defense of Congregational polity: Certain Positions preached at St. John's Church in Chester, by Mr Samuel Eaton, a minister lately returned from New England. With Timothy Taylor, he co-authored two very important treatises setting forth the polity of Independent churches in answer to the criticism of the Presbyterian Richard Hollinworth; A Defence of Sundry Positions, And Scriptures alledged to justifie the Congregationall-way (London, 1645), and The Defence of Sundry Positions & Scriptures For The Congregationall-way, Justified (London, 1646).[49]

---

[48] Several leading members of Parliament requested John Cotton and other New England divines to return from their voluntary exile in order to assist those in England "who sought to 'exalt' the Lord their God, and ' worship at his footstool.'" Cotton, as we know, declined to return, but others did -- as shall be seen in the subsequent pages -- although it is not always evident whether or not they were answering this invitation. Hanbury, Historical Memorials, Vol. II, pp. 154-155.

[49] DNB, Vol. 16, pp. 338-339, and CR, p. 178. Also see Edmund Calamy, Nonconformists Memorial, ed. by Samuel Palmer (3 vols.; London, 1802), Vol. II, pp. 361-362. Hereafter cited as NM.

A second and very significant way in which Eaton promoted New England Congregationalism was as the founder and principal director of Independency in Cheshire and Lancashire.[50] He was "the great apostle to promote their [the New Englanders'] design in these parts [Lancashire and Cheshire]."[51] Indeed, the church he founded in Dukinfield, according to Thomas Edwards, was "the first Independent Church visible and framed that was set up in England, being before the Apologists came over from Holland, and so before their setting up their Churches here in London."[52] Although there were "Independent" churches set up by Henry Jacob as early as 1616 (in Southwark),[53] Eaton's church in Cheshire was the first of which we have record that was gathered on the New England model, and thus, was of primary importance for the development of Congregationalism in England.

Not long after the founding of this church, Eaton and his colleague Timothy Taylor (they were teacher and pastor respectively) found themselves, and the polity of their church, to be the victim of vituperous

---

[50]Robert Halley, Lancashire: its Puritanism and Nonconformity (London, 1872), p. 318.

[51]Edwards, Gangraena, III, pp. 67-68.

[52]Ibid., p. 165.

[53]Jacob was more a Brownist and Separatist than a Congregationalist. He was a "semi" Separatist and not a "nonseparating" Congregationalist. The Brownists and Jacobists belong to the prehistory of Congregationalism and were not part of the movement itself. "'The Congregational men,' 'the Congregational way,' do not begin to appear until the 1640s. . . . Few Congregationalists, indeed, had been directly influenced by the Brownists or by Brownist writings. They had their own path of development, and while this often ran parallel with the Brownists' path it was not a projection of it." Nuttall, Visible Saints, pp. 8, 10. Also see Edmund S. Morgan's account of the early history of Congregationalism in his Visible Saints.

attacks put forth by several spokesmen of the Presbyterian persuasion. It was at this time that they published their rebuttals to Richard Hollinworth. In these two defenses we find a good example of the logic and arguments (based on Scripture) that were presented by those who wished to persuade English Puritans to adopt the New England form of polity. The visible church, they argued, may be gathered by seven or more persons (for in the time of Adam or Noah, "there was not above seven or eight, will you deny them the being of a Church?"), and should not consist of more members than can meet in one place at one time. Furthermore, "Visibility of Saintship is requisite to warrant the setting upon such an action as erecting of a Church. . .Better no Church erected then not of visible Saints." These visible saints, once gathered, would unite into one body, by entering into a special covenant with God. "A Solemne expresse and verball covenant or agreement (we assert) to be necessary unto the purity and strength of a Church, and so consequently unto the welbeing of a Church." The covenant was necessary for the existence of a church in order to sever its members from the world and join them to each other so that they could enjoy "communion together in all holy ordinances" undefiled by the presence of the unsaved, and also, once united in a covenant, the members of the church would not easily remove to other churches and thereby weaken the gathered church.[54]

It is here that the authors revealed that membership in the church was limited only to those who could satisfactorily prove that they were, indeed, regenerate; and that, to determine the sincerity of

---

[54]Samuel Eaton and Timothy Taylor, A Defence of Sundry Positions (London, 1645), pp. 9, 13, 31, 37, 38.

candidates wishing to be admitted, a test for saving faith was devised. This test was virtually the same as that already in use in New England (see above Chapter I), where, no doubt, Eaton, through experience, learned this practice. Rules were necessary, Eaton asserted, in order to examine persons for grace before admitting them to fellowship if the church was not to be "a common receptacle of all persons." Once the rules for receiving or rejecting candidates were decided upon, "then there must be a triall made by some, whether persons be qualified according to those rules. . . . Is it not as lawfull," they continued,

> to try persons that would be Church-members, and make some profession in words of faith and repentance, but hold forth nothing which may probably give witnesse to the reality thereof, as it was lawfull and commendable in the Ephesians to try false Apostles, which professed in words to be true Apostles? Rev. 2. 2. And is it not reasonable for a Church to seek satisfaction, concerning the reality and sincerity of sanctity from persons of whom they doubt, as it was just and equall for the Church at Jerusalem to seek satisfaction concerning Saul, whether he were a Disciple in truth or in pretence only? Acts 9. 26, 27. [55]

Thus it is obvious that the candidate for membership first had to prove to the satisfaction of the congregation, both in word and deed, that he sincerely repented of his sins and had received saving faith, before he would be permitted to enter into covenant with the church.

Other aspects of the Congregational polity which Eaton and Taylor outlined also had New England precedents. Each church, they proclaimed, after its gathering should choose its own ministers and officers "without the help of Synod, Classis or Presbyterie."[56] These officers, once chosen,

---

[55] Ibid., pp. 33, 34. See the following chapter for a detailed discussion of the test for membership in practice.

[56] Ibid., pp. 40, 45, 46. In the same vein as their New England brethren, they argued that "the Church is first, before it hath a Pastor . . . if it were not so, the Church would be dissolved at the death of a Pastor."

were to be ordained by the Congregation, and, if later they erred, the congregation had power to admonish, censure, or excommunicate the offending officer, depending on the gravity of his offense.[57] The duties of the officers were divided much the same as those in the New England churches. There were deacons, whose duty it was to collect and distribute the tithes and offerings of the members, and elders, who were divided into the two categories of ruling and teaching elders, and the latter were divided still further into teachers and pastors. The teacher's duty, as was the custom in New England, was the explication of doctrine, and the pastor's was exhortation: "the gift of teaching . . . is proper to the Doctor or Teacher; the gift of exhorting, . . . is proper to the Pastor of the Church: for Paul, in Ephes. 4 distinguisheth Pastors and Teachers, and the gifts of the Spirit were distinct."[58] Their primary duty was with their own church, just as synods could not meddle in the affairs of a particular visible church, neither could ministers perform ministerial acts in another congregation.[59]

Throughout their arguments putting forth these points of polity and other aspects of Congregationalism, Eaton and Taylor often defended New England practices against the aspersions of Presbyterian critics. For example, they claimed that the New Englanders were not too democratic, as their opponents complained, in giving most power to the people, for they retained for the eldership "certain acts of power . . . which are

---

[57] Ibid., pp. 52, 56-59, 95. Excommunication was carried out on an offender by the joint consent of the members and the officers.

[58] Ibid., pp. 64, 69, 70.

[59] Ibid., p. 111.

not in the people; and Mr. Cotton expressly gives all authority properly so called, to the Eldership, allotting only a popular power of interest and liberty to the people." The New Englanders did not place the power of the "Keys" in the hands of the congregation alone "but in the whole, consisting of Rulers, and ruled; giving to the Rulers an authoritative power, which they give not to the ruled."[60] The authors also defended the New Englanders by revealing that Hollinworth, in his effort to exaggerate the shortcomings of that way purposely misquoted New England treatises. The New England elders, Eaton and Taylor inform Hollinworth, do not say "that a Church member is to give himselfe up to the Church to be guided by her according to will, but according to God; But these words (according to God) you leave out."[61]

Thus a very significant aspect of Eaton's and Taylor's works is that they echoed, supported, and defended much of Cotton's The Keyes of the Kingdom of Heaven in presenting the way of the churches of New England. "You call for a Narrative of our Church-way," they addressed their critics, "especially of what we count Essentials, we had thought to have

---

[60] Ibid., pp. 94, 100.

[61] Samuel Eaton and Timothy Taylor, The Defence of Sundry Positions & Scriptures For The Congregational-way Justified (London, 1646), p. 12, (hereafter cited as The Defence of Sundry Position . . . Justified). Eaton and Taylor also made use of several passages from New England writings to supplement their arguments promoting various aspects of Congregational polity. For example, they quoted Cotton's The Keyes of the Kingdom of Heaven to support their belief that synods may exist, but not in an authoritative capacity. (A synod of nearby churches may condemn errors and schisms within a neighboring congregation, "but yet not assume authority of censuring the delinquents, but leave that to particular Churches to be performed," [p. 90]) Hollinworth himself pointed out this close relationship between Eaton's and Taylor's A Defence of Sundry Positions and several New England treatises in his A Rejoynder To Master Samuel Eaton, p. 93. He accused them of having taken several phrases directly into their work from "the N. E. Elders apology for Church-covenant."

taken some pains to have satisfied you herein, but that in the nick of time that work is done to our hands, by Reverend Mr. Cotton."[62] Not only was Cotton's work regarded by the authors as speaking for English as well as New England Congregationalism, but they also believed that the way of the churches in old England was indeed the same in practice as that in New England.[63]

Eaton, besides being Teacher in Dukinfield, was also the pastor of a church meeting in Chester Castle. By 1650, after Taylor had left the pastorate of Dukinfield and migrated to Ireland, Eaton had to give up his position in Chester in order to devote his full energies to Dukinfield. His successor at Chester (John Knowles) advocated anti-trinitarian principles, and was consequently hastily dismissed upon the insistence of Eaton, who then recommended John Murcot, a friend, to the post. Murcot declined and the pastorate remained vacant for several years until Thomas Harrison, a fellow New Englander, who after first ministering the Congregational Way in London and Dublin, came to Chester.[64] Thus it was that Chester was ministered to by two of the most powerful and moving preachers of the time. Eaton, who was so effective that he is known at one time to have spoken so strongly against the Book of Common Prayer, that enraged

---

[62] Eaton and Taylor, A Defence of Sundry Positions, p. 111.

[63] Because Cotton's works so admirably outlined English Congregationalism, Eaton and Taylor were reluctant to become engaged in a pamphlet war by publishing their defenses. "We chose . . . rather to practice in silence, according to our own light, and quietly to follow the Work we are called to in these parts, then to implead those that should plead against the Way we walk in." However, probably realizing his significant position as a former New Englander, Eaton did decide to publish an answer to Hollinworth, for "the eyes of many were upon us rather than upon others." Ibid., preface.

[64] Nuttall, Visible Saints, pp. 31-32.

members of the congregation ceased to attend divine service;[65] and Harrison, whose effectiveness as a preacher is attested to by the famous comment of an Irish Lord that he would "rather hear Dr. Harrison say Grace over an Egg, than hear the Bishops pray and Preach."[66]

Thomas Harrison was trained for the ministry in New England and returned to the mother country after a brief interval as chaplain to the Governor of Virginia. Because of his nonconformity he was dismissed from this post and soon thereafter arrived in London. In 1651 he succeeded Thomas Goodwin as pastor of the latter's gathered congregation in the parish of St. Dunstan's-in-the-East, where he soon became known for his outstanding preaching.[67] When Henry Cromwell went to Ireland in 1657 as Lord-Lieutenant, Harrison accompanied him and became one of the Congregational Lecturers at Christ Church, Dublin. It was from Dublin that Harrison came to Cheshire to continue the Congregational ministry of Samuel Eaton, and with him he brought the experience and knowledge of the way of polity that he had learned in New England and effectively practiced in London and Dublin. Shortly after the Restoration he was silenced by

---

[65] DNB, Vol. 16, p. 339.

[66] Edmund Calamy, Account of the Ejected Ministers, (London, 1713), p. 122.

[67] Albert Clare, The City Temple 1640-1940. The City Temple, located in the parish of St. Dunstan's-in-the-East, had very strong ties with New England. Founded by Thomas Goodwin who himself had become an Independent through the influence of John Cotton (p. 6), the church subsequently had the priviledge of being ministered unto by three New England divines. Thomas Harrison, upon his return from the colonies was Goodwin's immediate successor (p. 14), John Collins (a Harvard graduate) succeeded Harrison at one remove after the latter had gone to Ireland and Cheshire (p. 21), and another Harvard graduate, Nathaniel Mather (brother of Increase) became pastor of the church in 1688 upon the death of Collins (p. 25).

the Act of Uniformity, and although his time of service in Chester was thereby shortened, it is significant that he, as a New England man, helped to keep the church firmly rooted in the tradition in which it was founded.[68]

John Phillips was another New Englander who returned to the mother country and worked effectively for the Congregational Way. He had been Rector of Wrentham, Suffolk, but, because of his nonconformity, as with so many of his contemporaries, he was forced out of this post, and consequently accepted the invitation of John Allen (of Dedham, Massachusetts) to migrate to New England. This he did in 1638, settling at Salem with his wife, the sister of the renowned Dr. William Ames. Some of his parishioners from Wrentham joined him, and with them he founded the settlement of Salem Farms (now Danvers). For some time he preached in Dedham and Cambridge, and finally, in 1642, after several productive years in the Bay Colony, he returned to England and his old church in Wrentham, which he immediately reorganized along Congregational lines. For the next eighteen years, until his death in 1660, Phillips was a powerful and radical influence for the promotion of the New England Way in East Anglia.[69]

From the records of the Wrentham Church, it is clear that Phillips

---

[68] DNB, Vol. 25, p. 41. Nuttall, Visible Saints, p. 32. CR, pp. 250-251.

[69] CR, p. 389. NM, Vol. III, p. 296. Stearns, The Strenuous Puritan, p. 131. J. H. Tuttle in Publications of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts, XVII (1913-1914), 208-215. Nuttall, Visible Saints, pp. 17, 20, 26. Yule, The Independents in the English Civil War, p. 40. John Browne, in History of Congregationalism and Memorials of the Churches in Norfolk and Suffolk, p. 161, asserted that Wrentham was perhaps the earliest church organized according to the New England Way in East Anglia: it "was acknowledged as a Congregational church and had been virtually such from the time of Mr. Phillips return."

set about gathering a congregation of visible saints, that would, like the gathered congregations of New England, walk together in church fellowship according to the proper polity that was laid down by Christ. Christ's church, Phillips asserted, "is a company or assembly of Saints by calling and believers in C[hris]t united togither." Because it was impossible for the church to know who were indeed saints and who were unregenerate, it was necessary to judge those desiring to enter into church covenant according to their "fruites in their profession and practise, leaving secret things unto God, who Knowes the heart." He who wished to be accepted as a member in such a visible church must therefore show himself to be a believer "in C[hris]t called & sanctified," make a statement of belief in the principal points of Christianity,[70] profess "repentance from dead workes," subject himself "to the gospel of Christ," and live according to these principles. After exhibiting an understanding of these prerequisites for "true faith in Christ" the candidate was then required to relate "the gracious worke of faith" in his own heart which brought him to a saving knowledge of Christ. If this individual declaration of the work of faith exhibited that an applicant was indeed regenerated by God's grace, then he was permitted to ascribe to the covenant and become a member of the church.[71]

The covenant of Phillips' church in Wrentham was, like the covenants of the churches in New England, a voluntary agreement joining

---

[70]Belief in God (the omnipotence of God, the will of God, and the trinity), and the divine inspiration of Scripture, and that Scripture is a "rule of faith and obedience" -- the Word of God.

[71]Copy of the Church Book belonging to the Society of Congregational Protestant Dissenters at Wrentham, Suffolk, transcribed by Joseph Davey, DWL, Harmer MSS. 76, 7, pp. 5-8. Hereafter cited as Wrentham Church Book.

together those who entered it in the promise to walk in and practice "the ways & worship of C[hris]t." Just as it is impossible for timber and stone to be "an house unless they be joyned & compacted togither; soe Saints are not a visible church & house of God unless joyned and united togither" in a voluntary covenant. "We doe agree" covenanted the Wrentham congregation, "to give up ourselves unto the Lord in P[ro]fessed subjection to his Gospell, and promise by the help of his grace, whereupon wee trust, to walke togither in his holy ordinances & wayes to watch over one another in love, And submitt to the goverment of C[hris]t in this Society."[72]

About the time that John Phillips gathered, and became pastor of, this congregation, his reputation as a sound Independent with the benefit of New England experience became so widespread that his advice was sought after by other churches in the area. "So satisfied were the neighbouring Independents of his Congregationalism" that even members of William Bridge's Yarmouth Church consulted with Phillips "as the only man then in the neighbourhood in whose judgment and experience they could confide."[73] When the Yarmouth Church was gathered in 1642 by Bridge and others recently returned from Rotterdam, it was decided that the church would be temporarily located in the coastal town of Yarmouth until the political situation had quietened sufficiently to determine if it were safe to move the church to Norwich where many of its members resided. In

---

[72]Ibid., pp. 7-8. See Appendix A for the full text of a New England church covenant.

[73]John Browne, History of Congregationalism and Memorials of the Churches in Norfolk and Suffolk, p. 425.

1644 the Yarmouth congregation advised their Norwich brethren that as a matter of convenience, and as a way to increase the church for the glory of God, it would be proper for them to "gather themselves" into a separate congregation. Although Bridge and others of the congregation had ample knowledge and experience to facilitate such a move, it was considered wise to consult with others, including a New England Congregationalist. Thus it was that the people at Norwich wrote John Phillips and earnestly requested his opinion. In a letter Phillips concurred with the view of the Yarmouth Church and advised the people of Norwich to gather their own church. The advice from these two sources was then taken and a day in June, 1644 was appointed for the gathering of the new church and notice thereof was given "to Mr John Philips of Wrentham & to Mr Oxenbridge & the rest of the Church at Yarmouth, whose advise & assistance was also much desired: Mr Philips declared under his hand his assent with them, & also his willingness to assist by his presence but onely he was detayned through infirmity of body."[74] Thus there is no reason to doubt that not only was Phillips' Independency approved of by his brethren in East Anglia after his return from Massachusetts Bay, but also that he was an important factor in the initial spread of the New England Way there during the 1640's. This is especially true when it is observed that the Norwich and Yarmouth Churches themselves, by their example, advice, and assistance were also responsible for the gathering of many of the subsequent Congre-

---

[74]Copy of The Church Book belonging to a Society of Christians who assemble for divine Worship at the Old Meeting of Norwich, transcribed by Joseph Davey, DWL, Harmer MSS. 76. 1, pp. 6, 10 [entries for April and June 1644]. Hereafter cited as Norwich Church Book. The entire process of the gathering of the Norwich Church is related in the first fifteen pages of the church book. A further discussion of this is to be found in the following chapter. See also John Browne, History of Congregationalism and Memorials of the Churches in Norfolk and Suffolk, pp. 252, 425.

gational churches in the area.[75]

John Phillips was not the only New Englander connected with the Wrentham Church. He, of course, was very significant for he reorganized the church along Congregational lines, but also important for the development of the church was the ministry of Phillips' nephew, William Ames, Jr. Son of the learned theologian, Ames the younger was reared in New England and educated for the ministry at Harvard. In 1646 he sailed to England and became, two years later, Teacher of the Wrentham Church while his uncle continued as Pastor. When the latter died, in 1660, Ames became Pastor, and remained in this post until 1688. Although he had to contend with the events of the Restoration, Ames was successful in keeping the church strong, and indeed even helped its membership increase. Thus for over forty years the Wrentham Church was guided by and flourished under the ministry of New Englanders.[76]

Norwich continued to maintain a connection with New England, not only through keeping up its association with the Wrentham congregation, but also by way of acquiring a New England divine for its own pastor. The first pastor of the church, Timothy Armitage, was succeeded by Thomas Allen around 1657. Allen had fled to New England in 1638, where for several years he was a minister of the church in Charlestown. Returning to

---

[75]The communion between the Norwich and Yarmouth Churches and John Phillips continued throughout the Commonwealth period -- the members of the Norwich Church, for example, were "freely permitted . . . to join the Wrentham parish church." Yule, The Independents in the English Civil War, p. 40. This sort of relationship between churches also existed in New England.

[76]Wrentham Church Book, passim. John L. Sibley, Harvard Graduates (3 vols.; Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1873-1885), Vol. I, pp. 107-110. Hereafter cited as Sibley. John Browne, History of Congregationalism and Memorials of the Churches in Norfolk and Suffolk, pp. 426, 427, 431. Nuttall, Visible Saints, pp. 26, 79. NM, Vol. 3, pp. 296-297. CR, p. 10.

England he strengthened the Independent polity there, as pastor for over a decade of the gathered church in Norwich.[77] It is significant that the Norwich Church had this connection (through Ames and Phillips of Wrentham, and Thomas Allen) with New England, for throughout this period it was a prime mover in the spread of Congregationalism in East Anglia, as was its sister church at Yarmouth, under the capable ministry of William Bridge.[78] "Considerable numbers in the two counties of Norfolk and Suffolk adopted" the "sentiments" of the brethren of Yarmouth and Norwich "relating to Church Government, and formed themselves . . . into churches on the congregational plan" during the ensuing years. This was the case in the Congregational churches gathered at Wattesfield, Hapton, Wymondham, Alby, Tunstead, Stalham, Edgefield, Beccles, Bury St. Edmunds, and Sandcroft.[79] In most of these cases the advice of the Norwich or Yarmouth Church was specifically requested by those wishing to gather a visible church in their community. For example, in 1653 the Norwich Church received "A letter from the Christians about Godwicke desireing Messengers

---

[77] DNB, Vol. 1, p. 313. Harmer, "Nonconformity in Norfolk," pp. 39, 40. Norwich Church Book, pp. 36, 45. After much concerned prayer the brethren of the Norwich Church, in January 1656/7, did "with joynt consent elect & chuse Mr. Thomas Allen a member of this Church into the office of a Pastor over the Congregation." Also see John Browne, History of Congregationalism and Memorials of the Churches in Norfolk and Suffolk, p. 258. Allen was influenced a good deal by John Cotton during his stay in New England. See William Greenhill's preface to Allen's A Chain of Scripture Chronology.

[78] For William Bridge and his admiration for New England, see above, Chapter III, pp. 58, 60, 65-67.

[79] Thomas Harmer, "Nonconformity if Suffolk" (unpublished MS, 1774) DWL, Harmer MSS. 76. 9, p. 147. Joseph Davey, "The Church at Great Yarmouth during the Commonwealth" (unpublished MS) DWL, Harmer MSS. 76. 3, p. 146. John Browne, History of Congregationalism and Memorials of the Churches in Norfolk and Suffolk, pp. 161, 289, 298, 302, 342, 343. Norwich Church Book, pp. 15-16, 23. Yarmouth Church Book, p. 42.

to advise with about gathering a Church there." The requested messengers were appointed, gave their advice, and a new church was thus duly formed.[80] For several years this church (as was the case with other newly gathered churches) continued to look to Norwich and Yarmouth for assistance on questions of polity, thus illustrating the extent of the influence of these two churches throughout East Anglia.

Hugh Peter, Thomas Weld, Samuel Eaton, John Phillips, William Ames, Jr. were just a few of the important New England divines who returned at this time; there were many others who also became significant in this trans-oceanic movement of ideas. John Bulkley, who received his M.A. from Harvard in 1642, returned from the colonies and succeeded John Owen "(at one remove) as Rector of Fordham" in Essex. Bulkley held this post, ministering unto his Independent flock, until he was ejected in 1662.[81] Another New Englander, John Sams, was also a successor to John Owen. Upon his return from Massachusetts Bay, Sams became Vicar of Coggeshall, and through his effective and influential ministry kept this church strong in the Congregational principles under which it was reorganized by Owen. Even after he was silenced, Sams set up a separate gathered

---

[80]Norwich Church Book, p. 26. (From the evidence here it seems that the Godwick Church was perhaps a direct offspring of the Norwich Church. At the time that advice was sought from Norwich, two members of that church were dismissed upon indicating a desire "to joyne with Christians at Godwicke," in gathering the new church.) A similar case is recorded regarding the gathering of the church in Bury St. Edmunds: "The Messengers sent by the Church to Bury in Suffolke to behold the order of the Christians gathering a Church these made report thereof to the Church which being satisfactory, the Church declared to hold communion with them" (pp. 15-16).

[81]Sibley, Vol. I, pp. 52-54. Nuttall, Visible Saints, p. 39. Sachse, "Harvard Men in England," 127, 129. CR, p. 85. NM, Vol. III, p. 200.

church in Coggeshall to keep alive those principles.[82]

East Anglia of course was not the only section of the country which felt the impact of the "Great Migration" in reverse. George Moxon, after sixteen years' ministry in the Congregational church at Springfield, Massachusetts, returned in 1653 to Astbury, Cheshire, where his colleague was John Mackin, a Presbyterian. Losing little time, Moxon, a good New Englander, gathered a Congregational church there, and also at Rushton-Spencer, Staffordshire. After he was ejected by the Act of Uniformity, in 1662, still undaunted, he continued to preach to a gathered congregation in his own house.[83] Comfort Starr returned to England upon earn- his M.A. from Harvard in 1650. From then until 1662 when he was ejected, he was a Congregational minister at Carlisle in the northern county of Cumberland. Later he was active in the Independent ministry in Berkshire and Kent, finally settling as pastor of the Congregational church in Lewes, Sussex.[84] Isaac Chauncy, son of the famous president of Harvard, Charles Chauncy, returned to the mother country after receiving his degree at Harvard, and ministered to the gathered congregations in Wanstead (now in London); Woodborough, Wiltshire; and in Andover, Hampshire. By this time (1680's) he gave up preaching for awhile and engaged in the task of writing several important treatises -- many of which defended and

---

[82]Davids, Annals of Evangelical Nonconformity in . . . Essex, p. 586. Nuttall, Visible Saints, pp. 38, 39. Dale, The Annals of Coggeshall, p. 196. CR, p. 425. NM, Vol. II, p. 191.

[83]DNB, Vol. 39, p. 241. CR, p. 359. NM, Vol. I, p. 325.

[84]Sibley, Vol. I, p. 162. Sachse, "Harvard Men in England," 127, 130. CR, p. 460. NM, Vol. I, p. 378.

promoted the Congregational Way. Although these works[85] did not appear until after the period under discussion here, they were no doubt important for the later growth and development of Congregationalism.[86] William Hooke lived and ministered in New England from 1638 to 1656, first at Taunton, then at New Haven where his colleague was one of the key defenders of the New England Way -- John Davenport. After returning to England he became one of Oliver Cromwell's chaplains at Whitehall, and doubtlessly he continued to preach for Congregationalism as he "kept up his connection with the independents of New England."[87] The Teacher of George Phillips' church in Watertown, Massachusetts from 1639 to 1650 was John Knowles. In 1653, after returning to England, Knowles became a preacher of Bristol Cathedral and Rector of St. Werburgh's. It seems probable, although not conclusively certain from the evidence, that Knowles "was responsible for the church's formation" in Bristol, for it was gathered into a Congregational church shortly after his arrival there. Evidently he kept up his connection with New England because during his service in England he was offered the

---

[85] Ecclesia Enucleata: The Temple Opened (London, 1684); A Theological Dialogue . . . Defence . . . of Dr. John Owen (London, 1684); Ecclesiasticium: Or a plain (London, 1690); and The Divine Institution of Congregational Churches (London, 1697) -- hereafter cited as The Divine Institution. These works also indicate what the actual polity of the English Congregational churches was at this time.

[86] Sibley, Vol. I, pp. 302-307. Sachse, "Harvard Men in England," 128. CR, p. 112. NM, Vol. III, pp. 380-381.

[87] DNB, Vol. 27, pp. 279-280. See also Sachse, "The Migration of New Englanders to England," CR, pp. 274-275, and NM, Vol. I, p. 184. Hooke was the author of the sermon, New Englands Teares for Old Englands Feares (London, 1641), and co-author, with Davenport, of A Catechisme containing the Chief heads of Christian Religion (London, 1659). Hooke's son, John, also returned, after first being educated at Harvard, to his native land. John became chaplain of the Savoy, a minister at Basingstoke, and also Rector of King's Worthy, Hampshire. DNB, Vol. 27, p. 280. CR, pp. 273-274.

presidency of Harvard -- a post which he declined. He was ejected in 1662, as were so many other ministers of his persuasion.[88] Thomas Peter, brother of the famous (or infamous) Hugh, was yet another New England divine who found it attractive to return to England to join in the rule of the saints. In 1643, after being "driven from his church at Mylor, Cornwall," he hastened to the New World where he became a minister at New London, Connecticut. Then three years later, when the climate in England had improved for Independents, he returned to his former church and preached there until his death in 1654.[89]

Among those New England ministers who returned to spread their way of church polity in England, several eventually returned to Massachusetts Bay, after spending a few years preaching there. Urian Oakes, a Harvard graduate sailed to England during the Commonwealth to become a minister in the gathered church at Titchfield, Hampshire. Ejected in 1662 he returned to Boston, where he eventually entered the annals of colonial Massachusetts history, as President of Harvard College.[90] One of the most significant and famous New Englanders to arrive in England was Increase Mather. Born in New England (1639) he set out for England in 1657 at the age of 18 and preached for two years at Great Torrington, Devonshire. He also was an important preacher in Gloucester, and in County Londonderry, Ireland. At the Restoration he returned to

---

[88] DNB, Vol. 31, pp. 301-302. Nuttall, Visible Saints, pp. 34, 17n. CR, pp. 311-312. NM, Vol. III, pp. 173-175.

[89] Stearns, The Strenuous Puritan, pp. 293n, 366, 436. DNB, Vol. 45, pp. 78-79.

[90] DNB, Vol. 41, pp. 289-290. Sachse, "Harvard Men in England," 127, 128. CR, p. 370. NM, Vol. II, pp. 280-281.

Massachusetts and subsequent notoriety as one of the most famous Congregational Puritans of early American history.[91]

The fact that Increase Mather preached for a time in Ireland indicates that England was not the only area to hear the voices of New Englanders preaching for their Way. Marmaduke Matthews fled to New England in 1636 and preached in both Plymouth colony and Massachusetts Bay. After eighteen years' experience there he returned to Wales and for four years was a minister in St. John's Parish in Swansea. After he was ejected he continued to preach in a small chapel, and subsequently "under the indulgence granted by Charles II to nonconformists in 1672, he took out license to preach as an independent in his own house at Swansea."[92] Ireland also felt the New England influence after Cromwell became Lord Protector. Cromwell made a strong effort to settle Ireland with "'godly, well-affected' people;" and it seems that the invitation he sent to New England, requesting the saints back there to return and promote the true gospel and church order in Ireland, was instigated by his New England chaplain, Hugh Peter.[93] Increase Mather, it is mentioned above, spent some time preaching in Londonderry during this period probably in answer to this invitation, and two of Mather's brothers, Nathaniel and Samuel, were also significant in the promotion of the New England Way in both

---

[91] DNB, Vol. 37, pp. 27-28. Sachse, "The Migration of New Englanders to England"; Sachse, "Harvard Men in England," 125. CR, p. 343. NM, Vol. II, pp. 245-249. St. John D. Seymour, The Puritans in Ireland (Oxford, 1921), passim.

[92] DNB, Vol. 37, p. 70. NM, Vol. III, p. 504.

[93] Stearns, The Stremuous Puritan, p. 343n. Also see Waddington, Congregational History, p. 482, and Sachse, "The Migration of New Englanders to England," 267-268.

England and Ireland. Nathaniel received his Harvard M.A. in 1650 (Samuel had received his a few years earlier), and shortly thereafter, "on Cromwell's appeal for ministers for Ireland he and Samuel sailed from New England whither they had gone in 1635 with their father." Before settling in Ireland, however, they spent several years in England where they helped the spread of Congregationalism. Samuel preached first in Oxford and later in Scotland and in 1656 he went, in accordance with Cromwell's efforts "to puritanize Ireland," to Dublin and was "ordained in St. Nicholas's Church" where he associated closely with Samuel Winter and Timothy Taylor.[94] At the Restoration he was suspended when he preached against the revival of the ceremonies of the Church of England. Two years later, after a visit in England, he was ejected, and returned at last to Dublin gathering a Congregational church on New Row.[95] Nathaniel was an important preacher for a time first in Harberton, Devon, and later as Vicar of Barnstaple in the same county. With the Restoration he fled to Holland, but in 1671 finally arrived in Dublin where he succeeded his brother Samuel (upon the latter's death) as minister of the New Row Congregational Church. This post he kept until "the troubled year 1688" when he once again returned to England as the successor of

---

[94] Winter was the minister who gathered St. Nicholas's, and he too had been affected by the New England Way. John Cotton was his mentor before he set sail for Massachusetts Bay, and it was Cotton who found for Winter "a rich wife, and made him, in ecclesiastical theory, an independent." DNB, Vol. 62, p. 216. Taylor was closely associated, before arriving in Ireland, with another New Englander, Samuel Eaton, in Cheshire. See above, pp. 96-100.

[95] DNB, Vol. 37, p. 31. CR, p. 344. NM, Vol. II, pp. 355-357. Sachse, "Harvard Men in England," 126, 128. Sachse, "The Migration of New Englanders to England," passim. Also see Seymour, The Puritans in Ireland, passim, and Nuttall, Visible Saints, pp. 25, 31.

John Collins[96] in Thomas Goodwin's old gathered church in Lime Street, London. That his New England upbringing and experience was a factor in bringing Nathaniel Mather into a position where he could be influential in Devon, Dublin, and London in promoting and supporting the Congregational Way, is not to be doubted. Shortly after beginning his Devon ministry, he indicated the importance of this by declaring "'Tis incredible what an advantage to preferm[en]t it is to have been a New English man."[97] Edmund Weld, son of Thomas Weld, was yet another Harvard graduate who preached for the New England Way in Ireland. Unlike the Mathers, who were also important for the development of English Congregationalism, Weld went straightaway to Ireland, answering Cromwell's call. He accompanied the Lord Protector to Ireland as his chaplain, and later became the Independent minister first at Kinsale, and subsequently at Blarney Castle, both in County Cork.[98]

Not all returning New England divines however, had wholly accepted the New England Way and consequently they made no attempt to promote it in the mother land. Several of the returnees were either Baptist, e.g., Thomas Patient, Christopher Blackwood,[99] and Hanserd

---

[96]For John Collins see DNB, Vol. 11, pp. 369-370, and above, p. 102, note 67.

[97]DNB, Vol. 37, pp. 28-29. Nuttall, Visible Saints, pp. 17, 26, 41. Sachse, "Harvard Men in England," 130. CR, pp. 343-344. Nathaniel Mather, "Letters," Collections of Massachusetts Historical Society, 4th ser., VII (1868), 5. See below, p. 118.

[98]Sachse, "Harvard Men in England," 126. DNB, Vol. 60, p. 160. Also see Sachse, "The Migration of New Englanders to England," passim. It would be worthwhile to make a further detailed study of the New England influence in Ireland as a result of Cromwell's effort to puritanize that island.

[99]Patient and Blackwood were the leading Baptists in Ireland.

Knollys,[100] or Presbyterians, e.g., John Woodbridge,[101] Benjamin Woodbridge,[102] Giles Firmin,[103] and Thomas Lechford.[104] But as can be seen from the above discussion, the majority of New England ministers who returned to England during the Commonwealth were godly men who believed that the New England Way of polity was the correct way, as laid down in

---

Patient came to Ireland from New England in 1649 and founded a church in Waterford. Later he became a minister in Christ Church, Dublin. Blackwood left New England about 1643 and became a minister in Kilkenny, Wexford, and later in Dublin. Seymour, The Puritans in Ireland, pp. 60, 87, 112, 218. Sachse, "The Migration of New Englanders to England," 256, 269.

[100]Knollys returned to an important London ministry in 1641, after the Roger Williams's affair. Sachse, "The Migration of New Englanders to England," 256. DNB, Vol. 31.

[101]Woodbridge was chaplain of the commission treating with Charles I on the Isle of Wight. He later became Presbyterian minister at Andover, Hampshire, and also in another parish in Wiltshire. Along with his uncle Thomas Parker and his cousin James Noyes, he was the leading Presbyterian minister of Massachusetts Bay, to which he returned after the Restoration. DNB, Vol. 62, p. 386. Also see, Robert E. Wall, Jr., "The Membership of the Massachusetts General Court" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Yale University, 1965), p. 480.

[102]Benjamin (brother of John) preached in Salisbury, and Newbury, Berkshire, after receiving his education at Harvard and returning to England, c. 1648. DNB, Vol. 62, pp. 385-386. NM, Vol. I, pp. 290-291. CR, p. 534. Also see Sachse, "Harvard Men in England," 127, 128.

[103]Firmin was termed "the Presbyterian Vicar of Shalford, Essex" by Geoffrey F. Nuttall in Visible Saints, p. 92. NM, Vol. II, pp. 214-216. CR, p. 197. Firmin, according to Sachse ("The Migration of New Englanders to England," 265), was more in favor of a "reformed episcopacy" than either Congregationalism or Presbyterianism.

[104]Although not a minister, Lechford was a significant critic of the New England Way after his return to England. Shortly after leaving Massachusetts Bay he published Plain Dealing: Or, Newes from New England, in which he objected to the practices of the churches of New England, and the arbitrary form of civil government he believed existed there. The subtitle of this work is: A short view of New-Englands present Government, both Ecclesiasticall and Civil, compared with the anciently-received and established Government of England, in some materiall points: fit for the gravest consideration in these times. See also above, Chapter I, and Sachse, "The Migration of New Englanders to England," 255-256.

Scripture; and to the end of converting England to this Congregationalism they devoted their efforts.

To New Englanders, England in the 1640's and 1650's looked like a promised land, and thus there was a "'Great Migration' in reverse" lasting throughout this period until the Restoration. With Cromwell's victory many New Englanders returned to claim their reward for being exiled members of the winning party; and the reports received in New England certainly gave credence to the view that experience in Massachusetts Bay was a commodity eagerly sought after in the mother land.[105] William Hooke, who eventually returned from the colonial wilderness, declared as early as 1641, that those who returned to England were welcomed there with very open arms indeed:

> How doe they [the godly of England] talke of New-England with delight! How much nearer heaven doe some of their charities account this Land, than any other place they heare of in the world? Such is their good opinion of us! . . . And when sometimes a New-England man returns thither, how he is lookt upon, lookt after, received, entertained, the ground he walks upon beloved for his sake, and the house held the better where he is? How are his words lissened to, laid up, and related frequently when he is gone? Neither is any love or kindnesse held too much for such a man.[106]

Others who returned wrote letters to Massachusetts Bay urging their brethren to join them in the "promised land." Hugh Peter, realizing that the "'glorious reformation in church and state,' for which he had been striving . . . was at hand at last," wrote to New England in 1652 announcing that "'things here goe exceedingly well with us, & every day grow better.'" If the godly men of New England would "forsake the trials of

---

[105]Sachse, "Harvard Men in England," 119. Sachse, "The Migration of New Englanders to England," 257, 259-260, and passim.

[106]Hooke, New Englands Teares for old Englands Feares, p. 21.

their self-impesed exile" and return home they could become the architects in reconstructing "church, state, and English society" on the New England pattern. At the very least they will certainly "'be capable of a comfortable living in this free Commonwealth.'"[107] Nathaniel Mather also wrote of the wonderful opportunites awaiting the New England divine in England and hoped thereby to persuade more of his brethren to embark on the same journey which brought him back from the New World. In two letters to John Rogers (of New England) he made plain the "naked truth" that in England there

> is great incouragem[en]t for any to come over, especially such as designe themselves for the ministry, or whatsoever else they bee, I think they need not much to question living here, for it is with the honestest on both sides a matter of high account to have been a New English man. Sergiant Okes is so fully of this mind that I thinke hee halfe repents that his son[108] is not here, and he is resolved not to be any hindrance to his comming the next year.

Since his arrival in England, Mather found the situation there so favorable

> that I cannot but sincerely wish from my very heart that all my good friends in New England were here also with my selfe. 'Tis a notion of mighty great and high respect to have been a New-English man, 'tis enough to gayne a man very much respect yea almost any preferm[en]t. . . . My selfe within less [than t]hree houres of my comming to the city had two of[fers]. . . . If [yo]u mind any thing worth minding make all conv[enient s]peed over. . . . 'Tis incredible what an advantage to preferm[en]t it is to have been a New English man. 109

---

[107]Stearns, The Strenuous Puritan, p. 365. Stearns is quoting from a letter of Hugh Peter's to John Winthrop, Jr.

[108]Urian Oakes, the son of "Sergiant Okes," did come to England shortly after the writing of this letter. See above, p. 112.

[109]Nathaniel Mather, "Letters," Collections of Massachusetts Historical Society, 4th ser., VII (1868), 3, 4, 5. Also see below, pp. 113-115.

Many men answered the call of Cromwellian England and returned to their homeland, hoping that the time was now ripe to reap the harvest of their errand into the wilderness. For several years England felt the full impact of her daughter New England, as out of the 94 ministers who arrived in Massachusetts Bay during the first ten years of settlement, 27 returned, as well as half of the graduates of Harvard College; and it is clear from the evidence that the significance of these men on the development of English Congregationalism cannot be overemphasized. With the Restoration, their hopes lost their lustre, but although some of them once again made the exodus to New England, most of them stayed on in the mother land preaching for Congregationalism throughout the remainder of their lives.[110]

---

[110]Davey, "The Church at Great Yarmouth during the Commonwealth," p. 77. Sachse, "Harvard Men in England," 119, 128, and passim. Sachse, "The Migration of New Englanders to England," 275-278, and passim. John Wingate Thornton, The Historical Relation of New England to the English Commonwealth (Boston, 1874), p. 99.

CHAPTER V

THE ROAD TO ZION

It has been stressed that the rise of the Congregational Way in England during the 1640's and 1650's received much of its impetus from the example of New England. Just how closely the English Congregational churches resembled those of New England can be readily seen in an examination of the church records and the treatises on church polity written by the foremost Independent theologians. Because most of these men had accepted the New England form of polity, many of them often considered the publications of New Englanders adequate enough to represent their own sentiments. The Dissenting Brethren, for example, when they published An Apologeticall Narration, did not present their ideas of precisely what the practices of the churches should be; instead they found it more convenient to refer the Presbyterians at the Westminster Assembly to the writings of New Englanders if they wished to see an explication of Independent polity. Also, in the introduction to John Cotton's The Keyes of the Kingdom of Heaven, it is obvious that Thomas Goodwin and Phillip Nye considered this work to be an excellent statement of their own views of church government. Furthermore, until 1658 when the Savoy Declaration was issued, English Independents had looked to the Cambridge Platform as their own statement of polity and it is certain that they would have found it more difficult to formulate the Savoy Declaration "had it not been for the Cambridge Platform."[1] However, even though they

[1]Williston Walker, The Creeds and Platforms of Congregationalism (New York, 1893), pp. 345, 351. Joseph Davey, in "The Church at Great

subscribed to the New Englanders' statements of church government, many of the leading lights of English Independency eventually did find it necessary to write treatises dealing with the issue of polity. Often they published their ideas concerning what the way of the reformed English churches should be, and in doing so they sometimes described the polity already being practiced in their own churches. In looking at a few of these treatises, and at the existing records of some of the earliest Independent churches, we can see the closeness with which England was following her daughter New England.

As was the case in New England, the basis for forming a Congregational church in England was a voluntary gathering together of visible saints in a covenant with God.[2] "They are constituted a Church, and interested in the rights, power, and priviledges of a Gospel-Church, by the will, promise, authority, and law of Jesus Christ, upon their own voluntary consent and engagement to walk together in the due subjection of their Souls and Consciences unto his authority, as their King, Priest and Prophet, and in an holy observation of all his commands, ordinances, and appointments." In ascribing to this "Divine Covenant," the visible saints wishing to come together in church fellowship first confessed Christ, "his person, his authority, his law, his grace," and secondly took "upon themselves the observance of all his commands;" by giving

---

Yarmouth during the Commonwealth," p. 104, maintained that the Cambridge Platform "drawn up much about the same time" as the Westminster Confession was regarded by English Independents as a statement of their own view of church polity. This is clearly indicated by the "frequent recurrence" of references to it in the English Congregational church records. Also see above, pp. 100-101.

[2][John Goodwin], Certain Briefe Observations ([London], 1644), p. 8. Goodwin asserted that the members "must be visible Saints."

themselves up in this way, "unto the Lord," they became a gathered visible church.[3] The particular church thus gathered would be:

> 1. A Society of Believers sanctified in Christ Jesus; 2. Separate from the world, false-ways, and worships, united together into one Body, Independent; or having a plenary power within it self, without the least subordination, to any but Christ; 3. having the special presence of God, in the midst of her; 4. and being gathered and ordered by Christs rule alone; 5. all her Members freely, and voluntarily, embodying without the least compulsion (having communion with the Father and the Son,) 6. all seeking the same End, viz. The honor and glory of God in his worship.[4]

The procedure for gathering a church has been outlined by several Independent ministers, and is not too difficult to summarize. There was a minimum set as to the number of visible saints necessary to be incorporated as a true church of Christ. Seven was considered a proper number for the gathering of the church, but the church should not subsequently be permitted to grow so large as to make it inconvenient for the members to "meet in one place, in one Congregation."[5] Once a sufficient number

---

[3]Owen, A Brief Instruction, pp. 108, 111. Owen further explained that the main factor which distinguished a particular visible church from all others was the covenant. It is this that "constitutes them a distinct body, different from others; for thereby and no otherwise do they coalesce into a society, according to the law of their constitution and appointment." This then "gives them their especial relation unto their own Elders, Rulers, or Guides who watch over them as so associated by their own consent, according unto the command of Christ. And . . . From hence they have their mutual especial relationship unto one another which is the ground of the especial exercise of all Church duties whatsoever." (pp. 222-223). See also Owen's The True Nature of a Gospel Church, pp. 23ff. Owen's works are a statement of what the Congregational Way is, rather than what it ought to be.

[4]John Rogers, Ohel or Beth-shemish (London, 1653), p. 137. Hereafter cited as Ohel. Also see William Bartlet's presentation of the nature of a church gathering in his I'XNOFPAΦI'A, Or A Model of the Primitive Congregational Way (London, 1647), pp. 106-107. Hereafter cited as A Model.

[5]Eaton and Taylor, A Defence of Sundry Positions, pp. 9, 13, 31. Eaton and Taylor agreed with others who wrote that the basis for the church was a covenant with God. They asserted that "a solemne expresse and verball

of godly persons came together who feared God, and sought His counsel along with that of nearby "Churches of Christ and Elders thereof, and finding their way made clear before them," by the example of other gathered congregations, they could then "proceed with their Faces Zion-ward" and covenant with the Lord gathering themselves into a church. In covenanting together the people had to answer affirmatively two questions: first, that they were satisfied with each other's declaration of faith and were "willing cordially to receive one another in the Lord," and secondly

> whether they all and every one do freely, solemnly and unanimously give up themselves and their Seed to the Lord and join themselves to one another in Church-Fellowship, promising subjection to Christ their Political Head, in the Faith and Order of the Gospel, and to walk accordingly in discharge of their Duties to God and one another, as becometh Church-Members, through the Grace of God helping and assisting, and accordingly give to each other the right hand of fellowship.

Once this was accomplished the congregation was declared a true Church of Christ, and was given the "right hand of fellowship" by those present who were members of neighboring churches thereby acknowledging them as a properly gathered church. Even though the church at this point of its development did not as yet have a minister, it nevertheless stood as a constituted true church of Christ, for the church, it was reasoned, existed before it had a pastor.[6]

There are many examples of churches being gathered according to

---

covenant" was "necessary unto the purity and strength of a church, and so consequently unto the welbeing of a Church;" for how could men who live in the world "be severed from it and have communion together in all holy ordinances, without expresse verball consent"? (p. 38).

[6]Chauncy, The Divine Institution, pp. 46, 47-48.

these principles. Shortly after his return from New England, John Phillips and twelve others reformed the Wrentham Church on the New England pattern. After first expressing to each other "the gracious worke of faith in them as made it visible to Spiritual eyes," thereby establishing that they were all visible saints, they united themselves into one body "by voluntary agreement & solemne P[ro]mise . . . to walke with the society in the ways & worship of C[hris]t." "We doe agree," reads their covenant,

> to give up ourselves unto the Lord in P[ro]fessed subjection to his Gospell, and promise by the help of his grace, whereupon wee trust, to walke togither in his holy ordinances & wayes to watch over one another in love, And submitt to the goverment of C[hris]t in this Society.

In covenanting together "to practise every lesson. . . . & submitt to every truth of C[hris]t," the saints in Wrentham became a gathered church.[7]

Another important East Anglian church that was gathered during the 1640's was the one in Yarmouth. In 1642 William Bridge (one of the Dissenting Brethren) and many of his congregation returned from their exile in Rotterdam to their former homes of Yarmouth and Norwich. One of their first tasks upon their arrival was to set up a Congregational church. Because the civil wars were still being waged it was considered safer and wiser to gather the church in the seaport of Yarmouth rather than in the inland city of Norwich in case the tide of battle made it necessary for these nonconformists to make a hasty retreat to Holland or

---

[7]Wrentham Church Book, pp. 5, 6, 7, 8. The Dedham, Massachusetts Church (a church with which Phillips was connected during his stay in New England) made a similar statement when it was gathered in 1638. The members made a "publike p[ro]fession & enter[ed] into [a] sollem'e covenant with the lord & one an other." Dedham Church Records, p. 9. Other New England church covenants stated in similar terms that those covenanting together agreed to uphold Christ's ordinances, to follow the proper rules of church government, and to watch "over one another for good." Dorchester Church Records, pp. 1-2. Also see above, Chapter I. For the full text of the Dorchester Church covenant see Appendix A.

New England. In June 1643 the church was gathered when Bridge and ten other visible saints "entered into Covenant" with one another, promising to acknowledge Jesus Christ "to be our God," always to endeavour to uphold God's ordinances, to abstain from sin, and with love to watch "over one another & as need shall be to counsell Admonish, reprove, comfort, relieve, assist & beare with one another, humbly submitting ourselves to the Government of Christ in his Church."[8]

Two years after the formation of this church it was decided that the Norwich people should gather their own church. William Bridge and the Yarmouth congregation advised the Norwich brethren that now that the times were settled it was their duty "to gather themselves into a body to become a Church, seeing it would make much for God's glory, increase of the Church & procure a Comfortable opportunity of Church meetings in the Lords' daies." The saints of Norwich then wrote to John Phillips of Wrentham for his opinion and advice on the matter, and in a letter he concurred with the view of the Yarmouth congregation urging that a new church be gathered in Norwich. With this support the Norwich brethren agreed to "gather into a Church, first by themselves, & afterwards admitt such others as should desire the same & be found fitt for it." In June 1644 they met in the presence of John Oxenbridge of Yarmouth and after much prayer they subscribed their names to the church covenant and gathered themselves into church fellowship.[9]

---

[8]Yarmouth Church Book, pp. 1-4. For the complete text of the Yarmouth Church covenant see Appendix B.

[9]Norwich Church Book, pp. 5, 6, 10, 11. Also see Yarmouth Church Book, p. 8. John Phillips' presence and assistance had also been requested, but, although willing to attend, he was unable to do so because of ill

During the ensuing years there were many other churches in Norfolk and Suffolk that were gathered in the same manner, with covenants (whether similarly worded or not) expressing the same principles that gave form to the Congregational churches of New England. In 1654 the Watesfield Church was gathered by several saints in the town of Weston who believed

> that a company of Believers, called by the Word & Spirit of Christ, separating from the World's Worship, & joining together by mutual Consent to walk in the Faith & Order of the Gospel, are more visibly owned and attested by Christ for a Church of Christ, unto whom he hath committed many special Priviledges, which, without apparent breach of Gospel Order cannot be enjoyed but by Believers so separating from the World, & enjoining themselves in Gospel Fellowship.

Only visible saints should be permitted to constitute such a Church of Christ, and if hypocrites should find their way into the church, then the congregation's duty was to weed them out. It was only to such a church of the visibly elect that Christ had given "the Power of the Keys, to wit, of receiving in and casting out" of members, of electing its own officers, and of dispensing the ordinances. With these principles as a basis the people covenanted together, in a manner not unlike that of the other Congregational churches of New England and England: "We do Covenant or Agree," proclaimed the Watesfield brethren,

> in the Presence of God, through the Assistance of his Holy Spirit, to walk together in All the Ordinances of the Lord Jesus, so far as the same are made clear unto us; Indeavouring the Advancement of the Glory of our Father, the subjection of our Wills to the Will of our Redeemer, & the Mutual Edification, each of other, in his most holy Faith & Fear. [10]

A few years earlier several persons in Bury St. Edmunds, in like

---

health. The Norwich covenant is virtually the same as that of the church at Yarmouth.

[10]Watesfield Church Book, pp. 6, 7, 9.

fashion also covenanted together and became a "particular visible church." In words reminiscent of the Watesfield Church, the people at Bury proclaimed a belief that Christ committed the "power of the Keyes" only to a properly-constituted church thereby giving it the power to choose its own officers and admit and discipline its members. Those who believed in these principles gathered together in 1648, subscribed to a covenant and were thus embodied into a Congregational church. "We whose names are here subscribed do resolve and engage by the help of the Spirit of God to walk in all the ways of God so far forth as he hath revealed or shall reveal them unto us by his word, and in all duties of love and watchfulness each to other as becomes a church of Christ."[11]

In 1651 the church at Woodbridge, Suffolk was also gathered by a similar covenant "according to the Congregational Way & Order,"[12] and in 1652 a church was gathered at Beccles where the "persons whoe have covenanted togither to walke in the wayes of Christ according to Gospell Order," adopted a covenant much akin to that of the Norwich Church.[13]

---

[11]Copy of the Church Book belonging to the Society of Congregational Dissenters assembling for divine worship at the Meeting House situate in Whiting Street, Bury St. Edmunds Suffolk, transcribed by Joseph Davey, DWL, Harmer MSS. 76. 4. pp. 1-18. Hereafter cited as Bury St. Edmunds Church Book.

[12]Copy of the Records of the Congregational Church worshipping at the Quay Meeting Woodbridge 1651 to 1851, transcribed by Joseph Davey, DWL, Harmer MSS. 76. 5. p. 1. Hereafter cited as Woodbridge Church Book.

[13]Samuel Wilton Rix, Brief Records of the Independent Church at Beccles, Suffolk (London, 1837), pp. 112ff. Hereafter cited as Brief Records of . . . Beccles. Although all that was necessary for the gathering of a church was a covenanting together of visible saints, the records of these churches indicate that quite often they sought the advice of neighboring congregations. For the influence of Yarmouth and Wrentham on the brethren at Norwich, and of the Norwich Church on those at Watesfield and Beccles, see above, Chapter IV, and also Harmer, "Nonconformity in

In Stepney William Greenhill, with five others became a "True Church of Christ" by solemnly promising, "in the presence of Mr. Henry Burton, pastor of a church in London, to walk in all the ways of Christ held out to them in the Gospel,"[14] and William Strong and other godly persons covenanted together into a gathered congregation of visible saints at Westminster Abbey "in strict accord with [the] Congregational" Way, promising to look after "each others' spiritual welfare."[15] In Bedford after much prayer and seeking the advice of other congregations twelve "saints and brethren in and about the towne" jointly "with one consent . . . gave themselves to the Lord and one to another by the will of God." Thus was gathered into "Gospell fellowship" according to the "Congregational way" the church that was later to be blessed by the ministry of John Bunyan.[16] In Ireland too a Congregational church was gathered according to the

---

Suffolk," p. 147 and passim; and Greenwood, "The Origins of Early History of Independency in Suffolk to 1688," pp. 113, 115, 194-195.

[14]Jones, Stepney Meeting, p. 4. T. Wilson Booth, The First 150 Years of the Stepney Meeting Independents, From 1644 to 1796 (London, 1913). p. 5.

[15]Ira Boseley, The Ministers of The Abbey Independent Church (1650-1660) (london, 1911), pp. 69, 74, 95. Strong was associated with such influential and illustrious Congregationalists as Owen, Goodwin, and Nye, all of whom, it may be recalled, had been brought over to Independency by the influence of John Cotton. See above, Chapter III. Other London churches were similarly gathered at this time, most notably the Independent churches founded by John Goodwin in the parish of St. Stephen's, Coleman St., and by Thomas Goodwin in the parish of St. Dunstan's-in-the-East. For the former see the Vestry Minutes, in the Guildhall Library, London (cited above, p. 71n), and Turner, "Coleman St. Ward," p. 12. For the latter see Albert Clare, The City Temple 1640-1940, pp. 4, 6.

[16]Bedford Church Records, quoted in John Brown, John Bunyan: His Life, Times and Work, revised by Frank Mott Harrison (London, 1928), p. 80. Hereafter cited as John Bunyan.

principles of Cotton and Hooker at Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin. The saints here covenanted, among other things, to "walk together in one body with one minde," to uphold Christ's "Ordinances and Orders," and "Vigilantly to watch over each other's conversation . . . provoking one another to love and good workes."[17]

Once a church was gathered into a "true Church of Christ," its first duty, in order to become a complete church, was to elect ministerial officers. The power to choose these officers was granted by Christ to the church, and there was no other way by which they might be appointed, called, chosen, or "set apart." No synod or presbyter could appoint a minister over a Congregation, for it was "a priviledge of the people (especially if they proceed wisely and piously) to elect their Officers, and an injury to obtrude any on them without their consent."[18] When a duly qualified person was presented to the congregation the church first was required to debate the matter in secrecy, and then ask the "counsel of God and Neighbour Churches (so far as may be needful)." Once they were satisfied with the candidate's qualifications, then the members of the church (and only those "who are actual Members"), with as little disagreement and discord as possible, elected him to be an officer among them. The person elected, if he was not already a member, "ought now, upon the

---

[17]Rogers, Ohel, pp. 457, 459-461. Because the covenant of this church is a rather explicit and lengthy one, it is quoted in full in Appendix C.

[18]Owen, The True Nature of a Gospel Church, pp. 36ff, Eaton and Taylor, A Defence of Sundry Positions, p. 47. Owen, A Brief Instruction, p. 131: "Election by the suffrage and consent of the Church is required unto the calling of a Pastor or Teacher, so that without it . . . the call . . . is irregular and defective."

said Call and Acceptance, to join as an actual Member to the Church." Finally the act of electing and calling an officer to a church was not the last act to make him a minister, he had first to be solemnly and publicly set apart for the office through Ordination, "with Fasting and Prayer, and the outward sign of the Imposition of Hands."[19] Ordination it should be emphasized was less important for the making of an officer than was his election by the people; the laying on of hands was merely for the sake of order to complete the process of installing a man into the office which was his by right of election. The Independent church in Axminster, Devon, declared that "Ordination is not essentially necessary to the work of the ministery. The essence of a minister lies in the consent of three wills. The will of God, the will of the people, and the will of the minister. . . . And Ordination is for order sake."[20]

There were two main types of officers in the church, "Elders," and "Deacons." The former consisted of ruling elders and ministers; and ministers were divided further into pastors and teachers. The pastor's duty "is to attend to Exhortation, and therein to dispense a Word of Wisdom," and the Teacher's office is to attend unto the Doctrine, and therein

---

[19]Thus, in order for a person to become an officer in the church, he must be sufficiently endowed with the ability to discharge the office; chosen by God and sent by Him to the Church; examined, approved and elected by the congregation; and then set apart and ordained by the Church. Chauncy, The Divine Institution, pp. 63, 64, 65, 66. Owen, The True Nature of a Gospel Church, pp. 73-78, 85, Also see Owen, A Brief Instruction, pp. 125- 135.

[20]Axminster Ecclesiastica (Axminster, 1874), p. 101. Ordination was regarded in the same light in New England, see above, Chapter I. Many of the early Independent divines, e.g., John Cotton, Hugh Peter, William Bridge, and John Owen, revealed their distrust of the Establishment's practice of ordination by renouncing their own Anglican ordination as smelling of popery. Nuttall, Visible Saints, pp. 89-90.

to dispense a Word of Knowledge." The latter teaches the people "the Knowledge of the Lord," while the pastor shows them, by exhortation, "what is best to be done, and stirs them up to it."[21] Both ministers also were to administer the seals of the covenant -- the sacraments of baptism and the eucharist and to be good examples unto their flock.[22] The non-preaching elders of the church were ruling elders, whose duty it was to assist the pastors and teachers, by exercising several of the administrative duties of the members. First, they were to lead and moderate church meetings and present matters for the consideration of the congregation: in doing so, they were responsible for opening and shutting "the Doors of God's House," by admitting and excommunicating members and by ordaining officers. Also they were to make certain that members should not live "inordinately without a Calling, or idle in their Calling, and be ready to give a word of Admonition whenever necessary." Another way they were to exercise their duty was to give counsel to other churches as well as to members of their own, seeking "to prevent

---

[21]Thomas Goodwin, The Government and Discipline of the Churches of Christ (London, 1722), pp. 46, 48, and passim. This distinction between pastors and teachers was one that was first practiced by the churches of New England. See the Cambridge Platform, pp. 7-10, and Cotton's The Keyes of the Kingdom of Heaven, p. 37, and The True Constitution, pp. 2-3; all three are quoted above, Chapter I. Other manifestoes of English Congregational polity also made this distinction, e.g., Owen, The True Nature of a Gospel Church, p. 43, and passim; Owen, A Brief Instruction, pp. 120ff; Chauncy, The Divine Institution, pp. 60-61; Eaton and Taylor, A Defence of Sundry Positions, pp. 69-70; and [Phillip Nye], A Declaration of the Faith and Order owned and practiced in the Congregational Churches in England; Agreed upon and consented unto By their Elders and Messengers In Their Meeting at the Savoy, October 12. 1658 (London, 1658), (Hereafter cited as Savoy Declaration), pp. 57, 58.

[22]Owen, A Brief Instruction, pp. 141-142.

and heal Offences." Finally, they ought to "feed the flock" by visiting and praying for sick members.[23]

Besides the preaching and ruling elders there were also deacons and "Widows;" the former were responsible for collecting the offerings of the church "and therewith to serve Tables, distributing with Simplicity, not only to the Ministers of the Church, but to any other of the Brethren, as their need shall require." Deaconesses ("Ancient Widows of Threescore Years of Age") had the duty of performing such good works as nursing children, looking after and lodging strangers, "Washing the Saints Feet," and "Relieving the Afflicted."[24]

Throughout England the Congregational churches chose these officers in much the same way in practice as has been indicated in the treatises dealing with the subject. As soon as the church at Yarmouth was gathered the congregation elected William Bridge "to the Pastors office." After receiving his acceptance, the people, praising and thanking God, and seeking His continued assistance, "ordayned" Bridge to this office. For several years John Oxenbridge, Robert Cake, and John Tillinghast served as assistant pastors, and in 1654 Job Tookey was elected and set apart for the office of teacher.[25] In Norwich, Timothy Armitage was chosen as pastor in the same democratic manner: by vote of "all the brethren then present (being 32 in number)." Armitage filled this post until his

---

[23]Thomas Goodwin, The Government and Discipline of the Churches of Christ, pp. 53-63. Chauncy, The Divine Institution, pp. 61-62. Owen, A Brief Instruction, pp. 143ff.

[24]Chauncy, The Divine Institution, p. 62. Thomas Goodwin, The Government and Discipline of the Churches of Christ, pp. 70, 78.

[25]Yarmouth Church Book, pp. 4-5, 37, 44, 48.

death several years later, whereupon Thomas Allen (formerly of New England) was asked to come from London to Norwich. This he did, first becoming a member of the church, and then, in January 1656/7, after much prayer, the church did "with joynt consent elect & chuse" him to be "Pastor over the Congregation."[26]

In the gathered congregation at Westminster Abbey the election of a pastor to office was considered to be the privilege of the "people, in accordance with the choice of Christ." Once an officer was elected by the members, he was to consider himself "as being appointed by Christ," and had therefore to "be faithful in service" and careful not to abuse his office.[27] A pastor chosen in 1671 in the Bedford Church, who was faithful and did not abuse his office, was also elected according to the proper Congregational Way. "After much seeking God by prayer and sober conference formerly had, the Congregation did . . . with joint consent (signified by solemn lifting up of their hands) call forth and appoint our brother John Bunyan to the pastoral office or eldership. And he accepting thereof, gave up himself to serve Christ and his Church in that charge, and received of the Elders the right hand of fellowship."[28]

Not always, though, was the pastor chosen by the free choice of the entire congregation. During the civil wars Parliament sometimes had a voice in the matter, for example, at Stepney, William Greenhill was appointed by Parliament Evening Lecturer and Jeremiah Burroughes Morning

---

[26] Norwich Church Book, pp. 14, 36, 45.

[27] Boseley, Ministers of The Abbey Independent Church, pp. 71, 72.

[28] Bedford Church Book, quoted in H. G. Tibbutt, Bunyan Meeting Bedford 1650-1950 (Bedford, 1950), p. 20.

Lecturer at the newly gathered Congregational church there. However, Parliament's choice must have been concurred with by the members of Stepney Meeting, for when the "Morning Star" and "Evening Star" preached, their sermons and lectures were very well-attended indeed.[29] At a more propitious time (during the 1650's) when the realm was somewhat more stable for Independents, and after the church had made Greenhill their pastor, the congregation agreed that in order for them to become a more complete church, it was necessary to "have not only a Pastor, but a Teacher, Elders, and Deacons." The church already had a pastor (Greenhill) and some deacons, and so, in July 1657, a series of general church meetings began in an effort to choose these other officers.[30] By 1671, when Greenhill died, the church chose (according to the proper Congregational polity) Matthew Mead as Greenhill's successor. After much thoughtful prayer and a day of fasting, Mead was "chosen Pastor of the Church by the consent of the whole Church," and later ordained with the help and advice of, among other clergymen, John Owen.[31]

Ordination was often dealt with as it was in Stepney. Always there was a good deal of prayer at a meeting attended by advisors from

---

[29]Jones, Stepney Meeting, p. 12.

[30]Ibid., pp. 24, 25. Deacons and elders were chosen (see below), but a teacher never was. This office, which is discussed in great detail in all the works on polity in both New and old England, seems not to have been filled in many churches. Perhaps the uneasy times in England made it difficult to find adequately qualified men to fill the post, as in New England where it was often a luxury for a church to have two ministers, it became necessary to settle for either a teacher or pastor. There are notable exceptions, however, when the practice did follow the theory, e.g., the Boston (Massachusetts) Church was ministered unto by John Wilson as pastor and John Cotton as teacher, and the Norwich Church, later in the century, had John Cromwell as pastor and Robert Asty as teacher.

[31]Ibid., p. 50.

other congregations, and in many churches (although not all) the symbolic act of "laying on of Hands" was practiced.[32] It would seem that the church at Bury St. Edmunds did not use this practice when ordaining Thomas Taylor to the office of pastor,[33] but the Yarmouth Church most certainly did, although being careful to emphasize that it was merely a symbolic act having no authority in conferring ministerial power on the recently elected officer. "If laying on of Hands," declared a 1647 entry in the Church Book, "was signification as the Ceremonies were, & for the conferring of some immediate gift, it was not to be done: But if meerely demonstrative before the Church noting the man set apart for the worke & office unto which hee is set apart, then it might well be done, onely with this Caution that such as were against it would not be offended with the thing done."[34]

It has already been indicated that according to Congregational polity, a church existed before it had a minister; the minister was chosen only after the church was gathered into a "true Church of Christ" and was thus able to bestow ministerial power unto a godly person.[35] Usually the minister was elected at the same meeting in which the church was gathered, or very shortly thereafter; but several churches were organized which existed as true, yet incomplete, churches for some time before selecting a minister. The church at Bury St. Edmunds took two years to satisfy

---

[32]Nuttall, Visible Saints, pp. 92, 93, 94.

[33]Bury St, Edmunds Church Book, p. 20.

[34]Yarmouth Church Book, p. 21.

[35]Eaton and Taylor, A Defence of Sundry Positions, p. 45, and Chauncy, The Divine Institution, pp. 46, 47, 48. Also see above, p. 98, note 56.

itself that Thomas Taylor was the man they wished to elect and set apart for their pastor,[36] and the church at Watesfield actually existed for twenty-three years after its gathering before it was successful in obtaining a pastor.[37]

Elders and deacons were also elected by Independent congregations in much the same way as were pastors and teachers, with the exception that elders and deacons were often chosen from a group of nominees. At Stepney several meetings were spent in choosing four elders and three deacons. In August 1657, after much solemn "prayer and seeking the Lord" the congregation elected four of their number to be elders and nominated six to be deacons. These six nominees withdrew "into another room," while the church thereupon "made choice of Isaac Grey, Briam Bingley and Bro. Limsey." After the men were "called in the Pastor declared before the whole Church that these were the persons chosen, and accordingly the Church agreed and appointed this day fortnight to be solemnly set apart and spent by the Church in fasting and prayer and seeking God for a blessing both upon the Elders that were chosen formerly and the Deacons that are now chosen, and after some time spent in seeking God upon that day then to ordain and set apart the said persons to their offices." One of the deacons chosen (Brother Limsey), however, doubted his fitness for the office and "desired the Church to take it into consideration and to think of some others that might be more profitable for the Church in that office." A fortnight later, again after much prayer, the church, heeding Limsey's

---

[36]Bury St. Edmunds Church Book, p. 20.

[37]Watesfield Church Book, p. 9.

request, reviewed their choice of deacons. Grey and Bingley were clearly chosen, but now a debate arose "between the choice of Bro. Bailey, and Bro. Limsey" in which no agreement was concluded. This deadlocked situation persisted until January, when Greenhill proposed that they begin anew by re-electing three elders, and then deciding on three deacons. The manner of choosing them was "that every one of the brethren should write three names in a paper by themselves and leave it with our Pastor and those that had the most hands should be the persons chosen which accordingly was done." On February 9 the pastor declared that the elders thus chosen were Brothers Grey, Wilkinson, and Andrews; thereupon it was moved that a fourth person, Barton, be also elected.

> Accordingly it was put to the Church in general to manifest their thoughts concerning the said persons and accordingly the Church did with full consent and agreement make choice of all those four brethren to serve Elders in the Church. Then it was taken into consideration for to choose three Deacons. So there were six for nomination, viz: Isaac Grey, Ben. Blake, Wm. Browne, Bro. Bailey, Rob. Hendrick, Bro. Limsey, and when they are withdrawn into another room the Church made choice of three, viz.: Isaac Grey, Ben. Blake, Wm. Browne.

Finally on 30 April 1658, after a day of prayer and "earnest seeking of God for a blessing upon the officers chosen . . . the officers . . . were ordained."[38]

Although there was some difficulty and delay in electing elders and deacons at Stepney, this was not usually the case in other gathered congregations. At Bury St. Edmunds John Hayward was elected and ordained a deacon at the same meeting that Thomas Taylor was chosen pastor.[39] In

---

[38]Jones, Stepney Meeting, pp. 25-28.

[39]Bury St. Edmunds Church Book, p. 20.

Beccles (December 1656) "Wm. Cutlove & Edmond Artis, were sett ap[ar]te to attend the office of Deacons: & from the Lord's day next ther is to be a weekely collec[t]ion putt into ther hands for the supply of the Lord's table, & the table of the (godly) poore of the church."[40] And at Yarmouth a deacon was also generally elected and ordained (by "imposition of hands") without much ado. "The Church met," for example, on 22 April 1650 "for the choosing of a Deacon, and prayed, & then with joynt consent chose Mr. Robert Eaton who was solemnely set apart & devoted unto the worke."[41]

There is not mention in the records of the choosing and setting apart of "Ancient" women to the office of "Widows," although it is clear that most churches had officers of this sort. No doubt they had less of an impact in church meetings than did the other officers; but nonetheless they were regarded as an important part of the church body, as at Yarmouth where widows were considered to be "very helpful and needful in the Church."[42]

Thus we have seen quite readily that, according to English Congregational treatises and the records of Independent churches there, the types of church officers, their duties, and their election and ordination were patterned, on the whole, after the New England model.

One of the primary aspects of polity which distinguished the Congregational churches in both Englands from Anglican and Presbyterian

---

[40] Rix, Brief Records of . . . Beccles, p. 126

[41] Yarmouth Church Book, p. 27. Also see Davey, "The Church at Great Yarmouth during the Commonwealth," p. 155.

[42] Yarmouth Church Book, p. 26. Davey, "The Church at Great Yarmouth during the Commonwealth," pp. 177-178.

churches, was the covenanting together of visible saints in "voluntary consent, and submission to the ordinances of Christ" in Church fellowship.[43] Those entering this covenant being granted the "promises and priviledges" given to members of the church, "ought to be visibly Holy."[44] It is obvious then that a way had to be devised whereby these people could determine the saintliness of one another and of all those who would subsequently wish to enter their fellowship as church members; this was accomplished by implementing the New England practice of a test for saving faith.[45] The followers of the Congregational Way believed that only those who "are able to manifest their Faith . . . to manifest the Work of Grace in thair Souls" are thus fit to be members of the true Church of Christ,[46] and whoever was indeed elected of God would not find it difficult to reveal, by his "profession and walking," that he was a "Saint by Calling."[47]

The process whereby a saint manifested his faith and the work of grace in his soul was by first confessing his sins, then making a

---

[43]John Owen, Eshcol: A Cluster (London, 1648), preface.

[44]Owen, The True Nature of a Gospel Church, p. 11.

[45]For a detailed discussion of the origin of this test in New England, see Morgan, Visible Saints.

[46]Thomas Goodwin, The Government and Discipline of the Churches of Christ, p. 56. William Bartlet, in A Model, wrote that the congregation should "looke narrowly to the admission of members, not looking to, nor labouring after multitude, so much as cleannes and purity: a little church with great godlines, is farre to be preferred before a great church (I meane for number) and smal purity." Also see above, Chapter II, p. 22, and Nuttall, Visible Saints, pp. 73, 112.

[47]Savoy Declaration, p. 57.

profession of faith and entering into the church covenant with the Lord.[48] All of these steps, requisite to a candidate's admission to church membership, were to be performed publicly. When a prospective member wished to join the church, the "Stewards" of the church (the elders) first carefully examined him ("for they that are added to a Visible Church, ought to be such as are judged by their Profession to be such as shall be saved.")[49] It was the elders' duty to "discern and judge by the rule of truth applied in love, between sincere professors and hypocritical pretenders."[50] To do this, they impartially inquired of the candidate the reasons for his "Faith and Hope," determined the competency of his "knowledge in the Principal Doctrines of Faith and Order," and decided "whether his Conversation answer this Profession, and adorn the Gospel." In presenting to the elders the reasons for his faith and hope, the applicant had to make a declaration of "what he hath Experienced of the Grace of God upon his heart, through the Means of Grace that he hath sate under, and the Operation of the Spirit, in the production of his Repentance unto Life, and Faith in our Lord Jesus Christ." Then he proceeded to show that his conviction was based on "the Great Mysteries of the Gospel" and not on popular conceptions, by exhibiting a "knowledge of God in his glorious

---

[48]Thomas Goodwin, The Government and Discipline of the Churches of Christ, pp. 87, 88. John Owen, in The True Nature of a Gospel Church, p. 19, asserted that a church should accept as fit for membership those who are free from sin, "Flee from Idols, . . . Make profession of the truth of the Gospel of the Doctrine of Christ . . . . [and] are willing to give up themselves unto the Rule of Christ in the Church, and a subjection unto all his Ordinances and Institutions therein." Also see Owen's A Briefe Instruction, pp. 212-213, and the Savoy Declaration, p. 57.

[49]Chauncy, The Divine Institution, p. 107.

[50]Owen, A Briefe Instruction, p. 213.

Attributes." (E,g., "the Doctrine of the Trinity; the Person and Natures of Christ; the Nature of the Law; of the Fall by Sin, and the Curse; Man's State by Nature in the Guilt and Pollution of Sin . . . ; The Nature of the Redemption wrought by Christ . . . ; Reconciliation of Sinners to God, and Purchase of Eternal Life for them; that our Sins were Imputed to Christ; and his Righteousness alone to us unto Justification, received by Faith alone, &c.") A candidate who, although not sufficiently knowledgeable in these great mysteries, had exhibited to the elders the "beginnings of True Grace" in his heart ought not to be rejected, but encouraged and instructed further by the elders in the "knowledge of Divine Truth." Finally the elders must be satisfied that the hopeful member had revealed, during his examination, a "Conversation" that "becomes the Gospel," i.e., his faith was outwardly visible "by his works, and blameless demeanour in the World."[51]

After thus examining the prospective member, the elders either, finding him wanting, rejected him, or being satisfied with his profession, brought the matter to the consideration of the entire congregation in a general church meeting. The members of the church, during the next few days or weeks, conversed with the candidate and looked into "his Christian Deportment" seeking satisfaction that he "is a fit Stone for Christ's Building." If there were no objections

> against the said Person, the Elders bring him before the Church to give the Reasons of his Hope, either by Word of Mouth or by Writing (if bashfulness hinder him or her from speaking) which the Elder or Pastor reads; and if any Brother desire any further Question should be asked, it ought not to be denied. The Person

---

[51] Chauncy, The Divine Institution, pp. 106-109. Owen, A Briefe Instruction, p. 213.

> owning the Declaration read, and no Objection made, the Elder puts the Question, Whether the Church are satisfied in the Party propounded, and do consent to his Admission? desiring them to answer in the Affirmative by their Suffrage in lifting up their Hands; and then if any be otherwise minded, to speak or shew their disagreement by the same Sign.

If the candidate was thus approved, then the Pastor, or elder in charge, asked him

> Whether he doth in the strenth of Christ, yield professed subjection to the Gospel, and promise to walk with that Church in the Communion of the Faith, and Order thereof, giving up himself and his Seed to the Lord and the Congregation, according to the Tenor of Abraham's Covenant, to the same purpose?

Upon his promise to do so with God's help,

> the Elder doth in the Name of Christ, receive him into Church-Fellowship, promising on the behalf of the Church and himself, To watch over him in the Lord, and discharge towards him those incumbent Duties which may promote his edification in the ways of God. Or Words to that purpose. [52]

Thus, in this way, a person was acknowledged to be a visible saint and was accepted as a member of the "True Church of Christ," receiving the privileges and duties thereof.[53]

---

[52] Chauncy, The Divine Institution, pp. 109-111. John Owen's account, of the involved procedure that prospective members had to go through, is much the same as Chauncy's. If candidates exhibited a "soundness in the faith," a "competent knowledge in the mysteries of the Gospel" and "a conversation free from blame in the world," it would indicate that they were filled with "saving light. . . . the essence of conversion." When they testified about these things to the church and also acknowledged "the worke of Gods grace towards them, and their resolution through the power of the same grace to cleave unto the Lord Christ with full purpose of heart, and to live in all holy obedience unto him," and thus satisfied the elders and the congregation, it was the latters' duty to admit and receive them in love into church fellowship. A Briefe Instruction, pp. 213-220. Also see, Eaton and Taylor, A Defence of Sundry Positions, pp. 31-34.

[53] William Bartlet, in A Model, pp. 75-76, presented an outline of the Independents' practice, in both New and old England, in admitting new members into their churches:

"I. Those of the Congregationall way, are content to receive such

There are many examples in the church records of the admission of members according to this procedure. In Yarmouth persons wishing to become members first met with the elders, and upon their approval they would be brought before the church to "make publick confession of faith." After being thus "propounded," the congregation would then spend much time in prayerful "deliberation" deciding whether or not to receive the candidates.[54] In April 1653 "the Church ordered the next tuesday to make confession of their faith viz; Eliz. Jenkinson, Eliz. Wrea wido, to speak

---

into communion and church fellowship, upon their proffering themselves, that differ from them in judgement, in things of lesser consequence and moment, so long as they have good evidence and testimony of their upright conversation, and find them willing to sit down with them, and submit themselves to the churches proceedings, as farre as God shall give them light.

"2. They are studious of taking notice of the least breathings of Christ, in those that offer themselves to joyn with them in Church communion, whether poore or rich, condiscending to the meanest worke of grace, where they have any the least hintes of truth and sincerity, being assured that Christ hath appointed his green Pastures for his weake Lambes, as well as for his grown sheep.

"3. They are willing to give liberty to any such poore soules to manifest what God hath done for them in uniting them to Christ the foundation, (not to make a confession of their sinnes, as many report) for the satisfying of those that shall have communion with them in the holy things of God, (which is no more then reason requires) either before the whole Church publiquely, or else if they are weake and bashful (as many are) to the Pastor in private, with one or two more of the Church, and they to transmit it to the Church.

"4. If they meet with broken language, and bad and low expressions (as oftentimes it falls out) yet they make not that a ground of refusall, so there be sufficient testimony of the holines of the life, viz. such a profession as carries with it no palpable contradiction in mens walking, but is accompanied with the power of Religion and godlines.

"5. They bind not any to a formall and expresse written covenant at their comming in (as they are commonly slandered with) but only, after satisfaction is given, demand their willingnes to give up themselves to the Lord, & his Church, & to walke together in the mutuall discharge of those duties that concerneth such a Churchstate, and Gospell relation, upon the manifestation whereof, they are admitted to the fellowship and use of ordinances.

"6. If any are not found fit upon tryall, they are only desired to wait a while, till God shall bring them into a further capacity."

[54] Yarmouth Church Book, pp. 7, 40.

with the Elders -- Martha Salmon & Eliz. Bugdon.: A few months later (23 August) it was "Ordered that Eliz. Gother / Mary Davis / Jane Richmond / Lydia Harmer / give account of their faith next meeting," which accordingly was done and they were all admitted to membership. A year later Emma Herring, Sarah Davis, and Elizabeth Bird gave their "Confession of faith" and the latter two were admitted. In October 1655 "after some time spent in seeking the Lord the Church admitted Mr. John Green -- Scoller."[55] Before John Spilman was admitted to membership he too had to give "an account of my faith and life."[56]

Not only did the prospective member at Yarmouth have to present his confession of faith, but it was also required that he agree with the church's view regarding polity, especially that he should ascribe to the covenant. In 1645/6 a Miss Shepheard wished "to partake . . . in the ordinance of breaking of bread, without entring into covenant w[i]th us: pretending that the covenant or agreement hath another drift & that their is more in it then appears." Because she persisted in this view even after the pastor (William Bridge) tried to dissuade her, she was not admitted.[57]

The Norwich Church even more definitely stated the need for a "test for saving faith." Here it was decided that all those wishing to enter their fellowship as members had to give an account of the work of God's grace in their hearts. It was not necessary that everyone should

---

[55] Ibid., pp. 41, 43, 44, 48.

[56] Rogers, Ohel, pp. 412/4-5 (pagination is confusing). See Appendix D.

[57] Yarmouth Church Book, pp. 7, 13. She was eventually admitted five years later. By that time she was probably persuaded to accept the covenant. Also see, Davey, "The Church at Great Yarmouth during the Commonwealth," pp. 150-151.

give his profession in the presence of the whole church, "seeing many are soe weake as they cannot speake before a publicke congregation; but it were much to be desired that all could & would (at their joyning to the Church) speake something in presence of the Church tending to edification." No doubt the actual "account of the hope that is in them for salvation . . . [and] the reasons for their desires to joyne themselves to the Church" was given in private to a few of the elders. The elders in turn related the candidate's profession to the church which then decided whether or not to admit him. At one church meeting, for example, "there was a relation given in by br. Goodwin and br. Wright of Mrs. Warde which did give satisfaction and she was pased for admition the next Oppertunity."[58]

In Wrentham only "beleevers in C[hris]t called & sanctified," who could exhibit a knowledge of the principal doctrines of Christianity, present evidence of the work of grace in their souls, and then join in the church covenant, were accepted into membership.[59] At Bury St. Edmunds the procedure was much the same. The person seeking membership in the church had to relate to the congregation the manner in which he received saving grace. After prayerful deliberation he would be accepted or rejected; if accepted, a member (probably an elder) would be designated to receive him into fellowship by speaking with the candidate in words that clearly indicate the method that was used in so many Congregational churches.

> You have desired Comunion with us & have given an account of the Dealings of God wth yor Soul in bringing you to himself, wherin the Church rejoiceth wth you (for there is Joy in Heaven over one Sinner that repenteth) & upon the whole we are satisfyed: Now then do you here in the Presence of God & of his People in this

---

[58]Norwich Church Book, pp. 20, 51.

[59]Wrentham Church Book, pp. 6, 7.

> place, give up yor self to the Lord Jesus Christ as the King, Priest & Prophet of his Churches to follow him whither so ever he shall lead you, & to be his, & then unto this Church of C[hris]t to walk wth us in the Faith & Fellowship of the Gospel. (Consent here is required.)
>
> Then I do wth the Consent of the Church admit and receive you in the name of the Lord Jesus into our Holy Comunion, & Covenant for my self & on the behalf of the Church to walk wth you in the Dutys of Love & Watchfulness to our mutual Edification; as a Token of wch fellowship I give you my right hand.[60]

Throughout the seventeenth century many members were admitted to the church in this way. The entries in the Church Book indicate that always the candidate related the manner in which he received grace and was saved (thereby establishing his credentials as a visible saint) and then he would be admitted if the Church was satisfied with his sincerity. For example, a Mr. Goodwin "was received into the fellowship of the Church upon his publick declaration of the dealings of God with him, & profession of his faith &c, & the churches satisfaction thereupon."[61] Often the applicant also had to promise to walk in the ways of the Lord and the church by adhering to the church covenant. "James Prick, a carpenter, William Shortling an husbandman, William Prick a shoomaker, were received into the Church having given a publick account, with good acceptation to the Church, of their conversion unto God, & faith in Jesus C[hris]t, with an explicite consent to walk with us & abide in C[hris]ts wayes, in all troubles & temptations, C[hris]t strengthening them."[62]

In the other Congregational churches throughout the country whose records are extant, membership was also reserved for those who

---

[60]Bury St. Edmunds Church Book, pp. 3-4

[61]Ibid., p. 43. Also see pp. 45, 49.

[62]Ibid., p. 44.

could somehow satisfy the church that they were visible saints. In Beccles, several of the members were "appointed to confer with the candidates 'in order to the church's satisfaction.'" If their declarations did not succeed in giving evidence of salvation, then they were not admitted "until they could 'give further satisfaction,' and should again apply for admission."[63] In Bedford, those desiring membership first met with some of the members in order to give satisfaction to them concerning the work of God's grace in their souls. The next step was to go before the whole church, and if successful in satisfying the congregation of their salvation they were to be admitted, if unsuccessful. "then some of the brethren go forth and have conference with them, and labour in the wisdome and spirit of the Gospell to incourage them to farther waitinge." In 1656 John Wilson was admitted in this manner after giving "an account of the worke of grace in his soul," and likewise was "bro: John Crane . . . admitted a member of this Congregation" in 1657.[64] In Ipswich persons were accepted after first rendering to two or three of the congregation, an account of w[ha]t God had done for their souls." This was carefully considered by the whole church "together wth their spirits and conversation & unity of judgm[en]t with us in the great truth of the Gospell and separation from corrupt Worship," (i.e., the prospective members had to ascribe to the Congregational polity) and, if the church was satisfied "they were by joynt consent admitted into the Church, they also giving

---

[63]Rix, Brief Records of . . . Beccles, p. 130

[64]Bedford Church Book, quoted in John Brown, John Bunyan, pp. 99-100.

up them selves to the Lord and to the Church."[65] In Stepney candidates were required to give satisfaction regarding their salvation before the church would consider "who are fit to be admitted,"[66] and at the gathered congregation in Westminster Abbey applicants had "to give evidence concerning their conversion, their soundness in doctrine, and also to avow themselves Christians" if they expected to be admitted as members.[67] When John Goodwin gathered an Independent congregation at St. Stephen's, Coleman Street, only those who made a satisfactory "profession" of faith proving themselves to be "fit for such fellowship" were admitted as members and those who failed to do so were prevented even from attending the sacrament of the eucharist.[68] And in Woodbridge, even as late as 1709, members still were required to present "their Experiences of the Grace of Christ" before being admitted into the church.[69]

Not everyone who presented evidence of saving grace was

---

[65]A Copy of The First Minute Book of Tacket Street Congregational Church, Ipswich 1686-1791, typescript by J. Duncan, DWL, MS. 201.11, p. 2, 5. Although in many churches a candidate had to show an acceptance of the Congregational Way when he presented himself for admission (see pp. 87-88, note, 144, above), there are examples of persons being admitted who did not agree in all matters of polity. In Bedford there are several instances of persons being admitted as members after presenting their professions, even "though they agree not in judgement in all outward things." Bedford Church Book, quoted in Nuttall, Visible Saints, p. 115. Also see John Brown, John Bunyan, p. 100.

[66]Jones, Stepney Meeting, p. 28.

[67]Boseley, The Ministers of the Abbey Independent Church, p. 69.

[68]Vestry Minutes, St. Stephen, Coleman Street, p. 161. Edwards, Antapologia, p. 96. John Goodwin, Anapologesiates Antapologias, pp. 53, 129.

[69]Woodbridge Church Book, p. 10.

admitted immediately as a member. Rebecca Smith, after relating her experience to the congregation at Bury St. Edmunds, had to wait "some time for the churches consent," before being admitted.[70] "Goodwife Everit often troubling the Church" at Yarmouth "with propounding her selfe," for membership, but being completely unable to persuade the church of her sincerity, was finally informed "that when she offered her selfe againe that she bring testimony of Brethren and Sisters both of her grace and Conversation." Evidently she did not do this for the church book does not record whether or not she was ever admitted.[71] At Bedford Thomas Allen, after presenting his profession "satisfied" the church "of the work of grace in his soule," but was made to wait for several months before being admitted until he would agree to "submit his gift (formerly exercised) [of preaching?] to the judgement of the Church."[72]

Although the records of the churches indicate the manner in which a candidate for membership was received or rejected, there are few examples extant of the actual declarations of saving grace propounded by the applicants. One such declaration has been recorded by Matthias Maurice in an account of the confession presented by Thomas Browning when the latter offered himself for membership at John Owen's church in Coggeshall, Essex. Browning told the church that after a period of prayerful thought and searching he retired one evening to his study and seeing a book lying on his desk

> took it up and read a Line or two only in it, and there was

---

[70]Bury St. Edmunds Church Book, p. 45.

[71]Yarmouth Church Book, p. 53.

[72]Bedford Church Book, quoted in John Brown, John Bunyan, p. 100.

> this Passage, That Christ is so taken with a poor Sinner's believing on him, and trusting his Soul with him for Salvation, that he professes of it, it ravishes my Heart. . . . Though at reading of the Passage I took no great Notice of it, yet no sooner was I upon my Knees, but it revived and sounded so well in the Ears of my Soul, that evidently I was stirred up to believe, and so quickened in it, that I found a wonderful Adherence to Jesus Christ, and Rest in my Soul; and in that Strain, with much Humbleness and Self-loathing, was I carried forth all that Duty, and it was the first time that ever I was made to move directly and distinctly to Christ. 73

The congregation, hearing these "Dealings of God with his Soul," rejoiced greatly and straightaway "he was admitted Member; for his Faith was sound, his Experience clear, and his Conversation holy."[74]

John Rogers, the pastor of the Independent congregation gathered in Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin, recorded several declarations given by applicants for membership at his church. It would be tedious to quote many of them, but a few will suffice as examples of the sort of declaration that was required from all those who hoped to enter into church fellowship. Edward Wayman, when presenting himself for membership, related that

> I am not able to express what I have found of Gods goodness to me. My first call was upon a dream, which I had of a great black terrible dog, which seized upon me, and took hold on my ear fast, which I thought was the Devil; at which, I waked with screeks and cries, and such frights, as for three weeks I thought I should have gone distracted; for I found this was sent to raise me out of my sins, which were after set so before me, so that I was a long time afflicted; and so, as I could scarce walk about the streets for feebleness: But it pleased God to comfort me since by Mr. Fowler, and some others; and in private meetings, and in prayers; so that I am sure I am pardoned in Christ, and that God hath accepted of him, as an offering for me. I was zealous before for Forms, but now I desire to be built up by the Spirit, and to live by the Spirit, in Christ, whom I make my all: And for that end, I desire to joyn with you, as you do with the Father and the Son.

---

[73]Quoted in Matthias Maurice, Monuments of Mercy (London, 1729), pp. 28-29.

[74]Maurice, Monuments of Mercy, p. 29.

Another candidate, Dorothy Emett experienced saving grace, after being exposed to the preaching of John Owen (when he was in Ireland with Henry Cromwell). "Mr. Owen," she related,

> was the first man by whose means, and Ministry I became sensible of my condition, I was much cast down, and could have no rest within me, and so I continued till his going away from us, and at his going he bid me beleeve in Christ, and be fervent in prayer; but I said, how should I do to beleeve? I lay a long time in this trouble of minde, untill in my sleep one night came to me a voyce, (I thought) that said, I am the Fountain of living water: and when I awaked, I was much refreshed, for I had great thirstings after Christ, and yet I was under some doubts, untill I heard one at Cork-house upon that subject, Rom. 8. The Spirit witnesseth with our spirits, that we are the sons of God. So that God satisfied me very much, and I have had ever since a full assurance of Gods love to me in Christ.

A third applicant, John Bywater, had received saving grace when he was a young boy:

> Brethren, I do declare here this day the desire of my heart, which is to have fellowship with such a society as are built up by the Spirit; to be one with all those that are one with Jesus Christ the Head; knowing this, That all rudimentary and elementary things, do but point at a higher glory. As for my Faith, I acknowledge God one, not three, but as you have heard before, &c. As for my life, I shall in short say thus: When I was a little one, going to School, God began with me; for once I swore one Oath (as I was playing with my School-fellows) but I was presently struck with horror for it, and sence of it, as if I were to go to Hell for it presently; in which horror, and great trouble, I left my School-fellows playing, but I could no longer, being in this misery for that sin, but away I went into the Church-Porch (not far off) and there I sat alone, and wept bitterly to my self for some time; but at length growing in some hopes (I know not how) of pardon, I began to grow chearful, and fearless, until a little while after that, I went to see some malefactors suffer; and after I came home, this sight ran so much in my minde, and was for a long time set so before my eyes, That my sins, and the horrors of Hell came afresh upon me again; so that I was exceedingly cast down, and cryed out, O what shall I do! how shall I be saved! which I had often in my mouth, and in the hearing of my friends: in which condition, I could take no comfort from them, till the Lord himself brought me out of it, and gave me to be given up to Jesus Christ, by the life of Faith which I now live; notwithstanding. I was under several temptations, and so often-times very thick, but even then I resolved, if

> that I were flung into Hell, yet it should be holding on Christ; for I will not let him go now, and here I hold, through mercy, ever since. So that I take Christ for my King, Priest, Prophet, and do believe him to be a Propitiation for my sins. And I believe, that he will restore to us a pure language, and that we shall all worship him in one Spirit, and with one consent: And my desire is to walk with you thus, in union and love, and by one and the same Spirit.[75]

It is apparent, then, that in churches gathered along Congregational lines, membership was strictly limited to those who could "show the whole congregation convincing signs of their regeneration and true grace."[76] Once a person became a member in this way, he was granted the same privileges that belonged to all members of the church. He would share the responsibility in choosing officers for the church, in admitting further members, and in looking after, in all brotherly love, the spiritual well-being of his fellow members.

When a member erred, it was the responsibility of the others to admonish him and help him to overcome his deficiency. "In their mutual watch over one another," it was the brethrens' duty "to exhort each other unto holiness and perseverance; and if they observe any thing in the wayes and walkings of any of their fellow Members not according unto the rule, and the duty of their profession, which therefore gives them offence,

---

[75]Rogers, Ohel, pp. 394-395.. For further declarations from Rogers' church, see Appendix D.

[76]Baillie, A Dissuasive, p. 163. The importance of the test for saving faith to Congregationalism is emphasized by Baillie's assertion that it "hath always seemed to me their [the Independents] capital and fundamental difference, the only cause of their separation from us [the Presbyterians]; and wherein, if we could either agree or accomodate, there would be a fair possibility of accord in all things else; at least so far as to be united in one and the same Church. But this difference is the great partition wall which, so long as it stands, will force them to continue their intolerable practice of separating from all the Reformed Churches in the world."

to admonish them thereof in private with love meekness and wisdom."[77] If this admonition was not heeded by the offending member, then the offended party secured the assistance of one or two other members, who, upon being satisfied that the offense was indeed real and "contrary to the rule of the Gospel," proceeded to admonish "the offender the second time."[78] If this failed then no alternative was left but to bring the matter to the elders' attention who in turn reported it "unto the whole Church."[79] The elders informed the congregation of the nature of the offense (e.g., heresy, blasphemy, drunkenness) and the testimony presented by the offended party, then of "the means used to bring the offender to acknowledgement and repentance," and the reaction (or non-reaction) of the offender to the private admonitions. If the congregation then found that the member was indeed guilty of the offence of which he had been accused, he, he was "publicly admonished by the Elders, with the consent and concurrence

---

[77] Owen, A Brief Instruction, pp. 190-191. All members were bound to watch over one another, and if any, including an officer, were guilty of an offense, then he could be admonished, censured, or, if still persisting, excommunicated. "The Church hath power to censure her Officers if she see just occasion." Eaton and Taylor, A Defence of Sundry Positions, pp. 58-60. The church had this power (of disciplining its membership) in order to preserve love "among all the members . . . for if offences should abide unremoved, love . . . would not long continue in sincerity" thus eventually causing "the dissolution of the whole society." Beside preserving the basic cause of its existence the church also wished to keep both itself and the offending member free from dishonor and scandal. Owen, A Brief Instruction, pp. 196, 197.

[78] Chauncy, The Divine Institution, p. 124. Owen, A Brief Instruction, p. 199. If the members called in by the offended party discovered the offense not to be a real one, then they endeavoured to persuade "the brother offended of his mistake, and with him to satisfie the person pretended to be the offender, that no breach or schism may happen among the members of the same body."

[79] Chauncy, The Divine Institution, p. 124. Owen, A Brief Instruction, p. 191. The whole body of the church had to be consulted, not only the officers, for to discipline or "excommunicate this or that member, concernes all the Church," and could therefore only be accomplished by the whole church. Bartlet, A Model, p. 48.

of the Church."[80]

Excommunication, the supreme penalty that can be levied by a church, was not to be used "upon every slight occasion," yet if the offender rejected or ignored the admonition of the church, and continued to do so, then the church had no other recourse but to cut him off "from all the priviledges of the Church, and east [him] out from the society thereof."[81] The procedure for this commenced with a question, put by an elder to the church "whether the Church adjudge the person offending (all due means having bin used according to the Rules of Christ) to be guilty of matter of fact as charged, and remain incorrigible?" If this was answered affirmatively, then

> the Judgment is fallen into the Pastor's or Elder's hand, as after the Verdict of a Jury, into the hands of the Judge; and accordingly he goes on to pass Sentence, as the Duty of his place requires. And first with much Solemnity, after he hath laid open the Sin, with several aggravations, he shews likewise the Awful Nature of this great Censure, and the main End thereof, for the Salvation, and not the Destruction of the Sinner, and accordingly calls upon God for his gracious Presence and Blessing upon this Sacred Ordinance, that the great end thereof may be obtained, still expressing the deep sence the Church hath of the Fall of this Brother, with great Humiliation of the Church, with remorse for the Sin thus committed and persisted in.

After a sufficient lamentation for the soul of the offending brother, the elder,

> In the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ before the Congregation . . . cuts off and secludes such an one (by Name) from the Union and Communion of the Church . . . . Which is no more than the putting him out of Communion of the Church the

---

[80]Owen, A Brief Instruction, pp. 201, 202.

[81]Chauncy, The Divine Institution, p. 122. Owen, A Brief Instruction, p. 203. Excommunication could sometimes be accomplished without the previous steps of private and public admonition, if the offense be "notorious and scandalous" enough.

> Kingdom of Heaven, into the World the Kingdom of Satan, for the humbling and breaking of him in the sight and sense of his sins, which is all that's meant by the destruction of the flesh." 82

Excommunication though, was not irrevocable, for if the cast-out member would later be filled with remorse and repentance for his sin, upon his penitential acknowledgment thereof, he could be reinstated in the church. First he had to inform the elders of his repentance, and they, being satisfied with his sincerity, brought him before the church where he made a "Publick and Solemn Manifestation of his deep Remorse." If the church accepted his acknowledgment and forgave him, he was then "by an Elder absolved from the aforesaid Censure, and re-admitted into full Communion, with the great joy of the Congregation, and Expressions of thankfulness unto God."[83]

Throughout the period under discussion a large number of church members whose souls were being diligently watched over by their brethren, were disciplined according to these procedures. Some were merely admonished, or excommunicated and later reinstated, but many of those who were cast out never repented, and consequently the churches' efforts to expel the sins from the offending member merely resulted in the offender being permanently expelled from his church.

---

[82] Chauncy, The Divine Institution, pp. 125-126. Also see, Owen, The True Nature of a Gospel Church, pp. 211-216. The reason for such a punishment was "Corrective, not Vindicative; for Healing, not Destruction." Excommunication was to be used as a means to bring the offending member back to his proper walking. There was another, passive, sort of excommunication -- if a member "withdraws himself, and separates from the Communion of the Church," he thereby excommunicates himself (Chauncy, pp. 127, 128). The church then was required to lock its doors against him, declaring that he who has "sinfully departed from the Communion of that Congregation . . . is not to return to the Church." (Owen, pp. 225-226).

[83] Chauncy, The Divine Institution, p. 127. Owen, A Brief Instruction, p. 210. Owen, The True Nature of a Gospel Church, pp. 230-231.

In the church records there are many entries recording the admonition of erring members (presumably after they were first admonished privately by one of their peers). In 1649, at Norwich, a typical entry records that, "the censure of Church admonition was laid upon Benjamin Fisher for loose & offensive conversation."[84] Often the admonition resulted in the offender making a confession of his sins and thus being forgiven and reinstated (e.g., the case of a Mr. Burroughs at Yarmouth who penitently confessed his sins of drunkenness, adultery, and lying[85]), but, if the member continued obstinate in his sin (e.g., one Margaret Thompson of Norwich, in 1654[86]), he was excommunicated.

In 1658 a member of the Stepney Church was admonished by some of his fellow members for scandalous walking, drunkenness "and uncleaness in a very gross and public manner." Unfortunately, the admonition did not have the desired effect of purging these sins from him, for he continued in these "gross actions to the great dishonour of God," and even audaciously claimed, in the presence of the church, that there was no sin he did not commit. The congregation then, forthwith, "agreed to cut him off as a rotten member, whereupon our Pastor delivered him up to the world from whence we had received him, and declared him to be no member of us." At about the same time another member was likewise excommunicated for the same offenses, with the additional one of "abusing his wife."[87]

---

[84]Norwich Church Book, p . 16.

[85]Yarmouth Church Book, p. 28.

[86]Norwich Church Book, pp. 29-31.

[87]Jones, Stepney Meeting, p. 31.

Other Independent congregations followed the same procedure in casting out their "rotten members." Elizabeth Townsend, a member of the church at Norwich, committed the serious offense of absenting herself from divine service, preferring instead the company of several "very scandalous persons in vaine, foolish & prophane discourse not performing any duties of worship (as she acknowledged) in the whole day." Even after being admonished she persisted in associating with these scandalous persons, and began to take up reading blasphemous books. The church warned her that if she continued to walk so disorderly she would be cast out, to which she replied in such a manner as to seal her fate. She denied the church's power to admit or excommunicate members by affirming "that the Church could not cast her out: and also affirmed That the Church was no Church for God's love was alike to all." Furthermore, "she questioned not but she could satisfy the Church, but it must be onely in words & she must then play the hypocrite, for her judgment was for that company forbidden And affirmed further that she would as willingly live in any prison as in the Church, or words to that effect." After repeated admonitions she was finally cast out by "the Pastor with the consent of the Church."[88] Another rather headstrong woman was similarly expelled from the Bury St. Edmunds Church. She had, among other sins, "defiled herselfe & hurt others by filthiness of speech, & that upon the lord's day & in a publique manner, as one past all shame & having laid aside that modesty, shamfastnes & feare wherewith the chast conversation of holy women should be coupled; saying openly in the hearing of Tho: Mount, his wife & family, that she thought to have pissed in his entry because

---

[88]Norwich Church Book, pp. 17-20.

he did not bid her drinke at the time which the world sall Christmas."[89] And at Yarmouth, for unspecified offenses, the congregation "did unanimously vote that" John Ferrier "be put away from amongst us as a scandalous and evill person and to be accounted by us as a publicane and a heathen which" was accordingly carried out by the elders.[90]

Ordinary members were not the only persons disciplined by Congregational churches; sometimes church officers, too, would fall into sin, and be admonished or excommunicated by the members of the church. At Norwich, for instance, Daniel Bradford, an elder and founding member was excommunicated for neglecting communion with the church,[91] and the teacher of the gathered congregation at Bristol, Nathaniel Ingello, was admonished for wearing "flaunting apparel . . . not becoming the gospell, much less a minister of Christ . . . [and for] being given so much to music, not only at his own house, but at houses of entertainment out of town." Upon his refusal to give up his passion for music ("take away his music, take away his life") he was forced to leave and was replaced by Thomas Ewins, who, presumably, did not share his musical enthusiasm.[92]

There were occasions in which a member in effect excommunicated himself by no longer having any relations with the church. In such cases the church would attempt to bring the wandering member back into the fold, but, failing this, would lose little time in disowning him. A typical

---

[89]Bury St. Edmunds Church Book, p. 34.

[90]Yarmouth Church Book, p. 56.

[91]Norwich Church Book, p. 47.

[92]Edward Bean Underhill, The Records of a Church of Christ, Meeting in Broadmead, Bristol 1640-1687 (London, 1847), pp. 36, 37. Hereafter cited as The Records of . . . Broadmead, Bristol.

case concerned two members of the Yarmouth Church, who, in 1650, after having rent themselves from the church were likewise denounced to be none of us."[93] Not all who absented themselves from worship did so, to engage in various shady and scandalous activities (see above regarding Elizabeth Townsend), but as a matter of conscience. A member at Stepney answered the church when it inquired of him the reason for his absence from their communion that he had decided to attend "a church of Christ that walked according to the ordinances of the Gospel which he thought we did not in regard to that ordinance of Baptism." Having embraced Baptist principles, and resolutely refusing to relinquish them at the church's demand, he was looked upon "as disorderly in his walking in going from us and joining to another without a dismission, whereupon our Pastor did declare him before the congregation that he was no member amongst us, and so we should look upon him for the future."[94]

The member who had been disciplined did not always have to remain outside the church. Many of those who were admonished or excommunicated were later reinstated into full communion with their brethren. Benjamin Fisher, within a year of his being censured at Norwich[95] "appeared before the Church," and humbly and penitentially acknowledged his errors, whereupon the church "being satisfied he was received againe into full Comunion."[96] In Stepney a woman who was admonished for "disorderly walking" several weeks previously "acknowledged her offence and professed her

---

[93]Yarmouth Church Book, p. 29.

[94]Jones, Stepney Meeting, p. 22.

[95]See above, p. 156.

[96]Norwich Church Book, p. 20.

repentance, and this day the Church declared their satisfaction."[97] There were those who hesitated much longer before repenting (waiting, perhaps, to see if the church would first repent for casting them out?) and being received into communion once again. Roger Waters, who had been excommunicated from the Yarmouth Church seventeen years before, humbled himself before the church in 1680 and repented of his sins, promising not to repeat them, and to be in future a good example for his brethren. Upon renewing his covenant with the church, he was readmitted.[98] It should not be assumed, however, that any member who humbly and penitentially returned to the church was reinstated. Three years after William Pestell was excommunicated from the Stepney Church for his openly scandalous conduct, he humbly appeared before the congregation and acknowledged his sins. The church, though, was not impressed; his repentance, they believed, did not come from the heart, rather it "seemed to us a premeditated business, citing many scriptures and reading them out of the Bible. We had no satisfaction in what he did."[99]

Although each congregation was an independent entity, voluntarily embodied, choosing and electing its own officers, and controlling its membership by admitting, admonishing, excommunicating, and reinstating its own members by the joint consent of the brethren, it did not separate entirely from other Independent churches. This was an essential feature of the New England Way, and there is ample evidence that it became equally important in England. In both Englands the first Congregational churches

---

[97]Jones, Stepney Meeting, p. 62.

[98]Yarmouth Church Book, pp. 77-78.

[99]Jones, Stepney Meeting, p. 17.

"pled . . . for the right of each church to seek and cultivate the communion of other churches of the same faith and order. Independency at that time was not isolation, but simply self-government, and not a self-government which set at nought the voice of counsel of other churches, but which set great store by them."[100] Thus, there was always a large amount of communion between gathered churches, and this was accomplished so as not to infringe on the liberty or independence of each individual congregation.

One of the common means of bringing churches into contact with one another was the synod. If a controversy or discrepancy arose on a matter of polity or doctrine, either within one church, or in several churches, or if one church should give offense to another, then the churches involved, along with the neighboring churches ought to hold a synod. It was "according to the minde of Christ," that these churches should send Messengers to "meet in a Synod or Councel, to consider and give their advice in, or about that matter in difference, to be reported to all the Churches concerned." The synod though, like those of New England, was different from the Presbyterian synod in that it was merely consultative and advisory, not authoritative. Synods were "not entrusted with any Church-Power, properly so called, or with any Jurisdiction over the Churches themselves, to exercise any Censures, either over any Churches or Persons, or to impose their determinations on the Churches or Officers."[101]

---

[100] Ibid., preface by John Kennedy, p. 11.

[101] Savoy Declaration, p. 63. William Bartlet, in A Model, p. 110, stated that churches should seek and crave the "advice and counsell" of other congregations in an effort to settle matters of dispute; and Isaac Chauncy, in The Divine Institution, p. 136, reaffirmed that these assemblies "are not trusted with any coercive Power of Jurisdiction over the Churches, to impose their determinations on them or their Officers."

The decision of the synod, then, was merely for the consideration of those who had to decide what course of action should be taken to settle the matter under dispute.

If a church gave offense to other churches in a matter of doctrine or polity and did not seek to be advised about it, then a synod ought also to be called. In this case the neighboring churches could meet together and, after discussing the problem, ask the offending church to render an account of their doings and "admonish them of their faults, and withhold communion from them, in case they persist in the errour of their way."[102] Representatives chosen by the brethren of several churches might also meet together in a formal synod or assembly if it were desirable to formulate a statement or platform of opinion on a question of doctrine or polity, either to help promote "the truths of the Gospel which they profess," or to vindicate both "the truth and themselves, from false charges and imputations;" In meeting together in such situations they ought to declare and testify "their joynt consent and fellowship in the same doctrine of faith, expressed in a form of sound words." The outcome of such a synod (e.g., the platform of faith and order issued by the assembly meeting at the Savoy in 1658) was, like the proposals of any Independent synod, merely advisory and not authoritative -- Congregational churches could adopt the statement issued if they so wished, but they were under no compulsion to do so.[103]

Beside meeting in such assemblies, Congregational churches were obliged to "preserve a mutual holy communion among themselves . . . [for]

---

[102] Owen, A Brief Instruction, p. 226.

[103] Ibid., p. 227. Owen, The True Nature of a Gospel Church, pp. 249ff.

their mutuall good and edification" in other ways. They ought to show consideration for one another so as not to give offense, they should pray for one another, and, in times of danger or hardship, help one another by sending "supplyes for their relief according unto their ability."[104] Churches also were expected to assist fellow Christians in setting up new churches, by being present during gatherings, giving advice, and recognizing the newly gathered church by extending the "right hand of fellowship." A final important way whereby Congregational churches had communion with each other occurred when a member of one church desired to join another. If the member in question could show sufficient reason to justify his desire (e.g., in moving to another place the member would probably wish to attend a church nearer to his new home), and if the church he intended to join was recognized by his former church as properly constituted, then he would receive a letter of dismission recommending him to the new church. A member of one church could also partake of the sacraments in another, if the second church gave its consent, but he could not join it until he received a dismission from the first; for the "Covenant Relation" he had with the church he was first joined to had to be officially dissolved before he was able to enter into a new one. If the dismissed member was not commended, then the second church was not obliged to accept him straightaway into their fellowship, for he might be "an offending Brother, and therefore not suddenly to be admitted, till further Enquiry be made." The member dismissed with commendation, if no one took exception to him or his previous church, "hath his Dismission read before the Church, and is received by Suffrage, according

---

[104] Owen, A Brief Instruction, pp. 224, 225.

to the tenor of the Covenant he made with the other Church from whence he came." The new church of course had to be entirely satisfied of the member's saintliness, and consequently reserved for itself the right to require the dismissed candidate to "declare the Reason of his Hope," and present evidence of the work of grace in his heart, and "he should be ready to do it" lest he be rejected.[105]

There are many examples in the records of members of one church being dismissed to become members of another. Sometimes they were dismissed to form a new church, other times they were dismissed to join already existing churches. Before the brethren in Yarmouth (who had just returned from exile in Holland) gathered into church fellowship, they first sought dismissions from their previous church in Rotterdam. The latter church granted this request in a letter certifying

> That in a Church meeting there is graunted liberty & leave unto them to joyne together in a body in Church fellowship, trusting upon their faithfulnes that they will joyne & walke according to that order which Jesus Christ hath left to be observed & holden forth in his Churches wherein likewise they have walked in their fellowship with us Comending them to the sweet guidance of the Spirit of Christ with our earnest prayers & desires that trueth & peace may be their portion. 106

When several of the members of the Yarmouth Church who resided at Norwich later wished to gather a congregation of their own there, dismissions were requested, which the Yarmouth Church accordingly granted.[107]

Dismissions were similarly given to individual members wishing

---

[105]Chauncy, The Divine Institution, pp. 111, 113, 114, 134, 135. Officers who were dismissed from one church to another did not retain their office and were thus only admitted as ordinary members.

[106]Yarmouth Church Book, pp. 1, 2, 5. Norwich Church Book, p.2.

[107]Norwich Church Book, pp. 9-10. Yarmouth Church Book, p. 8.

to join another Independent church. A member of the Norwich Church, upon moving to Ireland "desired her dismission to joyne to the Church in Dubling in Ireland of which Mr. Winter is Pastor upon informacon that the said Church doth walke according to Gospell order and are a people of a Godly conversation a dismission here upon was granted unto her."[108] In 1652 a dismission was given to John Money after he requested "leave to joine with the Christians" at Wymondham "into Church Fellowship."[109] There were occasions in which a church member did not desire a dismission, but only a recommendation in order to participate temporarily in the services of another church. At Stepney one member who moved for awhile to Woodbridge, in order to live with her father, requested "a letter of recommendation, which was sent her according to her request, that she might be admitted to the ordinances with that church" for the duration of her stay.[110]

When a church dismissed or recommended a member to another church it was necessary that the letter should have some indication as to the member's godliness. A member dismissed from Bury St. Edmunds, for example, was commended as a worthy person and "fit materiall for the howse of God, as a lively stone, fit to be laid into the spirituall building of Jesus Christ."[111] A letter sent by the Denton Church to Watesfield in 1678 regarding the dismission of one of its members to the latter church, also

---

[108]Norwich Church Book, p. 29.

[109]Ibid., p. 23.

[110]Jones, Stepney Meeting, p. 33; also see p. 19.

[111]Bury St. Edmunds Church Book, p. 28.

established the concerned member's spirituall qualifications:

> Having lately received a Letter from an Honoured & Dear Brother in Christ, Mr. Samuell Baker, in which he desires his Dismission from us in order to Church Communion with you, with the Reasons thereof: After serious Consideration of so weighty a Concern; we are agreed, & do hereby declare our Compliance with our worthy Brother therein, We need not to write anything by way of Commendation, especially to you, his Praise is in the Churches. Our great Loss will be (by God's Blessing) we doubt not, your great Gain, in which we shall rejoice. His joining with you shall be his Discharge & Dismission from us. The God of Peace be with you all! Amen. 112

Equipped with such a letter from a well-known godly church a person was usually admitted with little ado.[113] Such was the case with Elizabeth Edwards, who, in 1649/50, was admitted to membership in the Yarmouth Church "by dismission from the Church of Christ in Salem in New England."[114] Without such a letter, the candidate was required to undergo the test for saving faith in order to satisfy the congregation that he was qualified to be a member of a "true Church of Christ."

Churches communicated with each other for their mutual

---

[112] Watesfield Church Book, pp. 11-12. Letters of dismission, like this one, reveal that not only did Congregational churches have a good deal of communication with one another, but also that they "conscientiously adhered to the discipline of their body, which enjoined that members, and even ministers might not remove or depart from the Church of which they were members, without the sanction of such Church." In preventing members from changing churches too easily, these letters of dismission re-emphasize the importance of the church covenant as the central principle of Congregationalism. Davey, "The Church at Great Yarmouth during the Commonwealth," p. 85.

[113] A church, however, could request from him his declaration of faith, even if it was satisfied that he was properly admitted by his former church, for it was possible that the candidate had fallen into error before presenting himself to the new church. See Appendix D.

[114] Yarmouth Church Book, p. 27.

edification in other ways than sending letters of dismission. It was commonplace for churches to meet at the gatherings of new churches, for it was considered necessary and proper that a group of Christians wishing to gather a new Independent congregation should seek the advice and approval of other churches in the vicinity. When the Norwich Church was in the process of formation, the advice of their parent church at Yarmouth, and of John Phillips of Wrentham[115] who had recently returned from New England, was sought. Yarmouth advised that "it was the duty of the brethren of Norwich to gather themselves into a body to become a Church, seeing it would make much for God's glory, increase of the Church & procure a comfortable opportunity of Church meetins in the Lords' daies; Which advise of theirs also was confirmed by a letter from Mr John Philips of Wrentham." When the Norwich people actually made covenant with the Lord and became a gathered church, representatives from Yarmouth were on hand to give assistance.[116] This was also the case in 1651 when several saints at Albee, gathering into church fellowship, requested the advice of the Yarmouth Church. The people of Yarmouth, realizing that it was impossible to give the Christians at Albee "by letter all things that concerne Church order," sent their pastor, William Bridge, "to goe over, & to helpe them" in the gathering. After he returned from Albee, he related to the Yarmouth congregation the manner in which the church there had been formed, and "how hee was satisfied concerning them." The brethren then signified their approval by declaring "that they would have fellowship with the Church in Albee, as a sister church," and as a token

---

[115] See above, pp. 103-107, 125.

[116] Norwich Church Book, pp. 6, 10, 11. Also see above, p. 125.

thereof gave to them the right hand of fellowship.[117] When six "Christians of Stalham & Ingham" gathered together into church fellowship, they first met with representatives from the churches of Norwich, Yarmouth, and North Walsham, and gave them testimony concerning "the worke of the grace of God upon their hearts." This being done to their satisfaction, the messengers then helped them "to lay a foundacon of a Church."[118] In 1648/9, during the forming of the church at Bury St. Edmunds, the people at Norwich sent messengers "to behold the order of the Christians gathering a Church" there. Their report to the congregation "being satisfactory, the Church declared to hold communion with them."[119] The church assisting at a gathering did not always approve of the proceedings, and consequently would withhold recognition from the new church until it received satisfaction. This was the case at Tunstead when the Norwich Church "after some debate" decided not to extend "unto them the right hand of fellowship."[120]

There are numerous other examples of churches assisting each other in this way. At Watesfield in 1678, when the church was reorganized, representatives from the churches of Woodbridge, Sudbury, Denton, and Bury St. Edmunds were present to give advice;[121] Henry Burton of London

---

[117]Yarmouth Church Book, pp. 32, 33, 34. Yarmouth also gave advice to the Couchley Church regarding its gathering and later sent two of their brethren "to goe over & in the name of the Church to give them the right hand of Fellowship as they had desired, which was done accordingly" (p. 25).

[118]Norwich Church Book, p. 25.

[119]Ibid., pp. 15-16.

[120]Ibid., p. 25.

[121]Watesfield Church Book, p. 9.

was in attendance at the forming of the Stepney Church, and upon being satisfied with the outcome of the proceedings, extended "the right hand of fellowship" to the new church;[122] representatives from Yarmouth were on hand to assist the churches at Edgefield and Sandcroft when they were gathered;[123] and from Norwich those at Beccles, Wymondham, Edgefield, Godwicke, and Swanton Worthing.[124]

In addition to the gathering of a new church, the ordination of a pastor or teacher also occasioned a meeting which brought together representatives from different churches. When Thomas Taylor was ordained pastor at Bury St. Edmunds in 1656, there were present "at a very solemn and publicke meeting . . . the messengers sent from nine severall Churches," among them Owen's church at Coggeshall, and John Wilson's former church at Sudbury.[125] At the ordination of William Greenhill's successor at Stepney, Matthew Mead, were present John Owen and the representatives from several sister churches.[126]

Occasionally problems or questions arose within a church that were difficult to answer. In such situations the members would seek the advice of one or more other churches in an effort to resolve the difficulty. The church at Boston, Lincolnshire, sought the advice of the Yarmouth Church when the brethren there could not decide whether or not to

---

[122]Jones, Stepney Meeting, pp. 1, 4.

[123]Yarmouth Church Book, p. 42.

[124]Norwich Church Book, pp. 23-28. Rix, Brief Records of . . . Beccles, p. 113.

[125]Bury St. Edmunds Church Book, p. 20.

[126]Jones, Stepney Meeting, p. 50.

admit "some Christians that lived at a distance from Boston . . . [who] were willing to joyne unto the Lord in Fellowship with them." After considering the matter the Yarmouth congregation replied that distance should not be a factor in determining a candidate's qualifications, and thus the Boston Church "might receive them" if they were proper saints.[127] The advice of the Yarmouth Church was sought after as well by many other churches in the area. The church at Wymondham asked how it could be determined whether or not persons were properly qualified for church fellowship. Yarmouth answered that if persons possessed a knowledge of God and the principles of Christianity, a desire to seek God, and "a stirring up" of grace in their souls, then they were fit "for this worke."[128]

The saints at Norwich often sought the advice of their mother church at Yarmouth. Upon calling a man to the office of teacher, there was a debate in the church whether the person considered was not still connected with another church where he had formerly preached. Before coming to a decision the congregation inquired, and received, the opinion of the Yarmouth brethren. In 1656 the Norwich Church, again beset with many questions about polity, wrote to Yarmouth beseeching "that Mr. Bridge doe come to Norwich and abide there a Month or six weeks to advise and help them in their necessities." After due consideration, Yarmouth "sent back an Answer that . . . we could not spare Mr. Bridge soe long from us . . . yet if a day or two will help them we shall be willing though it be to our loss provided they doe send us help."[129] Another

---

[127]Yarmouth Church Book, p. 11.

[128]Ibid., pp. 14-15.

[129]Ibid., pp. 26-27, 52; also see p. 14 and passim for other examples.

example of churches helping one another in an advisory capacity occurred in 1658 when the opinion of the Stepney Church (and several others) was requested by a congregation whose minister had deserted them, The members asked the messengers of these several churches "whether they were not a deserted people by their pastor." This "being so, whether they were not a free people," and whether therefore "they might not make choice of a new pastor." The messengers concluded "that they might, whibh was satisfaction unto them, and so they returned thanks for the assistance of officers and members in the case."[130]

There were also occasions in which mediatory advice was sought by two churches that could not come to an accord on a matter of dispute between them. In 1651 a controversy arose between the churches at Woodbridge and Hapton when they both issued a call to Frederick Woodall to the pastoral office. After reviewing the cases of the two churches, representatives from Yarmouth, Sudbury, Walpole, and Syleham, concluded that Woodbridge needed him more than did Hapton. Although this decision was merely advisory and in no way authoritative, the churches accepted this counsel and Woodall went to Woodbridge.[131]

It is obvious then, that on all levels, from the members of one church having fellowship with those of another,[132] to church officers meeting together in synods,[133] Congregational churches, although

---

[130] Jones, Stepney Meeting, p. 32.

[131] Yarmouth Church Book, p. 36.

[132] Often members of the church at Bristol would attend services in Monmouth. Underhill, The Records of . . . Broadmead, Bristol, p. 27.

[133] For example, the Savoy Synod which met in 1658 to draw up a platform of Congregational doctrine and polity, much like the one drawn up in the previous decade in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

thoroughly independent, never neglected to commune with one another.

Like the first churches set up on Congregational principles in New England, the churches in the mother country were based on two main ideas: the concepts of the covenant, and of visible saints. Each church was formed by a covenant between the people and God, it was not dependent on any other church, nor hierarchical organization, and as a result all churches were equal and autonomous. Secondly, those who were members of each congregation and covenanted with God, had to be visible saints and able to satisfy their brethren of the sincerity of their faith. From these concepts were derived all other aspects of Congregational polity -- the choosing and ordaining of officers, the admittance of new members, the careful watching over of one another, and the disciplining of errant members, and the fellowship and communication among churches.

CONCLUSION

A little leaven
leaveneth the whole lump.
-- Galatians 5: 9

With the founding of Massachusetts Bay Colony the saints who had travelled to the New World proceeded to set up churches there according to the proper polity as laid down in Scripture. During the first four years of settlement they had worked out a practice whereby a church consisting of visible saints could be erected independent from other churches and administered solely by the power of its members. To use the term "New England Way" is of course partly a misnomer, for the New Englanders were Englishmen who had learned the bulk of their theories in England. They had come to Massachusetts Bay in order to work out and more fully develop and refine their polity. It was here in the "free aire of the new world" that they were able, for the first time, to practice Independency of churches unimpeded by the restrictions of the Establishment. Their primary task in Massachusetts Bay was to put into practice the ideas that had been developed during the early decades of the seventeenth century.

By the 1640's a few churches were gathered in England modelled along these lines, and then in the 1650's this nascent Independency began to implement itself and the Congregational Way rapidly caught on throughout most areas of the mother country. It cannot be simply stated that the New England example was the sole causative factor behind this development. The outbreak of the struggle against Charles, the success of

Cromwell, and the return, about this time, of the Dissenting Brethren from Holland, certainly helped to increase the respectability of the Independent cause. However, added to these favorable circumstances, the success of the New England Way, and the importation of the New England ideas into the mother land was the decisive factor for the emergence of Congregationalism as a significant force in England. Congregationalism was, by the 1640's, successfully flourishing in New England, and leading colonial divines exported to the mother country pamphlets and tracts outlining their polity. With the influx of these treatises and the large number of returning New England divines, a mighty effect was wrought in Britain.

That the New England Way produced a mighty effect in England has been shown in the preceding pages. Such leading lights of Independency as John Owen, Thomas Goodwin, Phillip Nye, and John Goodwin, were impressed sufficiently by the New England model that they diligently worked to set up this new form of polity throughout the kingdom. New England returnees (Thomas Weld, Hugh Peter, Samuel Eaton, John Phillips, and many others) used their first-hand experience to gather congregations of visible saints together in mutual holy fellowship and convincingly preached their convictions in an effort to enlist others in their cause. The volume and massiveness of the publications for and against their polity also indicates that New England was exerting an influence on the saints back home. The Presbyterians, recognizing the far-reaching impact of the New England model, spared nothing in their published assaults on it, while the Independents, realizing their debt to the colonists, defended their brethren, even when embarrassed by the intolerance of

Massachusetts society, with the same amount of spirit as the Presbyterians condemned them, Had the New Englanders not been so successful in propagating their polity, then it is certain that the Puritans in England would not have expended so much energy in arguing over its merits.[1]

That the impact of New England on the mother land was mighty is further suggested by the fact that not only was the Congregational Way imported into England, but other aspects of New England thought as well. The Beccles Church, for example, inaugurated the Bay Psalm Book into its services,[2] and the Independents in England even adopted the Massachusetts practice of civil rather than religious marriage ceremonies -- the magistrate, not the minister was the only official who could solemnize a marriage.[3] Even though English and New England Congregationalism eventually diverged over the issue of toleration,[4] the influence of such men as John Cotton kept Independents on both sides of the Atlantic in

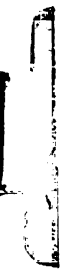
---

[1]New Englanders even spread their polity as far afield as Bermuda! The ministers in those islands were "perswaded by some writs of the Brethren of New England," to denounce their ordination and refuse "to administer to their old flocks any Ordinance," until "thirty or forty" people gathered together into a "new Church-Covenant; these covenanted persons did chose one of their old Ministers for their Pastor [who] . . . refused absolutely to celebrate any Sacrament, or administer any Discipline, or do any act of a Pastor to any but to the forty named only." Baillie, A Dissuasive, p. 108.

[2]Rix, Brief Records of . . . Beccles, p. 132.

[3]Baillie, A Dissuasive, pp. 115-116.

[4]"In New England they perswade the Magistrate to kill all Idolaters and Hereticks, even whole Cities, men, women, and children. But here they deny the Magistrate all power to lay the least restraint upon the grossest Idolaters, Apostats, Blasphemers, Seducers, or the greatest enemies of Religion." Ibid., p. 129. Baillie's critical view as to the difference between New England and old England Independents was, doubtlessly, overstated. For a further, more objective, account of this issue see Perry Miller's essays, "Errand into the Wilderness," and "The Marrow of Puritan Divinity." Also see above pp. 81-82.



close fellowship.

Thus it has been shown that the primary factor for the rise of the Congregational form of church polity in England was the impulse coming from New England. This fact is of no small significance for it clearly points out the close relationship between the colonies and the mother country, and that a study of seventeenth-century English history should not be undertaken without a proper consideration of developments in the colonial settlements. Historians have for many years emphasized the English influence on her colonies -- the settlers were above all Englishmen who brought with them English ideas and institutions. The forms of government and of law-making, the social structure, and even the style of colonial architecture was English in origin. The colonists refined and adapted their English traditions to the different environmental factors of the New World,[5] and some of what they developed, especially in the realm of ideas, returned to the homeland after having been recommended by several years of successful practice there. It has been the purpose of this study to underline this reverse movement -- that influence came from the New World to the old at a time when the colonists were preoccupied with building a home and erecting a workable organized society in a wilderness. National histories cannot be studied in a vacuum, and just as England was exerting a decisive influence in the development of Massachusetts Bay Colony, so too did the "city upon a hill" engender an impact on the mother country. Thus the flow of ideas

---

[5]In architecture, for example, the English thatch roof could not withstand the harsh New England winter, and so the settlers, while still following the basic English design for their houses, employed shingles to cover them.

that has for a long time now been reciprocal between England and America began with the founding of New England, and was important long before the American Revolution and the developments of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. English ideas have made their impact on America, but so too have American ideas been felt in the mother country from colonial times to the present -- from John Cotton to Bob Dylan.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

BIBLIOGRAPHY

General References

Brook, Benjamin. Lives of the Puritans to 1662. 3 vols. London: 1813.

Calamy, Edmund. The Nonconformists Memorial. Edited by Samuel Palmer. 3 vols. London: 1802.

Hanbury, Benjamin. Historical Memorials Relating to the Independents, or Congregationalists From their Rise to the Restoration of the Monarchy, A.D. MDCLX. 3 vols. London: 1839-1844.

Matthews, Arnold Gwynne, ed. Calamy Revised. Oxford: 1934.

Sibley, John L. Harvard Graduates. 3 vols. Cambridge, Massachusetts: 1873-1885.

Shurtleff, Nathaniel B., ed. Records of the Governor and Company of the Massachusetts Bay in New England. 5 vols. Boston: 1853-1854.

Waddington, John. Congregational History, 1567-1700. In Relation to Contemporaneous Events, and the Conflict for Freedom, Purity, and Independence. London: 1874.

Walker, Williston. The Creeds and Platforms of Congregationalism. New York: 1893.

Wilson, Walter. History of the Dissenting Churches in London. 4 vols. London: 1808.

Young, Alexander, ed. Chronicles of the First Planters of the Colony of Massachusetts Bay. Boston: 1846.

Young, Alexander, ed. Chronicles of the Pilgrim Fathers of the Colony of Plymouth, from 1602 to 1625. Boston: 1841.

Letters and Journals

Baillie, Robert. Letters and Journals. 2 vols. Edinburgh: 1775.

B[eadle], J[ohn]. The Journal or a Diary of a Thankful Christian. London: 1656.

Goodwin, John. A Satisfactory Letter of Mr. John Goodwin, Minister in Coleman Street; at the Request of A Freinde Concerning Points of Religion. British Museum, London. Harleian MSS.

Harrison, Thomas. Letter to Henry Cromwell, London 14 July 1656. British Museum, London. Lansdowne MSS.

Mather, Increase. Letter to Mr. Gouge, English Minister in Amsterdam, Dec. 10. 1683. British Museum, London. Additional MSS.

Mather, Nathaniel. "Letters." Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society, 4th ser. VIII (Boston, 1868).

[Vernon, George.] A Letter to A Friend Concerning some of Dr. Owens Principles. London: 1670.

Weld, Thomas. A Letter of Master Wells from New England to old England to his people at Tarling in Essex: It is a Letter setting forth the great Mercies of God with praise and Thanks giving, 1633. British Museum, London. Sloane MSS.

Winthrop, John. The History of New England, 1630 to 1649 [Winthrop's Journal]. Edited by James Savage. 2nd ed. 2 vols. Boston: 1853.

Pamphlets, Tracts, and Treatises

Allen, Thomas. A Chain of Scripture Chronology. With an Introduction by William Greenhill. London: 1659.

Ames, William, Jr. The Saints Security. London: 1652.

Aston, Thomas. A Remonstrance, against Presbitery. [London]; 1641.

The Attestation of the Ministers of . . . Norfolk. London: 1648.

Baillie, Robert. A Dissuasive From the Errours of the Time. London: 1645.

Baillie, Robert. The Disswasive From the Errors of the Time, Vindicated from the Exceptions of Mr. Cotton. London: 1655.

Ball, John. A Tryall of the New-Church Way in New-England and in Old. London: 1644.

Bartlet, William. 'IKVOYPAΦIA. Or a Model of the Primitive Congregational Way. London: 1647.

Baxter, Richard. Reliquiae Baxterianae. Edited by Matthew Sylvester. London: 1696.

Bridge, William. Babylons Downfall. London: 1641.

Bridge, William. England Saved with a Notwithstanding. London: 1648.

Bridge, William. The Saints Hiding-place. London: 1647.

Burroughes, Jeremiah. An Exposition of the Prophesie of Hosea. London: 1643.

Burroughes, Jeremiah. Irenicum, to the Lovers of Truth. London: 1646.

Burroughes, Jeremiah. The Saints Happinesse. London: 1660.

Burroughes, Jeremiah. A Vindication of Mr. Burroughes against Mr. Edwards. London: 1646.

Burton, Henry. Englands Bondage. London: 1641.

Burton, Henry. A Narration of the Life of Mr. Henry Burton. London: 1643.

Burton, Henry. Truth Shut out of Doores. London: 1645.

Chauncy, Isaac. The Divine Institution of Congregational Churches. London: 1697.

Chauncy, Isaac. Ecclesia Enucleata: The Temple Opened. London: 1684.

Chauncy, Isaac. Ecclesiasticum: or a plain. London: 1690.

Chauncy, Isaac. A Vindication of the Late Reverend and Learned John Owen. London: 1684.

C[hidley], K[atherine]. The Ivstification of the Independent Churches of Christ. London: 1641.

Child, John. New Englands Jonas Cast Up at London. London: 1647.

Cotton, John. A Defense of Mr. John Cotton. With an Introduction by John Owen. Oxford: 1658.

Cotton, John. An Exposition Upon the Thirteenth Chapter of the Revelation. London: 1655.

Cotton, John. Of the Holinesse of Church-Members. London: 1650.

Cotton, John. The Keyes of the Kingdom of Heaven. With an Introduction by Phillip Nye and Thomas Goodwin. London: 1644.

Cotton, John. The New Covenant. London: 1654.

Cotton, John. A Practical Commentary, or an Exposition. London: 1656.

Cotton, John. A Treatise of the Covenant of Grace. London: 1659.

Cotton, John. The True Constitution of A Particular Visible Church. London: 1642.

Cotton, John. The Way of Congregational Churches Cleared. London: 1648.

Cotton, John. The Way of the Churches of Christ in New-England. London: 1645.

Davenport, John. The Power of Congregational Churches Asserted. London: 1672.

Davenport, John and Hooke, William. A Catechisme Containing the Chief Heads of Christian Religion. London: 1659.

Dobson, Edward. XIV Articles of Treason. Oxford: 1643.

Eaton, Samuel and Taylor, Timothy. A Defence of Sundry Positions. London: 1645.

Eaton, Samuel and Taylor, Timothy. The Defence of Sundry Positions & Scriptures for the Congregational-way. London: 1646.

Edwards, Thomas. Antapologia. London: 1644.

Edwards, Thomas. Gangraena: or a Catalogue. London: 1646.

Erbery, William. The Bishop of London. London: 1652.

Forbes, Alexander. An Anatomy of Independency. London: 1644.

Goodwin, John. Anapologesiates Antapologias. or, the Inexcusablenesse. London: 1646.

[Goodwin, John.] Certain Briefe Observations. [London]: 1644.

Goodwin, John. Cretensis: or A Briefe Answer. London: 1646.

[Goodwin, John]. A Reply of two of the Brethren to A. S. London: 1644.

Goodwin, Thomas. The Government and Discipline of the Churches of Christ. London: 1722.

Goodwin, Thomas. Zerubbabels Encouragement to Finish the Temple. [London]: 1642.

Goodwin, Thomas; Nye, Phillip; Simpson, Sydrach; Burroughes, Jeremiah; Bridge, William. An Apologeticall Narration. London: 1643.

Goodwin, Thomas; Greenhill, William; Bridge, William; Nye, Phillip; Simpson, Sydrach; Carter, William. The Independents Declaration Delivered in to the Assembly. London: 1647.

Goodwin, Thomas; Nye, Phillip; Burroughes, Jeremiah; Simpson, Sydrach; Bridge, William; Greenhill, William; Carter, William. The Reasons of the Dissenting Brethren. London: 1645.

Hill, Thomas. The Season for Englands Selfe-Reflection. London: 1644.

Hollinworth, Richard. Certain Queres Modestly (though plainly) Propounded. London: 1646.

Hollinworth, Richard. A Rejoynder to Master Samuel Eaton. London: 1647.

Hooke, William. New Englands Teares, for Old Englands Feares. London: 1641.

Hooker, Thomas. A Survey of the Summe of Churche-Discipline. London: 1648.

Hoornbeeck, Johannis. Summa Controversiarum Religionis. Trajecti ad Rhenum; 1653.

Lechford, Thomas. Plain Dealing: Or, Newes from New England. London: 1642.

Mather, Cotton. Magnalia Christi Americana. London: 1702.

Mather, Richard. An Answer of the Elders of the Severall Churches in New-England unto Nine Positions, Sent Over to Them (By divers Reverend and godly Ministers in England) to declare their Judgements therein. London: 1643.

Mather, Richard. An Apologie of the Churches in New-England for Church-Covenant. London: 1643.

Mather, Richard. Church-Government and Church-Covenant Discussed. London: 1643.

Maurice, Matthias. Monuments of Mercy. London: 1729.

[Nye, Phillip.] A Declaration of the Faith and Order owned and practiced in the Congregational Churches in England; Agreed upon and consented unto By their Elders and Messengers In Their Meeting at the Savoy, October 12. 1658. London: 1658.

Oakes, Urian. An Elegie upon the Death of the Reverend Mr. Thomas Shepard. Cambridge, [Massachusetts]: 1677.

Owen, John. A Brief Instruction in the Worship of God. [London]: 1667.

Owen, John. The Duty of Pastors. London: 1644.

Owen, John. Eshcol: A Cluster. London: 1648.

Owen, John. A Review of the True Nature of Schisme. Oxford: 1657.

Owen, John. The True Nature of a Gospel Church. London: 1689.

Owen, John. A Vision of Unchangeable Free Mercy. London: 1646.

P., D. P. An Antidote against the Contagious Air of Independency. London: 1644[5].

P[agitt], E[phraim]. Heresiography. London: 1645.

Parker, Thomas. The Copy of a Letter Written by. London: 1650.

Parker, Thomas. The True Copy of a Letter: Written By. London: 1644.

Peter, Hugh. Good Work for a Good Magistrate. London: 1651.

Peter, Hugh. Mr. Peters Last Report. London: 1646.

Peter, Hugh. A Word for the Armie. London: 1647.

A Platform of Church Discipline Gathered out of the Word of God: And Agreed Upon by the Elders and Messengers of the Churches Assembled in the Synod at Cambridge in New England. Cambridge, Massachusetts: 1649.

R[athband], W[illiam]. A Brief Narration of some Church-courses held, in Opinion and Practice, in the Churches lately erected in New England. London: 1644.

Rogers, John. Ohel or Beth-shemish. London: 1653.

Rogers, Nathaniel. A Letter, Discovering the cause of Gods continuing wrath. London: 1644.

Rutherford, Samuel. The Due Rights of Presbyteries. London: 1644.

Shepard, Thomas. The Church-Membership of Children. Cambridge, [Massachusetts]: 1663.

Shepard, Thomas. New Englands Lamentation. London: 1645.

Shepard, Thomas. A Treatise of Liturgies. London: 1653.

Simpson, Sydrach. Reformations Preservation. London: 1643.

S[teuart], A[dam]. Some Observations and Annotations Upon the Apologeticall Narration. London: 1644.

Vicars, John. Coleman-Street Conclave Visited. London: 1648.

Vicars, John. The Picture of Independency Lively, yet Lovingly Delineated. London: 1645.

Walker, Clement. The Compleat History of Independency. London: 1661.

Walker, Clement. The History of Independency. London: 1648.

Weld, Thomas. An Answer to W. R. His Narration. London: 1644.

Weld, Thomas. A Brief Narration of the Practices of the Churches in New-England. London: 1645.

Weld, Thomas. A Short Story of the Rise, Reign, and Ruin of the Antinomians. London: 1644.

Weld, Thomas; et. al. A False Jew. Newcastle: 1653.

Westminster Assembly of Divines. The Answer of the Assembly of Divines to the Reasons of the Dissenting Brethren. London: 1648.

Westminster Assembly of Divines. Propositions concerning Church-government. Edinburgh: 1647.

Winslow, Edward. Hypocrisie Unmasked. London: 1646.

Winslow, Edward. New-Englands Salamander. London: 1647.

Woodbridge, Benjamin. Justification by Faith. London: 1652.

New England Church Records

Beverly:

"Beverly First Church Records." Copied by William P. Upham. Historical Collections of the Essex Institute, XXXV (July, 1899), 177-211.

Boston:

Pierce, Richard D., ed. "The Records of the First Church in Boston 1630-1868." Publications of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts, XXXIX (1961).

Cambridge:

Sharples, Stephen Pasehall, ed. Records of the Church of Christ at Cambridge in New England 1632-1830. Boston: 1906.

Dedham:

Hill, Don Gleason, ed. The Record of Baptisms, Marriages, and Deaths, And Admissions to the Church and Dismissals Therefrom.

Transcribed from the Church Records in the Town of Dedham, Massachusetts, 1638-1845. Dedham, Massachusetts: 1888.

Dorchester:

Pope, Charles Henry, ed. Records of the First Church at Dorchester in New England 1636-1734. Boston: 1891.

Roxbury:

A Report of the Record Commissioners, containing the Roxbury Land and Church Records. Boston: 1881.

English Church Records

Beccles:

Rix, Samuel Wilton. Brief Records of the Independent Church, at Beccles, Suffolk. London: 1837.

Bedford:

Brown, John. John Bunyan: His Life, Times and Work. Revised by Frank Mott Harrison. London: 1928.

Tibbut, H. G. Bunyan Meeting Bedford 1650-1750. Bedford: 1950.

Bristol:

Underhill, Edward Bean, ed. The Records of a Church of Christ, Meeting in Broadmead, Bristol, 1640-1687. London: 1847.

Bury St. Edmunds:

Copy of the Old Church Book belonging to the Society of Congregational Dissenters assembling for divine worship at the Meeting House situate in Whiting Street, Bury St. Edmunds Suffolk; and at present under the pastoral care of the Reverend George Jackson M.D. 1646 to 1801. Transcribed by Joseph Davey. Dr. Williams's Library, London. Harmer MSS.

Guestwick:

Copy of "A Register or Church Book containing the most materiall matters transacted in the Church of Christ walking in the faith and fellowship of the Gospel in and about Guestwick" 1652 to 1850. Transcribed by Joseph Davey. Dr. Williams's Library, London. Harmer MSS.

Ipswich:

A Copy of the First Minute Book of Tacket Street Congregational Church. 1686-1791. Transcribed by J. Duncan. Dr. Williams's Library, London. Typescript Theses MSS.

London:

St. Antholin, Budge Row, Vestry Minutes, 1648-1700. Guildhall Library, London. MSS. 1045.

St. Bartholomew Exchange, Vestry Minutes, 1647-1676. Guildhall Library, London. MSS. 4384/2.

St. Dunstan-in-the-East, Vestry Minutes, 1537-1651. Guildhall Library, London. MSS. 4887.

St. Dunstan-in-the-West, Vestry Minutes, 1587-1663. Guildhall Library, London. MSS. 3016.

St. Giles, Cripplegate, Vestry Minutes, 1659-1808. Guildhall Library, London. MSS. 6048.

St. Margaret, New Fish Street, Vestry Minutes, 1578-1789. Guildhall Library, London. MSS. 1175.

St. Mary Aldermanbury, Vestry Minutes, 1610-1763. Guildhall Library, London. MSS. 3570.

St. Matthew, Friday Street, Vestry Minutes, 1576-1743. Guildhall Library, London. MSS. 3579.

St. Stephen, Coleman Street, Vestry Minutes, 1622-1726. Guildhall Library, London. MSS. 4458.

Freshfield, Edwin. Some Remarks Upon the Book of Records and History of the Parish of St. Stephen, Coleman Street, in the City of London. Westminster: 1887.

Norwich:

Copy of The Church Book belonging to a Society of Christians who assemble for divine Worship at the Old Meeting Norwich. Transcribed by Joseph Davey. Dr. Williams's Library, London. Harmer MSS.

Stepney:

Booth, T. Wilson. The First 150 Years of the Stepney Meeting Independents, From 1644 to 1796. London: 1913.

Jones, A. T. Notes on the Early Days of Stepney Meeting, (1644 to 1689). With an Introduction by John Kennedy. London: 1887.

Swefling:

Copy of so much of the Congregational Records of the Church at Swefling and subsequently at Rendham as have been preserved; together with Extracts from the Deacons' Book of Receipts and Payments. Transcribed by Joseph Davey. Dr. Williams's Library, London. Harmer MSS.

Walsham:

Copy of the Church Book of the United Churches of Tunstead, Bradfield and North Walsham. Transcribed by Joseph Davey. Dr. Williams's Library, London. Harmer MSS.

Watesfield:

A Copy of the Church Book belonging to the Congregation of Protestant Dissenters assembling at Watesfield, Suffolk. Transcribed by Joseph Davey. Dr. Williams's Library, London. Harmer MSS.

Woodbridge:

Copy of the Records of the Congregational Church worshipping at the Quay Meeting Woodbridge 1651 to 1851. Transcribed by Joseph Davey. Dr. Williams's Library, London. Harmer MSS.

Wrentham:

Copy of the Church Book belonging to the Society of Congregational Protestant Dissenters at Wrentham, Suffolk. Transcribed by Joseph Davey. Dr. Williams's Library, London. Harmer MSS.

Yarmouth:

Copy of the Original Record of the Yarmouth Congregational Church 1642-1855. Typescript by J. Duncan. Dr. Williams's Library, London. Harmer MSS.

The Entire Records of the Congregational Church at Great Yarmouth from its formation in 1642 to the ordination of the Revd. A. Creak in 1813. Transcribed by Joseph Davey. Dr. Williams's Library, London. Harmer MSS.

Davey, Joseph. "The Church at Great Yarmouth during the Commonwealth." Unpublished manuscript, Dr. Williams's Library, London. Harmer MSS.

Miscellaneous MSS.

A Briefe discription of New England and the severall Townes therein. Together with the present Government thereof. British Museum, London. Egerton MSS.

Certaine Notes and Informations Concerning New England (circa 1660-1664). British Museum, London. Egerton MSS.

A Dialogue betwixt a presbyterian an Independent an Anabaptist and a quaker before a person of quality and a well wisher to the peace of the Church and State. British Museum, London. Harleian MSS.

Owen, John. Discussion with Baxter and others regarding Presbytery. Dr. Williams's Library, London. Henry MSS.

To the Right Honourable the Lords and Commons Assembled in Parliament. The humble Advice of the Assembly of Divines now sittinge by Ordinance of Parliament at Westminster Concerninge Church Government. British Museum, London. Harleian MSS.

Some additional notes to Dr. Samuel Winters life which I drew up from Mr. Coppendales account of him, who lived under his ministry. British Museum, London. Birch MSS.

"State of the Colony of the Massachusetts From the Commissioner of New England 1665." Given to Lord Arlington "principall Secretary of State" from George Cartwright. British Museum, London. Egerton MSS.

Secondary Works

Boseley, Ira. The Ministers of the Abbey Independent Church (1650-1660). London: 1911.

Browne, John. History of Congregationalism and Memorials of the Churches in Norfolk and Suffolk. London: 1877.

Cadoux, C. J. The Congregational Way. Oxford: 1945.

Clare, Albert. The City Temple 1640-1940. London: 1940.

Dale, Bryan. The Annals of Coggeshall, Otherwise Sunnedon, in the County of Essex. London: 1863.

Davey, Joseph. Correspondence principally relating to the History of Nonconformity in Norfolk and Suffolk, c. 1850. Dr. Williams's Library, London. Harmer MSS.

Davids, T. W. Annals of Evangelical Nonconformity in the County of Essex, From the time of Wycliffe to the Restoration; with Memorials of the Essex Ministers who were Ejected or Silenced in 1660-1662, And Brief Notices of the Essex Churches which Originated with their Labours. London: 1863.

Greenwood, Harold D. "The Origins and Early History of Independency in Suffolk to 1688." Unpublished B. Litt. thesis, 1949. Dr. Williams's Library, London.

Grieve, A. J. and Jones, W. M. These Three Hundred Years. Being the Story of Congregational Work and Witness in Bury St. Edmunds, 1646-1946. London: 1946.

Halley, Robert. Lancashire: Its Puritanism and Nonconformity. London: 1872.

Harmer, Thomas. Nonconformity in Norfolk (1774). Copy made by Joseph Davey. Dr. Williams's Library, London. Harmer MSS.

Harmer, Thomas. Nonconformity in Suffolk (1774). With additions by Joseph Davey. Dr. Williams's Library, London. Harmer MSS.

Levy, Babette May. Preaching in the First Half Century of New England History. Hartford, Connecticut: 1945.

Miller, Perry. Errand Into the Wilderness. New York: 1956.

Miller, Perry. The New England Mind: The Seventeenth Century. Boston: 1939.

Miller, Perry. Orthodoxy in Massachusetts. Cambridge, Massachusetts: 1933.

Morgan, Edmund S. The Puritan Dilemma: The Story of John Winthrop. Boston: 1958.

Morgan, Edmund S. The Puritan Family: Religion and Domestic Relations in Seventeenth-Century New England. New York: 1966.

Morgan, Edmund S. Visible Saints: The History of a Puritan Idea. New York: 1963.

Nuttall, Geoffrey F. Visible Saints: The Congregational Way 1640-1660. Oxford: 1957.

Nuttall, Geoffrey F. "The MS. of Reliquiae Baxterianae." Journal of Ecclesiastical History, VI (April, 1955).

Oberholzer, Emil, Jr. Delinquent Saints: Disciplinary Action in the Early Congregational Churches of Massachusetts. New York: 1956.

Orme, William. Memoirs of the Life, Writings, and Religious Connexions, of John Owen, D.D. London: 1820.

Pye-Smith, Arthur. Memorials of Fetter Lane Congregational Church, London. London: 1900.

Rix, Samuel Wilton. Nonconformity, the Development of a principle. London: 1852.

Sachse, William L. "Harvard Men in England, 1642-1714." Publications of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts, XXXV (1942-1946), 119-144.

Sachse, William L. "The Migration of New Englanders to England, 1640-1660." American Historical Review, LIII (January, 1948), 251-278.

Seymour, St. John D. The Puritans in Ireland. Oxford: 1921.

Shaw, William A. A History of the English Church During the Civil Wars and Under the Commonwealth 1640-1660. 2 vols. London: 1900.

Stearns, Raymond P. Congregationalism in the Dutch Netherlands. Chicago: 1940.

Stearns, Raymond P. "Hugh Peter and His Biographers." Annual Proceedings of the Bostonian Society, (1935).

Stearns, Raymond P. The Strenuous Puritan: Hugh Peter 1598-1660. Urbana, Illinois: 1954.

Thornton, John Wingate. The Historical Relation of New England to the English Commonwealth. Boston: 1874.

Turner, Lyon. Coleman Street Ward. Dr. Williams's Library, London. Lyon Turner MSS.

Turner, Lyon. Relation of the City Authorities to the Religious Life of London. Dr. Williams's Library, London. Lyon Turner MSS.

Wall, Robert E., Jr. "The Membership of the Massachusetts General Court." Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Yale University, 1965.

Williams, Dorothy Ann. "London Puritanism: The Parish of St. Stephen Coleman Street." The Church Quarterly Review, CLX, No. 337 (October-December, 1959), 464-482.

Yule, George. The Independents in the English Civil War. Cambridge: 1958.

Ziff, Larzer. The Career of John Cotton: Puritanism and the American Experience. Princeton, New Jersey: 1962.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Dorchester Church Covenant: August 1636

Wee whose names are subscribed being called of God to joyne ourselves together in Church Comunion, from our hearts acknowledging our owne unworthines of such a priviledge or of the least of Gods mercyes, & likewise acknowledging our disability to keepe coven[an]t with God or to p[er]fourme any spirituall duty which hee calleth us unto, unlesse the Lord Jesus do enable us thereunto by his spirit dwelling in us, Doe in the name of Ch[ris]t Jesus our Lord and in trust and confidence of his free grace assisting us freely Coven[an]t & bind ourselves solemnely in the presence of God himselfe, his holy Angells and all his servants here present that wee will by his grace assisting us endevour constantly to walke togeather as a right ordered Congregacon of Ch[ris]t according to all the holy rules of a church-body rightly established, so farre as wee do already know it to be our duty or shall further understand it out of Gods holy word: Promising first and above all to cleave unto him as our chiefe and onley good, and to our Lord Jesus Ch[ris]t as our onely spirituall husband and Lord, & our onely high priest and Prophet and King. And for the furthering of us to keepe this blessed Comunion with God and with his sonne Jesus Ch[ris]t and to grow up more fully therein, wee do likewise promise by his grace assisting us, to endevour the establishing amongst our selves of all his holy ordinances which hee hath appointed for his churches here on earth, and to observe all and every of them in such sort as shall bee most agreeable to his will; opposing to the utmost of our power, whatsoever is contrary thereunto, & bewayling from our hearts our owne neglect thereof in former tyme, and our polluting ourselves therein with any sinfull inventions of men.

And lastly wee do hereby Coven[an]t & p[ro]mise to further to our utmost power, the best spirituall good of each other, and of all and every one that may become members of this Congregacon, by mutuall Instruction reprehension, exhortacon, consolacon, and spirituall watchfulnes over one another for good; and to be subject in and for the Lord to all the Administracons and Censures of the Congregacon, so farre as the same shall bee guided according to the rules of Gods most holy word.

Of the integrity of our hearts herein wee call God the searcher of all hearts to witness; beseeching him so to blesse us in this and all our Enterprises, as we shall sincerely endevour by the assistance of his grace to observe this holy Coven[an]t and all the braunches of it inviolably for ever; and where wee shall fayle there to wayte upon the Lord Jesus for pardon and for acceptance and healing for his names sake.

Richard Mather:
Nath: Duncan:
George Minot:
Henry Withington
Thomas Jones
John Pope
John Kingesley.

From Dorchester Church Records, pp. 1-2.

APPENDIX B

Yarmouth Church Covenant: June 1643

It is manifest out of Gods word, that God was pleased to walke in a way of Covenant with his people, hee promising to be their God & they promising to be his people. . . . Wee being in the feare of God, desirous to worship & feare him according to hes revealed Will, doe freely, Solemnely & Joyntly Covenant with the Lord in the presence of his Saints & Angells

1. First. That wee will for ever acknowledge & avouch God to be our God in Jesus Christ.

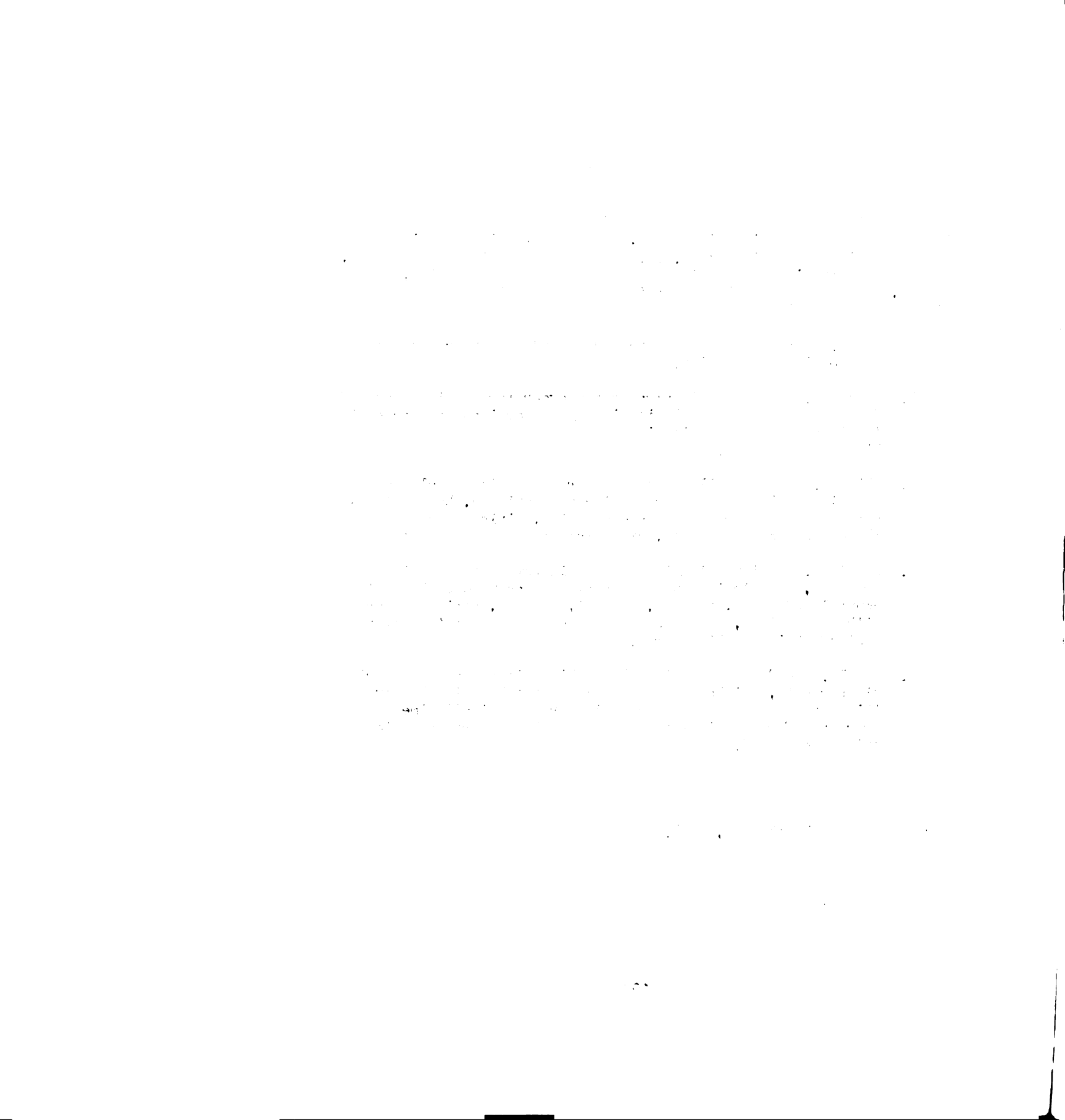
2. Secondly. That we will alwayes endeavour through the grace of God assisting us to walke in his wayes & ordinances & according to his written word which is the only sufficient Rule of good life for every man.

3. Thirdly. Neither will we suffer our selves to be polluted by any sinnefull wayes either publicque or private, but will abstain from the very appearance of evill, giving no offence to the Jew or to the Gentile, or to the Churches of Christ.

4. Fourthly. That we will in all love improve our Communion as Brethren, by watching over one another & as need shall be to counsell Admonish, reprove, comfort, relieve, assist & beare with one another, humbly submitting our selves to the Government of Christ in his Church.

5. Lastly. We doe not promise these things in our owne by Christ his strength, neither doe we confine our selves to the worde of this Covenant but shall account it our duty at all times to imbrace any further light or truth that shall be revealed to us out of Gods word.

From Yarmouth Church Book, p. 4.



APPENDIX C

Covenant of Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin

Wee whose Names are hereunder written do freely give up our hands and hearts to God the Father and his Son Christ Jesus, our onely Lord and Law-giver; and doe unanimously ingage in the fear of the Lord every one of us, to our utmost powers, through the gracious assistance of Gods holy Spirit,

That wee will walk together in one body with one minde, in all sweetnesse of Spirit, and Saint-like love each to other, (as the Disciples of Jesus Christ) and all to the Church. Joh. 15. 12& 13. 34. Rom. 13. 8. Ephes. 5. 2. I Thes. 3. 12. I Joh. 4. 21. &c.

Jointly to contend and strive together in all good and lawful wayes, both by doing and by suffering for the purity of the Gospell, the Truth of Christ, his Ordinances and Orders, the honour and liberty, and priviledges of the Church against all opposers, Jude 3. Gal. 5. 1. 13. &c.

With all care and conscience to study and labour to keepe up the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace, both in the Church in generall, and in particular, between one another, Phil. 2. 1, 2, 3. I Cor. I. 10. Ephes. 4. 3. II Cor. 13. 11, &c.

Carefully to avoid all causes and causers of Davisions (as much as in us lies) and to shun Seducers, false-Teachers of errors or Heresies, Rom. 16. 17, 18. I Tim. 6. 3, 4, 5. Tit. 9. 3. v.g. 10. 2 Job. 10. Rev. 2. 14. 18.

Partaking and fellow-feeling to our power with one another, in every condition, bearing each other burdens, Gal. 6. 2. Heb. 13. 3. I Cor. 12. 25. 2 Tim. 1. 16. &c.

To forbear and bear with one another weaknesses, and infirmities, in much pity, tendernesse, meeknesse and patience, not ripping up the weaknesse of any one to any other, without our Church; nor yet to any within, unless according to Christs rule and Gospel-order, endeavouring all we may for the glory of the Gospel and the credit of his Church to hide and cover one anothers slippings and failings. Ephes. 4. 32. Rom. 14. 13. Rom. 15. 1. Col. 3. 12, 13. I Cor. 13. 4. 7. &c.

And that we will (as the Lord our God shall enable us) to our utmost, cleave close one to another, and every one to the Lord, and cheerfully undergoe the condition and Lot the Lord shall lay upon (this) his Church, whether in persecution or in prosperity, without any wilfull drawing back or falling away from the fellowship or Faith which wee posesse together, Heb. 10. 24, 25, 26, &c to the end, 2 Tim. 4. 10. 16.

If any one Brother or Sister be afflicted, &c fellow-feelingly to be afflicted with that Brother or Sister, and in all Christian wayes we can, to counsell, comfort or assist, and to pray hard for such a Member, I Cor. 12. 26. 2 Thes. 3. 2. Rom. 12. 15. Act. 12. 15.

Freely to contribute and communicate of things temporall and spirituall according to our abilities out of our aboundance both to particular members in want, and also into the Publique-Treasury or Church-stock, I Joh. 3. 17, 18. I Cor. 16. 1, 2. 2 Cor. 9. 5, 6, 7. Rom. 12.

13. I Tim. 6. 17. &c.

Vigilantly to watch over each others conversation, so as to counsell, comfort or correct according to Christs rules in such cases; provoking one another to love and good workes, with brotherly bowels and affections, I Thes. 5. 4. 14. Heb. 3. 12, 13. Heb. 10. 24. Heb. 12. 13, 15, 17. Rom. 15. 14.

Carefully walking together in all holinesse, godlinesse and humility of minde, (to our uttermost) every day and often, and orderly meeting together to the edifying of the body, for the glory of the Gospell, credit of the Church, convincing of our adversaries, and them that are without, Mat. 5. 16. 20. Mal. 3. 16, 17. 2 Tim. 2. 19. II Cor. 7. 1. I Pet. 3. 12. Heb. 12. 14.

Praying continually for the prosperity of this Church; for Gods presence in it, and protection of it, against all the gates of Hell, Phil. 1. 4, 5. Rom. 1. 9. Ephes. 6. 18. Col. 4. 12. Psal. 122. 6. Isa. 62. 6, 7. &c.

And lastly, because differences have formerly arose about a Pastor, we doe freely declare to embrace and owne our brother -- for our Pastor, according to the order of the Gospel; to submit with all ready obedience in the Lord to Christs Ordinances dispensed by him, Ephes. 4. 11. I Cor. 4. 1. II Cor. 5. 18. 19. Heb. 13. 7. 17. 2 Thes. 3. 14. to pray for assistance from the Lord in the administration to him committed, Ephes. 6. 18, 19. Col. 4. 3. 2 Thes. 3. 1, 2. and to esteem of him as the Lord requires, I Cor. 4. 1. I Thes. 5. 12, 13. I Tim. 5. 17. and to adhere and cleave to him in the Lord, 2 Tim. 4. 6. 2 Tim. 1. 16. 18. &c.

All which we doe in the sincerity of our soules declare, promise, purpose and engage to , as our God shall enable us by his own gracious Spirit.

Cited in John Rogers Ohel, pp. 459-461.

APPENDIX D

Declarations of Experience in Receiving Saving Faith given at Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin, c. 1650

The third of these Declarations illustrates the fact that even though a candidate had already given a declaration of his experience at another church, and was approved of and accepted as a member of that church (in this case William Bridge's church at Yarmouth), he still was obliged to relate his experience at Dublin. This was also the practice of the churches of New England, for according to their treatises on polity (e.g., Cambridge Platform, p. 18; and Richard Mather's Church-Government and Church-Covenant Discussed, pp. 28-30), the liberty of each congregation to approve of and admit its own membership, was a basic right and ought not to be jeopardized.

I. Experience of Adrian Strong:

For my life, I was two and twenty yeares a childe of wrath, and then by the word preached, and read out of good Books and the Bible, I was brought in to God: for my precisenesse and walking in the wayes of God, I have been imprisoned twice, Sometimes I have had mony before these troubles, and then my heart was set too much on it; but afterwards I was taken off of all, and then I began to leave swearing and drinking, &c. which I did too much incline to. And ever since as afflictions have growne greater on mee, grace hath growne greater in mee. I was travelling into England; but now I blesse God for this mercy ordained for his Saints, that I can have so sweet fellowship with them here in Dublin.

II. Experience of Sarah Barn-well:

It hath pleased God to exercise me with much afflictions, and his Love was all which drew me to himself and nothing else; but first I lay long under a legall sorrow and grief for sin, and I was then put upon works and duties hard for heaven but I saw I could not get it that way; and in this great Plague-time in this City I was carried further, from the notion to the Power, and to spirituall holinesse, and higher into Christ, yet I used the means much, as praying, preaching, reading,

meditating, &c. and by the Word I was struck home, when Mr. Dunstable teached on the sad condition of some (even Professors) that were in Hell howling! Oh! this sad doctrine struck deep to the heart, and I lay long wounded in my spirit upon it. But it hath pleased God to work upon me in divers wayes; and by his spirit he hath set me free from this bondage, - which mercy I obtained first form the consideration of Gods great Love in Christ, and hereby I was brought to this assurance which I have.

III. Experience of John Spilman Captaine:

Being a member of the Church at Yarmouth in England, of which Mr. Bridges is Pastor, I have given there an account of my faith and life, onely shall say thus much more, that once in a carnall condition as I was, I did slight the Ministers of Christ, especially your long Preachers, and could not abide that any should preach long, but at last I was catched by one, and hee was on Heb. 8. 8. 10. the new Covenant made in Christ, which was applied to me very home, and touched me into the heart, and made me to inquire into my condition, hearing the danger of being out of that Covenant, as it was to bee out of Noah's Arke, and I asked my heart about it, whither I belonged to it or no! but (alas) I lay long in great affliction, and had no satisfaction, nor assurance, so that I knew not what to doe, being under many temptations, sometimes I would heare, and sometimes affected the Ordinances, and sometimes not, and so I continued a while, untill those promises comforted me much in Hosea 1 - 14. I will heal their back-slidings and love them freely, for mine anger is turned away form him. And Heb. 8. 12. For I will be merciful to their unrightousnesse, and their sinnes and iniquities will I remember no more. And that in Rom. 5. 6. In due time Christ dyed for the ungodly. And verse 8. While we were yet sinners. And some other places besides; but yet I questioned whether he dyed for me or no, and that was answered, yes, for me; for I was one of the number of sinners, and ungodly that needed Christ, but being in fears, I went to Mr. Bridges, told him how I was, and indeed he satisfied me very much for the time, but I fell into great trouble after all this, and had a sentence of death within me, and thought I was damned, and utterly lost for all this, still wanting faith, and looking upon my owne actings and graces, till the Lord laid these sayings of Paul to Corinth home close to my heart, Covet the best things, and I tell you yet a more excellent way, and I thought there was yet a better way, but I was a great while troubled, for I was well enough untill I had some sweet enjoyments of Jesus Christ, and then I discovered the most excellent way, which is Christ and nothing but Christ, and then I grew confident, and full of courage and assurance, and loved Christ in all and all that was Christs, and Christ more than all.

From John Rogers, Ohel, pp. 412.(9), 415, 412. (4)-(5).