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## ABSTRACT

### A Study of Presbyterianism in Colonial New England

by

Walter M. Boston, Jr.

The purpose of this study is twofold: first, to show that the New England Churches and their leaders indicated strong tendencies toward Presbyterianism and this enabled them to adopt some presbyterian procedures such as synods and councils similar to those used by English Presbyterians; second, to show New England was the source of the ready acceptance of Presbyterians from Scotland, Ireland, and France in the late 17th Century and the result was the development of a homegrown variety of Presbyterianism in the 18th Century. Church records, both primary and secondary, of New England Congregational and Presbyterian Churches were used in this study.

A STUDY OF PRESBYTERIANISM

IN

COLONIAL NEW ENGLAND

By

Walter M. Boston, Jr.

A THESIS

Submitted to

Michigan State University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

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Department of History

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1971

## DEDICATION

To Abbie, Jennifer, Andrew, and Jacob - without whom none of this would have been possible - thank you and peace.

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#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My thanks and appreciation go to my Committee, Professors Margorie Gesner, Robert E. Brown, and Robert E. Wall, Jr.; Professor Wall, as Committee Chairman, was especially patient and understanding.

In addition, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to Mrs. Doris Swanson, Graduate Studies Secretary, Department of History, Michigan State University; her help and counsel were invaluable.

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## INTRODUCTION

While definitions of Presbyterians have varied, most church historians have defined Presbyterianism as that form of church government in which lay members of the local congregation elect representatives who are called ruling elders, and who direct the life of the church on their behalf. The elders in the local congregations are banded together in an organization known as the session; this body is a legal ecclesiastical group and has charge of the affairs of the church. However, the actions of the session are subject to the supervision of a higher body called the presbytery. A presbytery is composed of the minister and one ruling elder from each congregation in a certain specific area; its members are called presbyters, and all have an equal voice in the affairs of the body. In addition, the presbytery has an advisory power over the local congregations and the actions of the individual sessions. Nevertheless, the decisions of the presbytery like those of the session are not final, for they may be appealed to the next highest body, the synod. The synod is composed of representatives of the clergy and elders in equal numbers from the various presbyteries in a given area, or if the synod so desires of all the members of the presbyteries within its bounds. Above the synod there is a higher court which stands as the last court of appeal; this covers a wider area than a synod and is known as the General Assembly. It is also composed of ministers and elders in equal numbers who have been chosen by the presbyteries to act as their representatives.

Because there are some legislative actions of such an important character in their bearing upon the whole church, the General Assembly may not act alone. These actions must be passed back to the various presbyteries for ratification or rejection, making the presbytery the key body in the governance and control of the church.

The power delegated to these official(s) church courts is such that the lay members of the church have little direct power in the operation of the church. They do have the right, nevertheless, to present to the presbytery their desire for the settlement or dismissal of a pastor. The members of the local congregation can state the terms of which they seek to settle such a pastor. It is, however, the Presbytery that has the final say as to whether the pastoral call shall be allowed, or whether the pastoral relations should be dissolved. Thus it is not possible for a Presbyterian minister to enter into a simple contract between himself and a Presbyterian church. The action and approval of the Presbytery is necessary in each case, and the ordination of men to the gospel is only performed by the presbytery.

At this point a distinction should be drawn between Presbyterians and Independency of the 17th century. Basically, the Independents were on the opposite end of the scale with respect to church polity. The Presbyterians believed and supported a rigid hierarchial church structure as the earlier definition indicated. Opposed to this, the Independents worked for the freedom and independence of each individual congregation. Another distinction between these two groups was that the Presbyterians were intent on imposing a tyrannical church along the

Scottish model while the Independents favored a doctrine of religious toleration. While these distinctions help us identify the two groups, they do not describe in absolute terms the conditions as they existed. J. H. Hexter's investigation of these groups indicated there were "Independents who were not Independents adhering in a larger proportion than Presbyterians who were not Presbyterian to a Presbyterian Church that was not really Presbyterian."<sup>1</sup> It seems quite obvious from this that there is a great deal of confusion between these two groups.

To further complicate an already complicated picture, there is confusion among the Presbyterians. Whenever one wanted to define Presbyterianism there was as Alexander Gordon described many years ago that strange tendency to "run off to Edinburgh or Aberdeen" to find the model of what Presbyterian government ought to be. From the very beginning the English Presbyterians showed indications of differing sharply from the Scottish.<sup>2</sup> For example, in England much greater importance was attached to the individual congregations, and while there were times when the English Presbyterians advocated a hierarchial Presbyterian system with higher courts exercising jurisdiction over the churches, they generally insisted that the synod would be primarily consultive and should not interfere with the sovereign independence of the individual congregations. Even the Scots

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<sup>1</sup>Hexter, J. H., "The Problem of the Presbyterian Independent," in AHR, XLIV, (Oct., 1938), pp. 29-49.

<sup>2</sup>Goring, Jeremy, et. al., The English Presbyterians (Boston, 1968), p. 20.

complained that the English system was not properly Presbyterian.

The purpose of this study will be to show two things: first, that the New England Churches and their leaders indicated strong tendencies toward Presbyterianism and this enabled them to adopt some presbyterian procedures such as synods and councils similar to those used by the English Presbyterians; second, New England was the source of the ready acceptance of Presbyterians from Scotland, Ireland, and France in the late 17th century and the result was the development of a home grown variety of Presbyterianism in the 18th century. Both of these situations existed despite bitter words between the English Presbyterians and the New England Congregationalists. In the process it is hoped this study will shed some light on American church development of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

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## Chapter I

### NEW ENGLAND PRESBYTERIANISM

In a strict sense the churches established by the English Puritans in Seventeenth Century New England were Congregational. However, a careful study indicates that there were many facets of English Presbyterianism present in New England church polity. How this came about is the subject of this chapter.

When the Puritans were setting up their ecclesiastical system in the New World, it seemed natural to them to turn to the forms of church polity with which they were most familiar. Because of their dissatisfaction with the Church of England as they knew it and in particular their unpleasant associations with the English Prelates, they were scarcely in the frame of mind to adopt the Episcopal system. At the same time upon leaving England the Puritans had a decided prejudice against separatism. It is because of these two things that Presbyterian polity appeared to be in a favored position; there was no great antipathy against it, and for some time it had been gaining widespread approval among the members of the Puritan party. In such a situation it was to be expected that the imprint of Presbyterianism would be felt upon whatever type of church government was adopted by the Puritan fathers in New England.

Among the Puritans who came to Massachusetts in the early years of the colony there were some who had been Presbyterian supporters in England. However, since the Church of England had not offered congenial atmosphere for the practice of Presbyterianism it is difficult to estimate what proportion of them had been previously

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attached to its principles.<sup>1</sup> Several writers on this subject have been inclined to accept a statement of Cotton Mather in his ecclesiastical history of early New England in which he indicated that at least four thousand of the first twenty-two thousand settlers had been Presbyterian.<sup>2</sup> While one may hesitate to accept this statement as an indication of an exact number of individual Presbyterians, it does, however, indicate as a point of fact that certainly there were among the Puritans who left England many men of Presbyterian persuasion.

More important for this study is the question of the assimilation of the Presbyterian element in the churches of Massachusetts. A group as large as Mather suggested had to have an impact on the beliefs and practices of the church system of New England. A few, however, tried to introduce a Scottish brand of Presbyterianism. This small minority of ministers and laymen, as we shall see shortly, were the only ones to identify themselves with the adoption of Presbyterianism. The vast majority of Puritans with Presbyterian antecedents appeared to be content with the Presbyterianized Congregationalism of the New England churches, and they were not willing to contend for a more complete form of Presbyterianism as found in Scotland.

Since Presbyterianism was such a growing movement in Old England in the early part of the Seventeenth Century, it was to be expected that certain ministers would attempt to presbyterianize more completely the New England ecclesiastical system. The most vigorous

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<sup>1</sup>James Truslow Adams, Founding of New England (Boston, 1949), pp. 76-77; Robert Thompson, History of the Presbyterian Churches in the United States (New York, 1895), p. 13.

<sup>2</sup>Alexander Blaikie, Presbyterianism in New England, p. 1; Frederick Loetscher, "Presbyterianism in Colonial New England," Journal of the Presbyterian Historical Society, Vol. XI, p. 86.

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attempt in this direction was made by the pastor and teacher Rev. Thomas Parker<sup>3</sup> and Rev. James Noyes<sup>4</sup> of the church at Newbury, Massachusetts. Their intentions were to move the Newbury Church in the direction of a more strict, Scottish type of Presbyterianism; this they did by ignoring the role of the congregation in matters of admission and dismissal from church membership, and in cases of discipline by taking these powers unto themselves as the Elders of the church. It seems the membership of the early New England churches valued highly this limited right to agree or disagree with the decisions of the Elders in these matters.

According to Coffin in his significant study of Newbury, the church was divided into two groups of almost equal size.<sup>5</sup> There was long, fruitless contention in the congregation over this matter. From the statements of those active in the dispute the crucial issue was as follows:

"As for our controversey it is whether God hath placed the power of the elder, or in the whole church, to judge between truth and error, right and wrong, brother and brother, and all things of church concernment."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Rev. Thomas Parker: born in Wilts, England in 1595; studied at Oxford; settled as pastor at Newbury in 1635; died on April 24, 1677; Cotton Mather, Magnalia Christi Americana (Boston, 1852), pp. 481-87.

<sup>4</sup>Rev. James Noyes: born in Choulderton.

<sup>5</sup>Joshua Coffin, Sketch of the History of Newbury (Boston, 1845), p. 73, gives the best documented account of the struggle; for additional material see Mather's Magnalia I, pp. 433-41, Savages, Winthrop's Journal II, p. 137; Alexander Young's Chronicles of the Pilgrims, p. 402.

<sup>6</sup>Coffin, Ibid., p. 87.

The group opposed to the ministers' acting as Elders claimed that the right of participation in such decisions was denied to them and that only the minister exercised the power of discipline.<sup>7</sup> The essence of the trouble lay in the question of whose hands the power of church discipline was committed. The ministers were certain that it should be in the hands of themselves as Elders, while groups of laymen were tenacious about their rights and were exceedingly resentful of any real or supposed encroachment on the congregation or its representatives as elders. The ministers Parker and Noyes definitely favored a more Scottish Presbyterianism method of operating the church; they were suspicious of democracy, and they were persistent in holding to the more Presbyterian manner of doing things. Neither Parker nor Noyes were willing to change their views on the matter; Rev. James Noyes, about four years after the Cambridge Ministerial Convention of 1643, published his views in a tract entitled "The Temple Measured, or a Brief survey of the Temple mystical, which is instituted church of Christ." He said:

"The church is to be carried, not to carry; to obey, not to command; to be subject not to govern. If all members, young and old, children and men, if thousands together must judge and govern upon conscience together with the presbytery, first it must needs interrupt the work; second, it is work enough, a double labor for the elders to instruct the church how to judge. There is more time spent in informing the church, than in determining the case. Third, pride is an epidemical disease in a democratical government. Who is sufficient to hold the reins of authority? Were there

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<sup>7</sup>Coffin, Ibid., p. 87.

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<sup>10</sup>Peter  
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no standing magistrates in the commonwealth,  
and in the church, no governors at all, the  
offspring is like to be an Ichabod Fourth  
confusion and disorder are inevitable."<sup>8</sup>

Neither side would concede; one ecclesiastical council after another met but all were equally unable to resolve the difficulties. The matters in dispute were taken before the Court in Salem without a satisfactory solution. The Ministerial Convention of 1643<sup>9</sup> which was called together to consider the dispute was unable to heal the rupture or to change the views of the Newbury ministers. However, the decision of the Convention proved that the other ministers of New England were not willing to adopt the views of the champions of Presbyterianism. The vast majority of the ministers of New England declared themselves in favor of giving to the lay membership a limited privilege of consent or dissent regarding the action of the Elders. There were other New England pastors who favored the policy of the Newbury ministers. One man we know of in particular. Rev. Peter Hobart,<sup>10</sup> pastor of the Hingham, Mass., church inclined toward the same views. Hubbard in his general History of New England describes Hobart as

"A man well qualified with ministerial abilities,  
though not fully persuaded of the congregational  
discipline as some others were. . . . The pastor  
was reported to be of a Presbyterian spirit,  
and managed all affairs without the advice

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<sup>8</sup>Coffin, Ibid., pp. 72-3; quoted from James Noyes, "The Temple Measured."

<sup>9</sup>Walker, Williston, The Creeds and Platform of Congregationalism (New York, 1893), p. 138.

<sup>10</sup>Peter Hobart was the first minister of Hingham, Mass., beginning in 1635; for additional information on his attitude, and the situation at Hingham see Mather's Magnalia I, pp. 448-52; History of Hingham, Mass., pp. 121, 159, 156; Savage's Winthrop, II, 222, 313.

of the brethren, which divers of the congregation not liking, they were divided into two parts . . ."<sup>11</sup>

It is likewise apparent that his Presbyterianizing tendency was no more acceptable to the members of his church than to those in Newbury. Wherever the ministers as Elders tried to take too much power into their hands the lay members of the Puritan churches of New England were inclined to resent it. Of course part of the trouble at both Hingham and Newbury was undoubtedly due to the dictatorial policies of the pastors themselves. The significant point for this study is the fact that these ministers were not able to win over either their own churches or others to a Presbyterian system. What this seems to illustrate is that from the very beginning there was Presbyterian sentiment in New England, co-existing side by side with Congregationalism. Yet when Presbyterian leaders tried to force their ideas on admission and dismissals, they would meet strong resistance, even within their own churches.

Brief notice should be taken of the effort to change the New England ecclesiastical system in favor of the Presbyterian order by means of political strategy.<sup>12</sup> In the Puritan Commonwealth an attempt was made to restrict the privilege of voting to the minority

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<sup>11</sup>Hubbard, William, A General History of New England (Boston), in Collections of Mass. Historical Society, XV, p. 192, XVI, p. 418.

<sup>12</sup>For a more detailed account of this episode, which has been called a Presbyterian Cabal, see George Lyman Kitteridge's book on Dr. Robert Child, The Remonstrant: also Palfrey, History of New England, II, 166-179; Hubbard, General History of New England, 499-518; Winthrop, History of New England, II, 319-392; Walker, Creeds . . . ., 163-181 passim.

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who were members of the recognized Church. Membership in the church was restricted to those who could give a satisfactory statement of their religious experience, and many in the community did not see it as appropriate to make such a profession. According to the principles of English and Scottish Presbyterianism, all citizens of the community who professed a belief in Christ and desired membership in the church were automatically considered to be members of the church. It has been argued that the disenfranchised residents of Puritan Massachusetts were irked by restriction of their liberties. These supposed malcontents saw Presbyterianism as the solution for their situation. They felt that if a system of church government were adopted that would make all citizens of the community church members they would then have their civil privileges. Nevertheless, the petition which the remonstrants presented to the General Court of Massachusetts in 1646 was denied. This did not stop the malcontents, however, from making a further effort by surreptitiously preparing a petition for the English Parliament, praying that that body would see fit to establish Presbyterianism in New England. Their chances of winning appeared to be fairly good for the Presbyterians were, at the time, in control of English affairs. Doubtless some attempt to Presbyterianize the New England ecclesiastical system would have been made if the Presbyterians had remained in control. Unfortunately for the remonstrants, Cromwell and his army came into control of English affairs in 1647 and he had little sympathy with Presbyterianism. Thus the ecclesiastical polity of the New England Churches was able to continue without

further serious molestation from dissident Presbyterian sources, people who used Presbyterianism to further their desire to democratize the churches of New England.

While the more overt Scottish type of Presbyterianism failed to succeed in New England, and while the direct efforts of men like Hobart, Noyes, and Parker, failed to make immediate Presbyterian changes, the English type of Presbyterianism did move quietly into the Congregational fold without much trouble. The reason for this is quite plain; the New England Congregationalists did not see much difference between the English type of Presbyterianism and their own brand of Congregationalism.

The use of the synod as a means of controlling the various churches and the theology in those churches was one of the very important encroachments of Presbyterianism. This shall be discussed more thoroughly in the next chapter but it is basically a question of how to exert some control over churches which are suppose to be free to decide for themselves what will be done in those particular churches. Under the congregational system, each church is free and independent and need not consult others concerning what goes on in their church. The New England leaders, church and lay, recognized quite early that this would not work. They needed some avenue of exerting control over the churches in the colony. As the next chapter will show, the synod was the ultimate means, although, like the English Presbyterian synod, it would serve more as an advisory group than a legal ecclesiastical court as used by the Scots.

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Another aspect of similarity between the New England Congregationalists and the English Presbyterians was the Confession of Faith adopted by the Westminster Assembly. The Cambridge Synod, considered by scholars to be the most important of all the synods held in New England,<sup>13</sup> adopted the Confession and "put the New England churches, by formal declaration, where they had always been in fact, at one in doctrine with the Puritan party in England,"<sup>14</sup> and in this case the Puritan Party in England were the English Presbyterians.

The position of the elder was another example of similarity between the two groups. The Cambridge Platform states:

"2 The Ruling Elders work is to joyn with the Pastor & Teacher in those acts of spiritual Rule which are distinct from the ministry of the word and Sacraments committed to them. of which sort, these be, as followeth.  
I. to open & shutt the doores of Gods house, by the Admission of members approved by the church: by Ordination of officers chosen by the church: & by excommunication of nortorious & obstinate offenders renounced by the church: & by restoring of poenitents, forgive by the church.  
II. To call the church together when there is occasion, & seasonably to dismiss them agayn.  
III. To prepare matters in private, that in publick they may be carried an end with less trouble, & more speedy dispatch.  
IV. To moderate the carriage of all matters in the church assembled. as, to propound matters to the church, to Order the season of speech & silence; & to pronounce sentence according to the minde of Christ, with the consent of the church.  
V. To be Guides & Leaders to the church, in all matters what-soever, pertaining to

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<sup>13</sup>Walker, Ibid., p. 185.

<sup>14</sup>Walker, Ibid., p. 185.

church administrations & actions.

VI. To see that none in the church live inordinately out of rank & place; without a calling, or Idlely in their calling.

VII. To revent & heal such offenses in life, or in doctrin; as might corrupt the church.

IIIX. To feed the flock of God with a word of admonition.

IX. And as they shall be sent for, to visit, & to pray over their sick brethren.

X. & at other times as opportunity shall serve thereunto."<sup>15</sup>

It would appear from this and the actual practices of the New England churches that the position of the ruling elder was a very important one. Of all the church offices in early New England practice none were discussed as much as that of the ruling eldership. However, the discussion seemed to revolve around theory and practice; to some churches one was more important than the other. The problem seemed to be one in which, as can be noted above in the Cambridge Platform statement, the duties of the elder were too broad and encroached upon the duties and responsibilities of the pastor and the congregation.<sup>16</sup> In actual practice, then, it appears the New England churches like their Presbyterian brethren in England modified the position of elder. The lay membership was given the right of consent of admission, dismissions, and discipline. Yet the clergy performed many of these functions and there appears to be no evidence of dissent on the part of the congregations.<sup>17</sup> The exception to this is the church at Newbury where Parker and Noyes got in trouble with their congregation

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<sup>15</sup>Cambridge Platform, Chap. VII.; Walker, Ibid., pp. 212-13.

<sup>16</sup>I. N. Tarbox, "Ruling Elders in the Early N. E. Churches," Congregational Quarterly, XIV; pp. 401-416 (July, 1872).

<sup>17</sup>Walker, Creeds (Philadelphia, 1893) p. 203ff. Dexter, Congregationalism (New York, 1879), pp. 439-40.

when they insisted on the giving the elders of their church complete control over the church government.<sup>18</sup>

The custom of having elders in the local churches was practiced in the New England churches, another indication of the extent of English Presbyterianism in the Puritan churches. The prevalence of this practice and others prompted Henry Martyn Dexter to say:

"All of which goes to endorse the judgment which we have reached from other sources of evidence, that the early Congregationalism of this country was Barrowism, and not Brownism--a Congregationalized Presbyterianism, or a Presbyterianized Congregationalism--which had its roots in the one system, and its branches in the other."<sup>19</sup>

One of the early concerns of the leaders of the Congregational church was uniformity. How could the local congregations be influenced if they were in error, either in their theology or polity? One method was to question a particular church's judgment by sending them a letter; this was the case when the Salem church chose Roger Williams as their teacher. The General Court in Boston wrote to Endicott to remind him of Williams' refusal to serve a church in Boston because he believed the magistrate could not punish for a breach of the Sabbath. The Court could not understand how Salem could have acted without consulting the magistrates; this followed with a request to "forbear to proceed" until the two groups conferred.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>Larzer Ziff, Career of John Cotton (Princeton, 1962), p. 207.

<sup>19</sup>Dexter, Congregationalism, p. 463.

<sup>20</sup>Winthrop, Journal, I, p. 62.

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Later, in May, 1635, after Williams had become the minister in Salem the General Court took civil action against the Salem people, barred Endicott from the Court for a year, and in July refused the Salem petition for some land "because they had chosen Mr. Williams their teacher, while he stood under question of authority, and so offered contempt to the magistrates."<sup>21</sup> So it would seem that very early in the history of the churches of New England any attempts at independence or autonomy would be checked if they ran counter to the General Court.

In 1653 the General Court again interceded when the Second Church of Boston wanted Michael Powell for its pastor. As the General Court found him objectionable it passed an order concerning preaching without an allowance.<sup>22</sup> Although it was found unsatisfactory and repealed the next session, it nevertheless illustrates the point made earlier, the autonomy of the local churches was questioned early.

While this very official action took place, there was another area of control over local churches that was developing; this was the ecclesiastical council. Professor Dexter clearly indicates that New England Congregationalism is distinguished from Independency by the question of the use of the council. He states that since all local churches belong to the one family of the Lord, they necessarily owe to each other sisterly affection and activity, the normal exercise of which takes the name of the communion of the churches. These councils operated to promote the common good for all the churches;

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<sup>21</sup>Winthrop, Journal, I, p. 155.

<sup>22</sup>Mass. Col. Rec., iii, p. 293, 294, 331.

their next step would be to form councils with greater authority and these would become known as synods.

The polity of the Presbyterian church is such that the synod came after the local congregation and the presbytery in its authority over the various councils. This was not true in New England. Here the synod, or consociations as they were sometimes called, stood after the congregations in order of precedence and authority. However, their power closely resembled the power of the synod in the Presbyterian church.

Between 1637 and 1708 there were seven synods held in New England. All were important in that they showed the New England churches' commitment to the development of the synod as a means towards achieving some uniformity in their churches. It also indicated an inclination toward Presbyterianism and the advantages it offered over the less structured and less disciplined Congregationalism.

A. SYNOD OF 1637:

The first synod held in New England convened at New Town (later to be called Cambridge when it was decided that a university would be founded there) in August, 1637. Composed of all the teaching elders in the colony and led by the Reverends Peter Bulkley and Thomas Hooker who were moderators, this synod was concerned with the disturbances brought on by Anne Hutchinson and John Wheelright. The synod resolved among other things, that private members of the church might ask questions after the sermon, but this should be done wisely and sparingly and with the permission of the elders; however, adverse

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The final act in this drama was played out by the General Court and its conclusion is familiar to all. One circumstance bears mentioning however, and it would seem to indicate that at an early stage of development the new New England way was moving toward the Genevan leaven which was fermenting at home. This circumstance is seen through a statement made after the synod:

"The assembly brake up; and it was propounded by the governour (Winthrop) that they would consider, that, seeing the Lord had been so graciously present in this assembly, that matters had been carried on so peaceably, and concluded so comfortably in all love, etc., if it were not fit to have the like meeting once a year, or, at least, the next year, to settle what yet remained to be agreed, or if but to nourish love, etc. This motion was well liked of all, but it was not thought fit to conclude it."<sup>24</sup>

While some historians have chosen to interpret this as indicating a move away from Presbyterianism which was developing in England, it would seem the opposite was true; that is, that this was an extremely strong statement from the governor of the colony telling all that the churches should meet periodically to settle differences. The use of the terms "in all love" and "to nourish love" meant that all would adhere to the decisions of the meetings. This, then, is another indication that while the leaders of New England talked congregationalism they were in fact leaning more and more toward adopting certain aspects

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<sup>23</sup>A Short Story of the Rise, Reign and Ruine of the Antinomians, Familists & Libertines that infected the Churches of New England: and how they were confuted by the Assembly of Ministers there, etc. (1644); Winthrop I, p. 284-287; Felt I, 311-319.

<sup>24</sup>Winthrop I: p. 2871.

presbyterianism. However, before this is discussed further, there were additional synods that are worth considering.

B. SYNOD OF 1646:

The reasons for the calling of this synod are best understood by going to the order passed by the General Court in May, 1646; this order expressed the desire that the churches of Massachusetts send their Elders and Messengers to sit in a Synod in Cambridge on the 1st of September next ensuing "to discuss, dispute & cleare up, by the word of God, such questions of church government & discipline" in certain points before suggested, and others, "as they shall think needful & meete;" and requested the churches "within the jurisdictions of Plymouth, Connecticut, & New Haven, to send their elders & messenger to the Assembly, . . . who, being so sent, shall be received as parts & members thereof, & shall have like liberty & power of disputing & voting therein, as shall the messengers & elders of the churches within jurisdiction of the Massachusetts."<sup>25</sup> The four churches absent were Boston, Salem, Hingham, and Concord. In the case of Concord it seems they were unable to find someone suitable to attend. Hingham's experiences of the recent past were such they would not see fit to respond to an invitation from the General Court. The more serious absences were Boston, the largest church, and Salem, the oldest church. The exception they took was stated:

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<sup>25</sup>Massachusetts Col. Rec., ii: 155-56.

"I. Because by a grant in the Liberties the elders had liberty to assemble without the compliance of civil authority, 2. It was reported, that this motion came originally from some of the elders, and not from the court, 3. In the order was expressed, that what the major part of the assembly should agree upon should be presented to the court, that they might give such allowance to it as should be meet, hence was inferred that this synod was appointed by the elders, to the extent to make ecclesiastical laws to bind the churches, and to have the sanction of the civil authority put upon them."<sup>26</sup>

Winthrop states that the men who advanced these opinions had just arrived from England where this kind of liberty was sought and allowed by those supporting Independency. This would seem to add to the previously stated opinion of Dexter about the differences between the Independents and the New England Congregationalists.<sup>27</sup> Because of early difficulties, namely the reluctance of four churches to attend and the onset of an epidemic, the initial charge to John Cotton, Richard Mather, and Ralph Partridge to draw up a plan of a Scriptural Model of Church Government was not considered by the Synod as a whole until August 15-25, 1648. The Mather statement was the one finally agreed upon. Of the platform's seventeen sections the sixteenth is the one of particular importance. It is of sufficient import that it deserves to be quoted in its entirety:

"Synods orderly assembled, & rightly proceeding according to the pattern, Acts 15. We acknowledge as the ordinance of Christ: & though not absolutely

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<sup>26</sup>Winthrop, II, p. 329.

<sup>27</sup>Winthrop, II, p. 329.

necessary to the being, yet many times, through the iniquity of men, & perversness of times, necessary to the welbeing of churches, for the establishment of truth, & peace therein.

2. Synods being spiritual & ecclesiastical assemblies, are therefore made up of spiritual & ecclesiasticall causes. The next efficient cause of them under Christ, is the power of the churches, sending forth their Elders, (&) other messengers; who being mett together in the name of Christ, are the matter of a Synod: & they in argueing, debating & determining matters of religion according to the word, & publishing the same to the churches whom it concerneth, doe put forth the proper & formall acts of a Synod; to the convictio of errours, & heresy, & the establishment of truth & peace in the Churches, which is the end of a Synod.
3. Magistrates, have power to call a Synod, by calling to the Churches to send forth their Elders & other messengers, to counsel & assist them in matters of religion: but yett the constituting of a Synod, is a church act, & may be transacted by the churches, even when civil magistrates may be enemyes to churches and to church assemblies.
4. It belongeth unto Synods & counsels, to debate & determine controversies of faith, & cases of conscience; to cleare from the word holy directions for the holy worship of God, & good government of the church; to beare witness against mal-administration & (27) Corruption in doctrine or maners in any particular Church, & to give directions for the reformation therof: Not to exercise Church-censures in way of discipline, nor any other act of church authority or jurisdiction: which that presidentiall Synod did forbear.
5. The Synods directions & determinations, so farr as consonant to the word of God, are to be received with reverence & submission; not only for their agreement therewith (which is the principall ground therof, & without which they bind not at all:) but also secondarily, for the powr wherby they are made, as being an ordinance of God appointed therunto in his word.
6. Because it is difficult, if not impossible, for many churches to come altogether in oneplace, in all their members universally: therefore they

may assemble by their delegates or messengers, as the church of Antioch went not all to Jerusalem, but some select men for that purpose. Because none are or should be more fitt to know the state of the churches, nor to advise of wayes for the good therof then Elders; therefore it is fitt that in the choice of messengers for such assemblies, they have special respect to such. Yet in as much as not only Paul & Barnabas, but certayn others also were sent to Jerusalem from Antioch. Acts 15 & when they were come to Jerusalem, not only the Apostles & Elders, but other brethren also doe assemble, & meet about the matter; therefore Synods are to consist both of Elders, & other church members, endued with gifts, & sent by the churches, not excluding the presence of any brethren in the churches."<sup>28</sup>

The question now arises concerning the authority of the synod. It has been argued that they were only advisory and could not enforce any of their decisions. Chapter Sixteen refutes this argument quite clearly. For example, it states that the synod as a spiritual and ecclesiastical body determines matters of religion according to the word, the word as determined by the synod. It continues by stating that it will establish truth and peace in the churches; I would suggest that this is extensive authority that was given to the synod. In paragraph three of this same chapter, it states that the Magistrates have the power to call a synod; implicit in this is the tremendous authority and prestige of the Magistrates in the colony so that any function they may deem to call amounts to an order for all to hear and obey.

Continuing in paragraph four, the synod is given the power to reform a church that is corrupt in manner and doctrine.

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<sup>28</sup>Walker, Creeds, p. 233-34.

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While there is a caution against censuring a church, in actual practice the men at the synod as the most powerful and prestigious church leaders in the colony had the ultimate of influence over individual churches they might be trying to reform. This is emphasized in paragraph five which declared that not only were the churches to receive the statements of the synod with reverence and submission but the power of the synod was that of an ordinance from God. It would seem quite difficult if not impossible for a particular church in Massachusetts or Connecticut to go against an eminent group of laymen and clergy meeting together as a synod.

The results of the synod were presented to the Churches and the General Court in 1649 and in October of that year the Court judged:

"it is meete to coment it to the judicyous and pious consideracion of the severall churches within this jurisdiccon, desiring a retourne from them at the next Gennerll Courte hou farr it is suitable to their judgments and app. bacon, before the Courte p.ceeds any farhter therein."<sup>29</sup>

After a few minor objections were satisfied, the Court in October, 1651, thanked all concerned and voted "to give their testimony to the said booke of discipline, that, for the substance thereof, it is that wee have practised and doe believe."<sup>30</sup> This would seem to remove any doubt regarding the power of this particular synod with respect to the declaration of the General Court and the various churches.

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<sup>29</sup>Mass. Col. Rec., iii: 178.

<sup>30</sup>Mass. Col. Rec. iv (I): 57, 58.

Henry Martyn Dexter has maintained that the synods were for advice and for the moral power of persuasion only, but again this does not appear to be the case when one reviews the statements of the synod and the support they received from the General Court.

C. SYNOD OF 1662

Next to the Cambridge Synod, perhaps the most famous synod held in New England was the Half Way Covenant Synod, also known as the Synod of 1662.<sup>31</sup>

The concern of those who met at the Synod of 1662 was the extension of the baptism rites to those who were outside the covenant. When the meeting had ended the decision would mark a new period in the history of New England orthodoxy. While the decision to extend baptism was made and while it would have the full weight of the majority of the members of the synod, the controversy over the Half Way Covenant would rage into the eighteenth century. Nevertheless, the decision was made and the power of the synod would carry the day.

Next, it was the General Court's task to consider the proposals. Although the Court rejected the proposals temporarily, later "the Court, on their perusall, judged it meete to commend the same unto consideration of all the churches & people of this jurisdiction, and for that end ordered the printing thereof."<sup>32</sup> At this point both the church through the synod and the State through

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<sup>31</sup>Many books and articles have discussed this synod; the best are ones written by Edmund Morgan, Visible Saints (Ithaca, 1962), and Robert Pope, The Half-Way Covenant (Princeton, 1969).

<sup>32</sup>Massachusetts Records, 4, Part 2, p. 62.

the General Court stood by the finding of the Synod. The majority of the churches accepted this new doctrine, but there were a few who showed continued reluctance; these two groups were divided between churches which believed that this new covenant was too liberal and would destroy the purity of their churches of visible saints and those churches like Northampton which believed that the synod had not gone far enough by extending the sacrament of holy communion to all. The first group which we could call conservative would divide again into two groups: the very strict Congregationalist and the Baptists. Those who remained and might be called the liberals constituted the vast majority and tended more and more toward a presbyterian form of church governance through the clergy and elders. This group was strongly controlled by the belief that the church in New England needed guiding controls to keep it on the true path of the church as perceived by the leaders; the way of maintaining this control was through the synod and the General Court. This was done quite successfully as the various synods proved.

#### D. SYNOD OF 1679

In the Spring of 1679 after the colonies of New England had suffered many calamities such as sickness and Indian wars, the feeling quickly developed that God was for some reason displeased with his elect. Consequently, the reverend Elders of the Massachusetts Colony petitioned the General Court to take action. The response was to order a Synod called which met September 10-20, 1679. Two questions were to be considered:

"Quaest. I. What are the euills that haue provoked the Lord to bring his judgments on New England?

2. Quaest. What is to be donn that so many evils may be reformed?"<sup>33</sup>

The Synod spent several days discussing the subject; the result was written and refined by a committee and their report was unanimously adopted by the Synod. As one would expect from past experience, the General Court at its October session approved the actions of the Synod and commended it to the people, "to the serious consideration of all the churches and people." The Court further enjoined and required:

"All persons in their seuerall capacities concerned, to a careful and diligent reformation of all those provoking evils mentioned therein, according to the true intent thereof, that so the anger and displeasure of God, which hath binn many wayes manifested, maybe averted from this poore people, and his favour and blessing obteyned, as in former tjimes."<sup>34</sup>

With this strong endorsement, the Synod was very successful in the good effect it had on the people; many ministers were inspired to work harder with their people, resulting in many churches renewing their covenant with God.<sup>35</sup>

There was more evidence that this Synod was moving the churches of New England toward a much broader base than had previously been thought possible. On re-reading the order by the Court calling the Synod, one finds that the reverend elders had asked that the Synod be held "for the reuisall of the platforme of discipline agreed

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<sup>33</sup>Mass. Col. Rec., V: 215.

<sup>34</sup>Mass. Col. Rec., V: 244.

<sup>35</sup>Mather, Magnalia, V, 95.

upon by the churches, in 1647, and what else may appeare necessary for the preventing schishmes, haeresies, prophaness, & the establishment of the churches in one faith & order of the gospell;" and the Court directed the body to assemble "for the ends aforesaid."<sup>36</sup>

Thus it would seem that the first order of business was to consider how those present at the Synod felt about the Cambridge Platform. Some time was spent early in the Synod to read and consider the platform, after which they "unanimously approve of the said Platform, for the Substance of it; desiring that the Churches may continue steadfast in the Order of the Gospel, according to what is therein declared from the Word of God."<sup>37</sup>

Cotton Mather, writing less than twenty years after the Synod of 1679, believed this phrase to be one of qualification. Continuing he specifies four areas where the Current New England opinion had departed from the Platform. Of these four points the fourth is the one in which a movement towards a Presbyterianism previously denied by the reverend elders is very obvious. The fourth point is concerned with the admission of members to the church and it "hath been as Difficult as any of the rest" to be considered. In the Platform it advised that the "weakest measure" be used to determine real faith and "that a personal and publick confession, and declaring of Gods manner of working upon the soul, is both lawful,

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<sup>36</sup>Mass. Col. Rec., V: 215.

<sup>37</sup>Mather, Magnalia, V: 39.

expedient and useful."<sup>38</sup> While some churches maintained a very severe examination, many were adopting a practice where the minister determined who would be admitted to privileges of church membership and then he communicated his satisfaction to the church membership.<sup>39</sup> Cotton Mather's explanation agrees with other sources and would seem to indicate that when the New England churches passed into the eighteenth century many were openly avowing that baptism and a morally correct life entitled a person to full communion in the Lord's Supper without his having to prove his piety to the clergy or elders. Of course there were those who were not yet prepared to go this far, but they appeared to acquiesce in such a view to the degree that it produced "no troublesome Variance or Contention among them."<sup>40</sup>

Another problem discussed at the time of the Synod of 1679 was the differences in regard to the seat and amount of power over churches as well as in the churches themselves. Here the discussion of the power of synods entered and we find the clergy at Cambridge advanced so far to teach that:

Synods being of Apostolical example, recommended as a necessary Ordinance, it is but reasonable, that their Judgment be acknowledged as Decisive, in the Affairs for which they are ordained; and to deny them the Power of such Judgment, is to render a necessary Ordinance of none effect."<sup>41</sup>

It was admitted that there were certain items that the Elders should

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<sup>38</sup>Platform, Chap. xii, Sec. 5.

<sup>39</sup>Mather, Magnalia, V: 226. Ratio Disciplinae, etc., 88.

<sup>40</sup>Ratio Disciplinae, etc., 84.

<sup>41</sup>Mather, Magnalia, V: 45.

take to the membership of the particular church for their advise and opinion:

"Nevertheless, the Pastor of a Church may be himself Authoritatively suspend from the Lord's Table a Brother accused or suspected of a Scandal, till the Matter may and should be regularly examined. . . . The Elders of the Church, have a Negative on the Votes of the Brethren; who, indeed, in the Exercise of their Liberty and Privilege are under the conduct of the Elders. To take away the Negative of the Elders, or the Necessity of their Consent unto such Acts, indeed is to take away all Government whatsoever, And it is to turn the whole regimen of the Church into a pure Democracy. And, if the Positive of the Brethren can supercede a Negative of the Elders, either the Elders may be driven to do things quite contrary unto the Light of their Conscience or else the Brethren may presume to do things which belong not unto them."<sup>42</sup>

More and more as we move toward the eighteenth century we find the pastor having the specific veto power over the whole church. The College of Elders or the Barrowistic Presbytery as Dexter called it as established by the Cambridge Platform had disappeared in the majority of churches in New England, if it ever really existed in the first place. An illustration of this is the case of the Reverend Samuel Fisk, pastor of the Salem church from 1718 to 1735; he dispensed with church meeting entirely and when a church meeting was held to consider some of his actions occasioned by his official conduct, he refused to comply with their findings and recommendations.<sup>43</sup>

Finally we have the account of what took place in Taunton, Massachu-

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<sup>42</sup>N. E. Cong., etc., 111.

<sup>43</sup>The Christian History, etc., of the Revival and Propagation of Religion (1743), i: 110.

setts, in the early spring of 1705; one of the results of the Half Way Covenant Synod was that many churches renewed their covenant with God. In many cases the freedom of the Synod's actions permitted those who were not regenerate to enter into the covenant with the already-churched members. The Reverend Samuel Danforth described his church in Taunton response this way:

"It was a most comfortable Day the first of March when we renew'd the Reformation Covenant . . . only we added an Engagement to reform Idleness, unnecessary frequenting Houses of public Entertainment, irreverent Behaviour in Public Worship, Neglect of Family-Prayer, Promise-breaking, and walking with Slanderers and Reproachers of others; and that we should all in our Families be subject to good Orders and Government. It was read to the Brethren and Sisters (those who were already members of the church) in the Forenoon; they standing up as an outward Sign of their inward Consent, to the rest of the Inhabitants. In the Afternoon they (those who were not members of the church) standing up also when it was read; and then every one that stood up, brought his Name ready writ in a Paper, and put into the Box, that it might be put on Church Record.... We gave Liberty to all Men and Women Kind, from sixteen Years old and upwards to act with us; and had three hundred Names given in to list under Christ, against the Sins of the Times.... We have a hundred more that will yet bind themselves in the Covenant, that were then detained from Meeting. Let God have the Glory."<sup>44</sup>

There seems then to be very little question that the Congregational churches of New England were in actuality exhibiting definite strains of Presbyterianism. Those who feared the very word Presbyterian were thinking of the very formal, highly structured form of Scottish

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<sup>44</sup>The Christian History, etc., of the Revival and Propagation of Religion (1743), i: 110.

Presbyterianism, while in fact the men of New England knew there were many similarities between what they called Congregationalism and the English Presbyterianism of their day. This was shown most clearly in the Heads of Agreement, a document which attempted to move the Congregationalists and Presbyterians closer together

E. HEADS OF AGREEMENT, 1691

The individuals responsible for the Heads of Agreement were Mathew Mead, the pastor of a large Congregational church at Stepney (then a suburb of London), John Howe, an ex-Congregationalist but a man who believed very strongly in modifying the differences among the Congregationalist, Presbyterians, and the Church of England people, and Increase Mather, then serving as the agent of the Massachusetts Colony in England.<sup>45</sup> Mather is credited with being the man with the strongest influence in the forming of the eventual union. Undoubtedly the final agreement was a compromise but not as much at the expense of the English Presbyterians as some have suspected; as stated before and is in part the sub-thesis of this paper, the English and Scottish Presbyterians differ significantly on church polity.

Unquestionably the Heads of Agreement had the greatest impact on the New England churches. Increase Mather's son Cotton preached two very laudatory sermons on the Agreement as well as having the document printed and circulated throughout New England in 1692.

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<sup>45</sup>Walker, Creeds, 444-45.

Ten years later the Heads of Agreement was given a very honored place beside the other New England symbols in the Magnalia; Cotton Mather called the Agreement the best possible exposition of existent Congregationalism. Several parts of the statement, however, indicate that it was not strictly Congregationalism anymore, but was tending toward Presbyterianism.

The first of these statements concerns membership in the church; the Congregationalist supporter would argue that an individual had to prove before the congregation that he was a saint person; usually this was accomplished through relating some religious experience. Later, many churches amended this practice to permit an individual seeking admission to the church to relate his experience to the pastor or the elders or both. On the Presbyterian side all were welcomed to the church if they professed certain beliefs and were known to have lived a good life. In the Heads of Agreement it states:

"3. That none shall be admitted as Members, in order to Communion in all the special Ordinances of the Gospel, but such persons as are knowing and sound in the fundamental Doctrines of the Christian Religion, without Scandal in their Lives; and to a Judgment regulated by the Word of God, are persons of visible Godliness and Honesty; credibly professing cordial subjection to Jesus Christ.

4. A competent Number of such visible Saints, (as before described) do become the capable Subjects of stated Communion in all the special Ordinances of Christ, upon their mutual declared consent and agreement to walk together therein

according to Gospel Rule. In which declaration, different degrees of Explicitness, shall no way hinder such Churches from owning each other, as Instituted Churches."<sup>46</sup>

Those who have argued that this was a compromise in favor of the Congregationalists are mistaken; the above statement indicates a tendency toward more open membership, not the extremely restrictive requirements thought to have been presented by the various churches in New England of the seventeenth century.

Another problem presented by this definition of differences between Presbyterian and Congregational concerns the power of the congregation compared to the power of the pastor and the elders. It has been argued that in the Congregational churches the people were consulted on almost every matter and could as a group overrule the elected elders and the pastor. However, we find this was not the case and find in the Heads of Agreement this statement:

"7. In the Administration of Church Power, it belongs to the Pastors and other Elders of every particular church (if such there be) to Rule and Govern: and the Brotherhood to Consent, according to the Rule of the Gospel."<sup>47</sup>

In another matter of what has been taught was common Congregational church polity is the "electing" of a minister for a particular church. Again it had always been thought that each church was the first and only party in the decision that a man was to be pastor of a church,

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<sup>46</sup>Walker, Ibid., p. 457.

<sup>47</sup>Walker, Ibid., p. 458.

without outside considerations or consultations. While this may have been practiced in a few churches, generally there was the feeling that others in the colony should be consulted so that unqualified men would not be accepted by churches. In fact, it was an attempt on the part of the ruling elders and pastors of the colony to maintain some understandable standards. The Heads of Agreement clearly states this premise.

"4. That in so great and weighty a matter as the calling and chusing a Pastor, we jugd it ordinarily requisite, That every such Church consult and advise with the Pastors of Neighboring Congregations.

5. That after such Advice the Person consulted about, being chosen by the Brotherhood of that particular Church over which he is to be set, and he accepting, be duly ordained, and set apart to his Office over them; wherein 'tis ordinarily requisite, That the pastors of Neighbouring Congregations concur with the Preaching-Elder, or Elders, if such there be.

6. That whereas such Ordination is only intended for such as never before had been ordained to the Ministerial Office; . . . .

7. It is expedient, that they who enter on the work of Preaching the Gospel, be not only qualified for Communion of Saints; but also that, except in cases extraordinary, they give proof of their Gifts and fitness for the said work, unto the Pastors of Churches, of known abilities to discern and judge of their qualifications; That they may be sent forth with Solemn Approbation and Prayer; which we judge needful, that no doubt may remain concerning their being Called to the Work; and for preventing (as much as in us lieth) Ignorant and rash Intruders."<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>48</sup>Walker, Ibid., p. 460.

Again to repeat, it is obvious that a church's choice of minister was not exclusively its own. Many others in the colony were involved and it would appear from the statement above that these others had something very close to a veto over the choice of the individual candidate chosen by the particular church.

The discussion of the independence of the Congregational churches next considers the subject of the relationship between churches. As pointed out previously each church congregation was believed to be completely independent, an often propounded tenet of congregational polity. In the Heads of Agreement it states:

"1. We Agree, that Particular Churches ought not to walk so distinct and separate from each other, as not to have care and tenderness towards one another. But their Pastors ought to have frequent meetings together, that by mutual Advice, Support, Encouragement, and Brotherly intercourse, they may strengthen the hearts and hands of each other in the ways of the Lord.

3. That known Members of particular churches, constituted as aforesaid, may have occasional Communion with one another in the Ordinances of the Gospel, viz. the Word, Prayer, Sacraments, Singing Psalms, dispensed according to the mind of Christ: Unless that Church, with which they desire Communion, hath any just exception against them."<sup>49</sup>

Communion between churches does not end here for the statement continues:

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<sup>49</sup>Walker, Ibid., p. 460.

"1. We agree, That in order to concord, and in any other weighty and difficult cases, it is needful, and according to the mind of Christ, that the Ministers of several Churches be consulted and advised with about such matters.

2. That such Meetings may consist of smaller or greater Numbers, as the matter shall require.

3. That particular Churches, their respective Elders, and Members, ought to have a reverential regard to their judgment so given, and not dissent therefrom, without apparent grounds from the word of God."<sup>50</sup>

This is some very strong language, and it would seem the churches of the colony were put in a position that it was extremely difficult not to obey or follow the practices of the councils.

#### F. THE PROPOSALS OF 1705

These last meetings came at a time when there was great concern in Massachusetts and Connecticut over the prevalent strictness of some of the churches. The controversey is best illustrated by the sharply contrasting philosophies present in the intellectual center of the Commonwealth, Boston. This difference took the form of two separate camps, the make-up of which has been grossly misunderstood. For example, historians have described the two different philosophies as conservative and liberal; the conservatives led by Increase Mather, teacher of the Second Church of Boston, and the liberals led by William and Thomas Brattle, John Leverett, Ebenezer Pemberton and Benjamin Colman.

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<sup>50</sup>Walker, Ibid., p. 461.

While some have argued that the conservatives were representing a return to more strict Congregationalism and that the liberals were representing a move toward more Presbyterianism, this does not seem to be supported by the facts of the situation. Receiving support from his son, Cotton Mather, and other ministers like James Allen of the Boston First Church, John Higginson and Nicholas Noyes of Salem, William Hubbard of Ipswich, Samuel Cheever of Marblehead, and Joseph Gerrish of Wenham, Increase Mather believed that the true method of improving the religious conditions of New England was to be found in returning to the principles of the colony's early founders as stated in the Cambridge Platform. This meant that discipline would be enforced in the churches and churches would be watched over by councils, thus preventing the development of looser discipline and procedure; what this really meant was that there would be an increase in ministerial and synodical authority.

The means by which these men tried to achieve their objectives became apparent in September, 1705, when an Association of ministers met and considered what we know as the Proposals of 1705. Agreement among those attending came in November of that same year. Generally what they attempted was to answer this question:

"What further Steps are to be taken, that the Councils may have due Constitution and Efficacy in supporting, preserving, and well ordering the Interests of the Churches in the Country?"<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>51</sup>John Wise, Churches Quarrel Espoused, pp. 1-4.

The answers to this question are extremely significant because they show the direction the churches of New England had taken throughout most of the seventeenth century; the answers also represent the thinking of those who heretofore had been considered conservative and the purporters of formal and strict Congregationalism. Consequently, the answers are quoted directly:

"1st, That the Ministers of the Country form themselves into Associations, that may meet at proper times to Consider such things as may properly lie before them, Relating to their own faithfulness towards each other, and the common Interest of the Churches; and that each of those Associations have a Moderator for a certain time, who shall continue till another be Chosen, who may call them together upon Emergencies.

In these Associations,  
2dly, That Questions and Cases of importance, either provided by themselves or by others presented unto them, should be upon due deliberation Answered.

3dly, That Advice be taken by the Associated Pastors from time to time, e're they Proceed to any action in their Particular Churches, which be likely to produce any imbroilments. That the Associated Pastors do Carefully and Lovingly treat each other with that watchfulness which may be of Universal Advantage; and that if any Minister be accused to the Association whereto he belongs, of Scandal or Heresie, the matter shall be there examined, and if the Associated Ministers find just accusation for it, they shall direct to the Calling of a Council, by whom such an offender is to be proceeded against.

4thly, That the Candidates of the Ministry undergo a due Tryal by some one or other of the Associations, concerning their Qualifications for the Evangelical Ministry; and that no particular Pastor or Congregation Employ any one in Occasional Preaching, who has not been Recommended by a Testimonial under the Hands of some Association.

5thly, That they should together be consulted by Bereaved Churches, to Recommend to them such Persons as may be fit to be employed amongst them for present Supply, from whom they may in due time proceed to chuse a Pastor.

6thly, That hereunto may be referred the Direction of Proceeding in any of their particular Churches, about the Convening of Councils that shall be thought necessary, for the Welfare of the Churches.

7thly, That the several Associations in the Country, maintain a due Correspondence with one another, that so the state of Religion may be better known and secured in all the Churches, and particularly it is thought necessary to the well-being of these Churches, that all the Associations of the Country meet together by their Respective Delegates once in a year.

8thly, And finally, that Ministers Disposed to Associate, endeavour in the most efficacious manner they can, to Prevail with such Ministers as unreasonably neglect such Meetings with their Brethren in their proper Associations, that they would not expose themselves to the Inconveniencies that such Neglects cannot but be attended withal.

Second Part, It is Proposed,

1st, That these Associated Pastors, with a proper Number of Delegates from their several Churches, be formed into a standing or stated Council, which shall Consult, Advise and Determine all Affairs that shall be proper matter for the consideration of an Ecclesiastical Council within their respective Limits, except always, the Cases are such as the Associated Pastors judge more convenient to fall under the Cognizance of some other Council.

2dly, That to this end these Associated Pastors, with their Respective Churches, shall Consociate and Combine according to what has been by the Synods of these Churches recommended, that they act as Consociated Churches in all holy Watchfulness and Helpfulness towards each other; and that each Church choose and depute one or more to Attend their Pastor, as Members of the Council in their Stated Sessions, or occasionally, as Emergencies shall call for.

3dly, That these Messengers from the several Consociated Churches shall be chosen once a year at the least.

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4thly, It is propounded, as that which from our beginning has been Recommended, that the Churches thus Consociated for these purposes, have a stated time to meet in their Council, and once in a year seems little enough, that they may Inquire into the Condition of the Churches, and Advise such things as may be for the Advantage of our holy Religion. But the more particular time is best left to the Determination of each respective Association.

5thly, That the Associations shall Direct when there is Occasion for this Council to Convene, on any Emergency, and shall direct whether the whole, or only a certain Number of these Consociated Pastors and Churches shall Convene on such Occasions.

6thly, It appears agreeable to the present Condition of our Churches, and from our beginnings acknowledged, That no Act of the Councils are to be reckoned as Concluded and decisive, for which there has not been the Concurrence of the Major part of the Pastors therein concerned.

7thly, The Determinations of the Councils thus Provided, for the necessities of the Churches, are to be looked upon as final and decisive, except agrieved Churches and Pastors have weighty Reasons to be the contrary, in which cases there should be Provision for a further hearing; and it seems proper that the Council Convened on this occasion, should consist of such Pastors as may be more for number than the former, and they should be such, as shall be directed to, and convened for this purpose by the Ministers of an Association, near to that whereto these of the former Council belonged, unto which the agrieved should according apply themselves, and in this way expect a final issue.

8thly, If a particular Church will not be Reclaimed by Council from such gross Disorders as plainly hurt the common Interest of Christianity, and are not meer tolerable differences in Opinion, but are plain Sins against the Command & Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Council is to declare that Church no longer fit for Communion with the Churches of the Faithful; and the Churches represented in the Council, are to Approve, confirm and Ratifie the Sentence, and with-draw from the Communion of the Church that would not be healed; Nevertheless, if any Members of the disorderly Church, do not

justifie their Disorders, but suitably testifie against them, these are still to be received to the wonted Communion by the Churches; and if after due waiting, the Church be not recovered, they may upon [Advice] be actually taken in as Members of some other Church in the Vicinity.

These Proposals were Assented to by the Delegates of the Association, eet according to former Agreement, at B. \_\_\_\_\_. September 13th, 1705. To be Commended to the several Associated Ministers in the several parts of the Country, to be duly Considered, that so, what may be judged for the Service of our Great Lord, and his Holy Churches, may be further Proceeded in."

The formal approval by the Minister's Convention took place on May 30, 1706, and there is little doubt that these proposals represented a wide-spread feeling in New England favoring a stricter church government. It is also significant that this feeling was shared by such liberals as Ebenezer Pemberton and Benjamin Colman. As a consequence, there is no substance to the argument that these proposals represented the work of a small faction of ministers led by the Mather's; in fact these proposals represented the vast majority of Boston churches and their leaders.<sup>52</sup>

Despite some powerful support, the Proposals failed to produce the results desired by its advocates, participants and writers. The reasons for this is quite simple; for the first time in the history of synods in New England the General Court refused to support the Proposals and without this support, a stricter church system in Massachusetts was impossible. Governor Joseph Dudley, no friend of

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<sup>52</sup>Walker, Creeds, p. 491.

Congregationalism or of Presbyterianism, showed that clerical influence of the past in Massachusetts had ended; he did this by withholding his support of the Proposals. This does not, however, detract from the importance of the Proposals, for it is what they represented in the minds of the ministers of Massachusetts that is significant. It is a fact that the Proposals represent the culmination of several decades of thought in Massachusetts, all beginning with the Cambridge Platform; it also indicates that the conservatives and some of the liberals may have accepted certain forms of Presbyterianism.

G. THE SAYBROOK PLATFORM OF 1708

While the Proposals were failing to take hold in Massachusetts, similar and related proposals were progressing and eventually succeeding in Connecticut. One only has to compare the proposals and the Saybrook platform to find that those who wrote the later had read the Massachusetts' Proposals of 1705. The calling of the Saybrook synod also indicated that the thought present in Connecticut was quite similar to that of Massachusetts. This can be seen by reading the Connecticut General Court's call for a synod;

"This Assembly, from their own observation and from the complaint of many others, being made sensible of the defects of the discipline of the churches of this government, arising from the want of a more explicate asserting the rules given for that end in the holy scriptures, from which arise a firm establishment amongst ourselves, a good and regular issue in cases subject to ecclesiastical discipline, glory to Christ our head, and edification to his members, hath seen fit to ordein and require, and it is by authoritie of the same ordeined and required, that the ministers of

the churches in the several counties of this government shall meet together at their respective counties towns, with such messengers as the churches to which they belong shall see cause to send with them on the last Monday in June next, there to consider and agree upon those methods and rules for the management of ecclesiastical discipline which by them shall be judged agreeable and conformable to the word of God, and shall at the same meeting appoint two or more of their number to be their delegates, who shall all meet together at Saybrook, at the next Commencement to be held there, when they shall compare the results of the ministers of the several counties, and out of and from them to draw a form of ecclesiastical discipline which by two or more persons delegated by them shall be offered to this Court at their sessions at Newhaven in October next, to be considered of and confirmed by them, and that the expense of the above mentioned meetings be defrayed out of the publick treasury of this Colonie."<sup>53</sup>

The synod met at Saybrook on September 9, 1708, and while there is no record of their daily discussions we know what the final results of the Synod were. It seems its first decision involved adding the Savoy Confession as adopted by the Massachusetts Synod of 1680 to the Platform as the doctrinal basis of the Connecticut churches. Next they adopted the Heads of Agreement, a statement which the Mathers believed was the best exposition of Congregationalism but was in fact more Presbyterian in its polity.

Before the calling and meeting of this synod the county delegates were asked to prepare statements concerning church discipline.

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<sup>53</sup>Walker, Ibid., pp. 499-500.

When the synod met they considered each statement and decided on the one by the New Haven delegates. The result was fifteen "Articles for the Administration of Church Discipline" and this was to be the very heart of the polity of the Connecticut churches. It was in this statement that we find the culmination of what had been developing in New England throughout the seventeenth century. While terms like association and consociation are used they are in fact presbyteries and synods in the English Presbyterian sense. Later in this paper we will discuss the impact of this platform on the relations between the Connecticut churches and the Presbyterians of the Middle Colonies, but suffice to say that the cooperation between the two groups was extensive.

As further evidence of the importance the churches of Connecticut placed on this Platform, it was sent immediately to the General Court for its approval. It was enacted into law on October, 1708, with this statement:

The Reverend Ministers delagates from the elders and messengers of the churches in this government, met at Saybrook, September 9th, 1708 having presented to this Assembly a Confession of Faith, Heads of Agreement, and Regulations in the Administration of Church Discipline, as unanimously agreed and consented to by the elders and messengers of all the churches in this government: This Assembly do declare their great approbation of such a happy agreement, and do ordain that all the churches within this government that are or shall be thus united in doctrine, worship, and discipline be, and for the future shall be owned and acknowledged established by law. Provided always, that nothing herein shall be intended and construed to hinder or prevent any society or church that is or shall be allowed by the

laws of this government, who soberly differ or dissent from the united churches hereby establish, from exercising worship and discipline in their own way, according to their consciences.<sup>54</sup>

It appears that the Hartford and New London Counties accepted the Platform as it came from the Synod, but New Haven found it too strict and Fairfield found it too liberal. Consequently the Fairfield group met as a council on March 16 and 17, 1709, and agreed to a document that was more strict in church discipline than the Saybrook Platform, in that it had a more judicial tone.<sup>55</sup> For example the Consociation became a full fledged church court with the power to excommunicate a delinquent church. Walker states that this "was an interpretation not far removed from Presbyterianism."<sup>56</sup>

To summarize to this point, we can see the movement of the New England churches away from the independency they had been supporting. They had moved steadily toward a presbyterian-styled church, one in which the clergy and elders with the cooperation of the General Court's control the religious life of the colony. They had no intention of giving up any power to the independency movement; they wanted to control what was being preached in the pulpit by deciding who would preach in their churches and thereby control what was preached.

Our next effort is to consider who some of the leaders were in the various synods and hopefully to better understand these synods and their polity.

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<sup>54</sup>Conn. Records, V: 50.

<sup>55</sup>Orcutt, History of the Old Town of Stratford and the City of Bridgeport, (New Haven), 1886, I: 312-13.

<sup>56</sup>Walker, Creeds, p. 510.

## Chapter II

### PRESBYTERIANISM IN CONNECTICUT

During the 17th and early 18th centuries the Congregational Churches of Connecticut practiced a Presbyterian type of church polity. This trend in Connecticut results from the Presbyterian influences in 17th century New England - the synod system and the presences of actual Presbyterians.

The churches of Connecticut sprang from the same impulse which sent the English Puritans to the Bay Colony. Some of the early settlers of Connecticut had first migrated to Massachusetts, and then, for various reasons, moved to the attractive Connecticut River valley. The important sites were the settlement of Windsor, Hartford, and Wethersfield under the leadership of Thomas Hooker, Samuel Stone, John Haynes, and Roger Ludlow. This group sold their holdings in Newtown, Watertown, Roxbury, and Dorchester, and migrated to the Hartford area,<sup>1</sup> where they established the same type of churches of the Bay Colony. In other words, the churches of Connecticut followed the commonly accepted practices and patterns of Puritan New England.<sup>2</sup>

In Connecticut the early ministers the Massachusetts churches defended the way of the churches of Christ in New England against those who attacked the validity of their system of church government.

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<sup>1</sup>Trumbull, A Complete History of Connecticut (New Haven, 1818), pp. 58-68.

<sup>2</sup>Walker, G. L., History of the First Church in Hartford (Hartford, 1884), pp. 133-38.

The Rev. John Davenport, the first pastor of the New Haven congregation, wrote a strong defense of the New England polity in his answer<sup>3</sup> to "A Letter of Many Ministers in Old England, requesting the Judgement of their Reverend Brethren in New England concerning Nine Positions, written Anno Dom. 1637". One of the ablest developments of the position of the New England churches came from the pen of Rev. Thomas Hooker of Hartford when he wrote his treatise entitled "A Survey of the Summe of Church-Discipline" in reply to the publication of the Rev. Robert Rutherford of Scotland on "The Due Right of Presbyteries, etc.," in which he had advocated the government of the Church of Scotland.<sup>4</sup> These facts are mentioned because they indicate a certain amount of unanimity among the early Puritan ministers of New England on the subject of church polity.

Whenever the ministers of Connecticut participated in the general convention of New England churches, they did so on equal terms. At two of the most important gathering of the early New England ministers, the so-called Cambridge Synod of 1637 and the Ministerial Convention of 1643, Thomas Hooker of Hartford, Connecticut was chosen one of the co-moderators.<sup>5</sup> From all points of view it appears to be a reasonable assertion that prior to the 18th century the Congregational churches of Massachusetts and Connecticut followed along parallel lines.

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<sup>3</sup>Hanbury, Historical Memorials II (London, 1839), pp. 18-39.

<sup>4</sup>Hooker, "A Survey of the Summe of Church Discipline, etc." (London, 1648).

<sup>5</sup>Walker, Creeds, p. 133, 138.

The Proposals of 1705 were obviously of a Presbyterianizing character failed to be adopted in Massachusetts, but in Connecticut they played a conspicuous part because they were utilized in the Saybrook Platform of 1708.<sup>6</sup> In Massachusetts these proposals, because they were opposed by some outstanding people and lacked the support of the legislature, were not put into effect.<sup>7</sup> However, in Connecticut these same proposals, which have Presbyterian implications, were also opposed by certain leaders, but the General Court in Connecticut was favorable to them and they were enacted by the Court to become part of the law of the state.<sup>8</sup> One reason for this lies in the fact that Connecticut was under a semi-independent charter and was able to choose its own upper house and governor, and the governor at that time was a minister, Gruden Saltonstall.<sup>9</sup>

He was a firm believer in the desirability of a stricter organization among churches. He had wide influence and was popular with both the ministers and the legislature. It was the habit of the Connecticut Court to interfere in the affairs of the churches. In Massachusetts the situation was quite different. It was under a new charter after 1692, and as a result, the old-time clerical influence

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<sup>6</sup>Wise, A Vindication of the Government of New England Churches, p. 107-11. Trumbull, pp. 482-86.

<sup>7</sup>Walker, A History of the Congregational Churches in the United States, p. 203-4, part of The American Church History Series, Vol. III.

<sup>8</sup>Blake, S. Leroy, The Early History of the First Church of Christ, New London, Conn. (New London, 1897), pp. 230 ff.

<sup>9</sup>Records of the General Court of Conn. Vol. V, p. 87.

was practically at an end. The Governor of Massachusetts came by royal appointment, and he was not [always] a friend of the Congregational churches. Here we have the roots for the divergence in the type of Congregationalism which developed in these two sections of New England. During the 18th century this gap widened with the Congregationalists of Connecticut becoming increasingly friendly toward the Presbyterians and developing a Presbyterianized form of Congregationalism among themselves. The main step in this growing divergence was the adoption of the Saybrook Platform by Connecticut in 1708.

The General Court, under the direction of Rev. Gurden Saltonstall, the minister-governor of Connecticut, ordered the representatives of the churches to come together in various county towns on June 28, 1708, and there to draw tentative schemes of church government and to choose delegates to a general assembly which was to meet at Saybrook at the commencement of the new Connecticut College. On the basis of the several county plans, the delegates to this general council were to prepare a form of government for submission to the legislature. So on September 9, 1708 the synod met with an attendance of twelve ministers and four laymen. This body adopted a threefold platform. It approved the Confession of 1680,<sup>10</sup> which was a slight revision of the Westminster Confession of Faith as the doctrinal standard for the churches. Secondly it adopted the Heads of Agreement of 1691,<sup>11</sup> which had been a means for Congregational and

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<sup>10</sup>Walker, Creeds, pp. 367-402.

<sup>11</sup>Walker, Ibid., pp. 455-62.

Presbyterian cooperation in England; this was an attempt to compromise the divergent views regarding church government already present in the colony. In the third place the synod prepared fifteen articles which were a more detailed development of the Massachusetts Proposals of 1705. This was the most important and only original part of the synod's work.<sup>12</sup>

In this third section of the synod's proposals, it provided that the churches of Connecticut were to be grouped in "consociations" or standing councils. A consociation was to be composed of the ministers and a lay representative from each congregation in a given district. There were to be one or more such bodies in each county. These consociations were to consider all cases of discipline which were too difficult for the local church to handle. The decision rendered by the consociation was to be considered final, except in cases of unusual difficulty, in which even the next neighboring consociation was to be called into joint session. The local parish was to seek the help of the consociation in ministerial ordination, installation, and dismissal. The consociation was to be vested with powers very similar to that of a Presbytery.

Provision was also made in the Platform for the formation of ministerial associations. All the ministers of the colony were to be distributed into associations whose purpose would be to furnish

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<sup>12</sup> A Confession of Faith--Owned and Consented to by the Elders and Messengers of the Churches in the Colony of Conn. in New England--Assembled by Delagation at Saybrook, Sept. 9, 1708. Printed by Thomas Short, 1710, New London, in New England.

opportunity for consultation and the licensing of ministers. These associations were to send delegates to a "General Association" of the entire colony which was to meet annually.

As mentioned earlier these recommendations of the synod were immediately approved by the General Court and made into a statute of the colony.<sup>13</sup> The various consociations and associations were formed in the several counties of the colony during the early part of 1709. The first General Association of Connecticut met in May of that same year.

The organization of consociations was not as smoothly and uniformly accomplished as the above statement might indicate. These consociations, composed of one lay member and one minister from each church, were to elect officers which were to function during the interim between meetings. In the main this is quite similar to a Presbyterian Presbytery. Now while all of Connecticut adopted this plan, there were modifications of it in actual practice. New Haven county accepted the Platform with an attached sheet in which they interpreted the terms in such a way that their consociation was very free and more like a Congregational council.<sup>14</sup> On the other hand, the county of Fairfield made the provisions more strenuous by a Presbyterian interpretation put on record at the time the consociation was formed.<sup>15</sup> They made the consociation a church court. Hartford and New London counties accepted the new rules

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<sup>13</sup>Records of the General Court of Conn. Vol. V, p. 87.

<sup>14</sup>Congregational Order. The Ancient Platforms of the Congregational Churches of New England, p. 284-86.

<sup>15</sup>Orcutt, History of the Old Town of Stratford and the City of Bridgeport, Part I, pp. 312-13.

just as they came from the synod. There were, however, certain individual churches which did not accept the system graciously and considerable quarreling resulted from the inauguration of this presbyterianizing system.<sup>16</sup> The great majority, however, of the churches and ministers accepted the plan. It is possible that the system would not have been into effect if it had not had the hearty support of the legislature of the colony and had not been enacted by it into an official statute. It is evident that in practice this was not the pure Presbyterianism that one associates with the Scottish model. It was in reality a Presbyterianism of an English nature. The consociations in actual practice were more than advisory bodies but they did not attempt to exercise the power of excommunication or to dominate the policies of the individual churches as the Scottish Presbyterian polity might insist.<sup>17</sup>

The chief manifestation of this Presbyterian churches of the Middle colonies. During the 18th century the churches of Connecticut drifted away from an intimate relationship with the churches of the Bay state and developed a closer contact with the Presbyterian Synod of New York and Philadelphia. There are many evidences to show the growing fellowship with the Presbyterians.

The first real manifestation of the goodwill of Connecticut Congregationalists toward Presbyterians is shown by their joining

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<sup>16</sup>The quarrel in the East Windsor Church is told in Stiles, Ancient Windsor, pp. 240-46, and the dispute in the Norwiche Church is described in Caulkin's, History of Norwich, pp. 284-88.

<sup>17</sup>The 150th Anniversary of the Fairfield County Consociations, p. 21.

the ten annual conventions with the Presbyterians representatives from the Synod of New York and Philadelphia from 1766-1776.<sup>18</sup>

The convention met in alternate years in New Jersey and Connecticut. The main purpose of these conventions was to consider ways and means of protecting the churches in America from the possible infringement upon them which might come through the establishment of the Church of England in this country, and the consequent setting up of Bishops and collection of taxes for the Established Church. They spoke of meeting to gain information of their united cause, of joining their endeavors for spreading the gospel, and of preserving the religious liberties of the churches.

The convention, with representatives from each denomination, met regularly for the ten years preceding the outbreak of hostilities between the American colonies and the English government when the primary purpose was automatically superseded.

Friendly relations continued after the struggle for independence. For many years both groups sent letters of goodwill to each other and had regular Committees of Correspondence to further this intercourse. In 1790 the General Association of Connecticut voted that a further degree of union with Presbyterians was desirable and a Committee of Correspondence was appointed to secure this result.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>"Records of the Presbyterian Church" published by the Presbyterian Board of Publication, Philadelphia, 1904. The minutes of these conventions are given in Appendix.

<sup>19</sup>Records of the General Association 1738-99, pp. 133.

In response to this, the Presbyterian General Assembly of 1791 proclaimed its desire "to renew and strengthen every bond of union" between the Congregational and Presbyterian Churches, and recall "with much satisfaction the mutual pleasure and advantage produced and received by their former intercourse."<sup>20</sup> They took steps at once to bring about this result and appointed a committee for that purpose. Accordingly, a joint committee representing these two bodies met at New Haven in 1791 and provided for an exchange of fraternal delegates at their official meetings. This proposal of the commissioners was approved the following year by the General Association and the General Assembly, and three representatives of the Connecticut churches were sent to the General Assembly. The next year, 1793, three Presbyterian delegates took their seats in the General Association. At the request of the Presbyterians in 1794 both sides agreed that the representatives of each body should have full right to vote in the meetings of the other.<sup>21</sup>

The most famous, and by all standards, the most far reaching cooperative program with the Presbyterians was that undertaken under the provisions of the Plan of Union of 1801.<sup>22</sup> Under the terms of this plan the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church agreed to work together on the western frontier. The two bodies were to provide missionaries and share the burdens of building churches there. This

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<sup>20</sup>Minutes of the General Assembly, 1789-1820, pp. 29, 33.

<sup>21</sup>Minutes of the General Assembly, 1789-1820, p. 80 and Records of the General Association 1783-1800, p. 154.

<sup>22</sup>Walker, p. 524 ff.

Plan of Union operated effectively for almost half a century and was supported considerably by the churches of Connecticut. Indeed, the Congregationalists of Connecticut were so friendly to Presbyterianism that they continued to support the Plan of Union for several years after they saw the majority of the churches on the frontier turning to Presbyterianism and the Congregational Associations becoming Presbyterian Presbyteries.<sup>23</sup> This willingness to cooperate with the Presbyterians of the Middle States indicates something of the extent of the Presbyterian influence upon the churches of Connecticut.

This Presbyterian tendency was also manifest in a rather confusing use of Presbyterian terms. Certain of the more enthusiastic supporters of Presbyterian ideas occasionally used Presbyterian terms in place of the commonly accepted Congregational designations. The Reverend Nathan Strong, pastor of the First Church of Hartford, spoke of his church as "the North Presbyterian Church".<sup>24</sup> It appears that it was a rather common practice to use interchangeably Congregational and Presbyterian names to describe Connecticut Churches during the latter part of the 18th century and early part of the nineteenth.<sup>25</sup> We find such statements as that made by the General Association of Connecticut in 1788, when referring to the Plan of Union which offered it as a "Scheme for the union of Presbyterians in America" and in 1805 this same body called the Saybrook Platform

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<sup>23</sup>Sweet, W. W., Religion on American Frontier, (Harper Bros, N.Y. 1936), p. 43-4. See also "Diary of Thomas Robbins," Vol. I., p. 280.

<sup>24</sup>Walker, G. L., The First Church in Hartford, p. 358.

<sup>25</sup>Sweet, p. 38, Vol. II.

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"The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in Connecticut."<sup>26</sup>

These statements, of course, must be regarded as reflecting the views of some who had a broad interpretation of Presbyterian principles. When the Presbyterian minded ministers were speaking, they were inclined to the use of Presbyterian terms. Perhaps the most frequently quoted statement of this sort was that made by a group of fifteen members of the Hartford North Association. George L. Walker in his "History of the First Church," Hartford, quotes it as follows:

February 5, 1799. "This Association gives information to all whom it may concern, that the Constitution of the Churches in the state of Connecticut, founded on the common usage, and the confession of faith, heads of agreement, and the articles of church discipline, adopted at the earliest period of the settlement of this State is not Congregational, but contains the essentials of the church of Scotland, or the Presbyterian Church in America, particularly as it gives a decisive power to Ecclesiastical Councils; and a Consociation consisting of ministers and messengers or a lay representation from the churches is possessed of substantially the same authority as a Presbytery. The judgements, decisions and censures in our Churches and in the Presbyterian are mutually deemed valid. The Churches, therefore, of Connecticut at large and in our districts in particular, are not now and never were from the earliest period of our settlement, Congregational Churches, according to the ideas and forms of Church order contained in the book of discipline called the CAMBRIDGE PLATFORM: there are, however, scattered over the State, perhaps ten or twelve churches which are properly called Congregational, agreeable to the rules of Church discipline in the book above mentioned. Sometimes indeed, the Associated churches of Connecticut are loosely and vaguely, through improperly termed Congregational."<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>27</sup>Walker, G. L. op. cit., pp. 358-9.

Dr. George L. Walker indicated he believed this statement was really a perverted interpretation of history:

"When fifteen ministers in an association like Hartford North, present at this action, could so misstate history and forget the principles of the first founders, one ceases to wonder that the people generally were not disturbed at being called Presbyterians. . . one may wonder, however, what Thomas Hooker would have said to the implication of his successor, that Presbyterianism was the form of polity he came to this country to plan; and to this amazing statement that the Constitution founded on the "heads of agreement and articles of church discipline" was adopted "at the earliest period of the settlement of the State." Whatever the merits or demerits of the Saybrook system, such a declaration of its antiquity takes one with surprise."<sup>28</sup>

It would seem that the Walker statement was the biased viewpoint of certain individuals who, for some particular purpose could not accept the tendencies toward Presbyterianism existing in New England. However, this may be, there was a period in the history of Connecticut churches when certain individual congregations were popularly called Presbyterian. Undoubtedly some of them leaned toward the Presbyterian system and may have incorporated certain of its provisions within the framework of their polity.

It is sufficient for our purpose to know that for many years in the history of Connecticut Congregationalism there was much partiality shown toward Presbyterianism by certain members of the various ministerial associations. This development well illustrates the Presbyterian tendencies in New England Congregationalism.

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<sup>28</sup>Walker, G. L., p. 359.

### Chapter III

#### PRESBYTERIANS FROM ABROAD

The second impulse toward Presbyterianism in New England came from abroad via migration. One of these groups was the French Huguenots who came to the area as a result of the persecution in France after the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685. These immigrants remained loyal to the practices of the French Reformed Church which had at an early period adopted the Presbyterian form of church government, a form more closely resembling English Presbyterianism than Scottish Presbyterianism. They had endured much for their faith and it was to be expected that at least the first generation would have a deep and emotional attachment to the principles for which they had sustained the loss of their homes and positions. The number of these French Protestants that came to New England was relatively small, since they generally favored a more southern location, but there were some refugees who found New England, and more especially Boston, to their liking. Here they were received with consideration and friendliness, and gifts were actually made to help them in their need by the Puritan authorities.<sup>1</sup> They found favor with the Puritans because of their resistance to the Roman Church, and their adherence to Calvinistic tenets. Since they had already endured so much, and since their church practices was somewhat similar to those of

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<sup>1</sup>Massachusetts Archives, Council Records, 1686-87, p. 79. See also Baird, History of the Huguenot Emigration to America, Vol. 2 (New York, 1885), pp. 200-08.

the Puritans, and moreover, since the French had to have their service in a different language, the Puritan leaders were willing to allow them the right to worship according to their own custom. Indeed, in 1687 Boston officials granted them permission to use the Latin School for the purpose of public worship.<sup>2</sup> The French Church used this facility until 1715 when they were reluctantly granted permission to erect their own house of worship.

A stricter form of Presbyterianism might have developed in New England by the coming of the French Huguenots if they had settled in greater numbers. As it was, their settlements were weak and struggling, and, by a series of misfortunes, they were not enduring. The first real settlement attempted by the French immigrants was in the vicinity of the present town of Oxford, Massachusetts, in what was then known as the Nipmuck country. This endeavor at colonizing was supported by Gabriel Bernon, a wealthy French Protestant, who had managed to escape from France with a considerable fortune. Owing to his influence, a large grant of land was obtained from the General Court on the frontier about fifty miles west of Boston. In the Spring of 1686 or 1687 a small group of about ten families migrated to this location and endeavored to establish a colony.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Baird, Vol. 2, p. 221. Massachusetts Archives Council Records, 1686-87, p. 155.

<sup>3</sup>Baird does not give any reference showing why he holds to 1687. Daniels, "The Huguenots in the Nipmuck Country," p. 67 favors the year 1686 and supports his view with the following footnote: "It has been claimed by some that the settlement was made in the spring of 1687, but we see no reason for doubting the statement of Whitney and of Holmes that

One of the leaders in this endeavor was the intrepid French Protestant minister, Rev. Daniel Bondet.<sup>4</sup> The little company was joined by others during the next year so that there were probably between seventy and eighty people (counting the children) in the new community within the first year. In the early period of their settlement the settlers met in the home of Pastor Bondet for their religious services. The earnestness of their religious life is shown by the fact that during the second year they built a house of worship.

At Oxford, the life of this colony was brief owing to its advanced location on the frontier which made it easy prey for the Indians. The hostility of the Indians is shown by the fact that they murdered the young daughter of one of the villagers and carried off two children in the summer of 1694. From that day the colonists were in a perpetual state of fear lest the whole settlement should be attacked by the savages, and two years later their feeling of insecurity was greatly accentuated by the massacre of one of the settlers, a Mr. Johnson, and his three children. With one accord the French settlers decided to forsake their frontier location and return to Boston. The Oxford refugees who remained in Boston decided to make another attempt at settlement in the spring of 1699; they reclaimed their abandoned farms remaining there until 1704 when they became

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it was in 1686. Bondet in his letter to Cornbury, 1703, says that he had then been in America about fifteen years. This is indefinite. When he particularizes and says his was nine years in Oxford, two waiting in Boston, and five years in New Rochelle, we have sixteen years, which gives 1686 as the time of settlement."

<sup>4</sup> Baird, Vol. 2, p. 256.

convinced that the danger from the Indians was so great that they left never to return.

The Oxford colony enjoyed religious services from the beginning. Pastor Bondet ministered to them until the fall of 1695 when he returned to Boston. The effort of the people to support a pastor is shown by their agreement to pay him forty pounds annually, a considerable sum for such a small, newly founded community.<sup>5</sup> Perhaps they received some financial assistance from other New England churches. He is reported to have been a faithful and industrious pastor and to have performed his ministerial duties well.<sup>6</sup> In the second endeavor to settle the Oxford location the colonists were accompanied by a Rev. Jacques Laborie, a minister who had come from London in 1698.<sup>7</sup>

It is obvious that from the nature of the circumstances this Presbyterian church could not have been very thriving. The greatest accomplishment of the membership seems to have been the maintaining of themselves as an organized church and the erecting of a crude meeting house. Very little data is available on the functioning of this congregation, but it is reasonable to believe that it followed the principles of the Reformed Church of France and adopted a Presby-

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<sup>5</sup>Foote, The Huguenots; or Reformed French Church (Richmond, 187), p. 518.

<sup>6</sup>Gov. Houghton gave him a certificate telling "of his great faithfulness, care and industry in performance of his duties to Christians and Indians", Foote, Ibid., p. 519.

<sup>7</sup>Baird, Vol. 2, p. 282; p. 145 in the footnote gives a brief biographical survey of his life. He tells us that after leaving New Oxford, Mass. he went to New York and took charge of the French church in that city, as Peiret's successor, for two years, October 15, 1704 to August 25, 1706. As early as 1716 he settled in Fairfield, Conn. where he practiced medicine and surgery until his death about 1731.

terian system of church polity in so far as it was able to do so. However, this became more modified under the influence of the English Presbyterians in the colony.

The most important attempt of the French refugees to establish a Presbyterian church in New England was made in Boston. It was not possible for these French-speaking Protestants to join in the worship services of the English Puritans because of language differences nor did they have the inclination to give up their [more strict] Presbyterian practices. Therefore, soon after their arrival in Boston, probably as early as 1685,<sup>8</sup> the French families united together in forming a church. The chief organizer may have been Rev. Pierre Daille who came to America in 1682, and was active in organizing several French congregations in the new world. The first settled pastor of the congregation was Laurentius Van den Bosch.<sup>9</sup> He probably began his ministerial labors during the year 1686. Unfortunately he did not adapt himself well to the situation, and in a very little time had stirred up much contention in the congregation itself and with the Puritans of Boston. Rev. Pierre Daille saw the seriousness of this and wrote to Rev. Increase Mather, requesting that the annoyance caused

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<sup>8</sup>Fosdick, L., The French Church in Boston (New York, 1906), p. 157.

<sup>9</sup>Laurentius Van de Bosch was of French parentage; his given name was Laurent du Bois, but while in Holland he adopted a Dutch patronymis. He stopped in England before coming to Boston and had conformed to the Church of England. Cf. Baird, Vol. 2, p. 224.

by Mr. Van den Bosch would not diminish Mather's goodwill towards the French for the fault of a single person should not be the cause of harm to all.<sup>10</sup> Unfortunately for the church, Van den Bosch remained only a year.

The Rev. David Bonrepos was the next regular pastor who came with a company of French refugees from the Island of St. Christopher in 1686.<sup>11</sup> While this new company augmented considerably the French congregation it never was very large. The Rev. Mr. Bonrepos was able to smooth out the irritations which had been caused by his predecessor and he revived the friendly relations with the Puritan pastors of Boston. His pastorate in Boston was scarcely more than a year, for he accepted a call to take charge of the religious life of the Huguenot settlement of New Rochelle, Staten Island, and New Paltz in the province of New York.

Because it had to carry on without the guidance of a regular pastor,<sup>12</sup> the next eight years were difficult for the small struggling congregation; the congregation probably consisted of about twenty

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<sup>10</sup>Letter of May 2, 1686 from Daille to Increase Mather, contained in the Mather Papers in the Prince Library; Public Library of the City of Boston. A Copy of this letter is in the Appendix to Baird, Vol. 2, p. 398.

<sup>11</sup>Baird, Ibid., pp. 225-26.

<sup>12</sup>See excerpt from the letter of Bonrepos, Ibid., p. 226.



French families. The congregation was supplied by such French preachers as were available and one of the English pastors who could speak French fluently.<sup>13</sup>

The French congregation revived under the leadership of the Rev. Pierre Daille who became pastor of the church in 1696 and continued in that capacity until his death on May 21, 1715, in his sixty-seventh year.<sup>14</sup> He was accepted by the Puritan minister of Boston with genuine friendliness. The Dutch minister Selyns of New York described him thus: "He is full of fire, godliness and learning. Banished on account of his religion, he maintains the cause of Jesus Christ with untiring zeal."<sup>15</sup> He was loved by his own people and respected by the townspeople of Boston. His salary was not large, owing to the fact that there were not many French families in Boston and they had an extra burden of caring for the colonists that had returned from Oxford. In order that Pastor Daille might remain with his congregation, the General Court of the Colony at one session appropriated twelve pounds towards his maintenance in response to a petition from the Elders of the French Church.<sup>16</sup> While this appears

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<sup>13</sup>Rev. Nehemiah Walter, pastor of the First Church in Roxbury, Mass. Fosdick, L., p. 161.

<sup>14</sup>Blaikie,, Presbyterianism in New England, pp. 33-4; Memorial History of Boston, II, p. 252.

<sup>15</sup>Letter of Henrius Selyns to the Boston Ministers, M.S.S. in "Mather Papers", Vol. V., No. 17, in Prince Library in Boston. Also in Appendix of Baird, p. 397.

<sup>16</sup>Massachusetts Archives, Vol. XI, p. 150, the petition was signed by John Rawlings, Peter Chardon, and Rene Grignon Elders of the French Congregation; Baird, p. 235.

to have been the only time that such a grant was made from the state, it was quite significant.

The French Church in Boston followed the Presbyterian procedure in the organization of the congregation. All writers are agreed that there were in the church elders who were known as "anciens."<sup>17</sup> These elders, together with the pastor, constituted the Consistoire or the Church-Session which had charge of the oversight of the flock and the spiritual and temporal concerns of the church. The anciens were elected by the people and held office for a period of years. Owing to the absence of the original records it is impossible to name all those who filled the office of elder. We have indirect sources of names of some of the Elders who served during the pastorate of Pierre Daille. In 1704 the congregation purchased a lot in what is now School Street with the intention of building a house of worship on it. The deed for the lot is made out to John Tartarien, Francis Bredon, and Jean Dupuis, Elders of the French Church, for themselves and the other members of the congregation.<sup>18</sup> Baird also mentions Pierre Chardon, Jean Millet, Jean Rawlings, Mousset, Guillaume, Barbut and Rene Grignon as also having been Elders between 1696 and 1705.<sup>19</sup> It was the Elders of the congregation who presented the petition to the General Court for a contribution to the maintenance of their Pastor, Pierre Daille.

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<sup>17</sup>Fosdick, p. 163; cf. Baird p. 232-33. Blaikie, p. 32-39.

<sup>18</sup>Suffolk Deeds, lib 22, fol 102 cf. the Memorial History of Boston, p. 253.

<sup>19</sup>Baird, p. 233.

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Throughout the pastorate of Pierre Daille the French Congregation met in the Latin School House, which was part of the educational system of Boston. More than ten years before the death of Daille the French Congregation had purchased property and petitioned the Boston Council for the privilege of constructing their own house of worship.<sup>20</sup> For some unexplained reason the Boston authorities did not grant them the permission at that time.<sup>21</sup> More than ten years later the permission was given and the French Congregation proceeded after the death of Daille to build an unpretentious brick building which they used until the church disbanded in 1748.<sup>22</sup>

The Rev. Andrew Le Mercier who had received his education in Geneva, Switzerland, was the last pastor of the congregation. He was offered one hundred pounds in New England currency for his salary which indicates that the members of the congregation had become more prosperous. He began his ministerial labors in Boston in the latter part of 1715. He was not considered to be as brilliant a preacher as his predecessor. His sermons were probably dry and hard to follow and this is in part responsible for the statement of the leading laymen of the congregation that "he has driven all our young people to other churches."<sup>23</sup> This must not be considered to be the

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<sup>20</sup>MS. Minutes of the Selectman of the Town of Boston (in office) of City Clerk) p. 95 cf. Memorial History of Boston II, p. 254; cf. Fossick, p. 158, Massachusetts Archives, Minutes of the Council under the date of January 12, 1704.

<sup>21</sup>Memorial History of Boston II, p. 254.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 254, cf. N.E. Historical and Genealogical Register, XII, p. 319.

<sup>23</sup>Massachusetts Archives, XII, pp. 522-7; also Memorial History of Boston, II, pp. 356-7.

only cause, however, of the unusual decline in membership during his thirty-four years as pastor, for there was a tendency for the second generation of French to adopt the customs and language of their English neighbors and through marriage they naturally drifted to the English-speaking churches. By 1748, the congregation was so small that the only reasonable procedure was to disband the society. This was carried out on May 7, 1748, when the church was sold for three thousand pounds old tenor to the trustees of the Rev. Croswell's new Congregational Society. Le Mercier lived for sixteen years after the dissolution of the church, spending his last years upon an estate which he owned in Dorchester, Massachusetts. He died on March 31, 1764.

It was during the pastorate of the Rev. Le Mercier that the French church became affiliated with the Scotch-Irish element (Presbyterian) in New England. Le Mercier was a dedicated Presbyterian holding strongly to the discipline of the French Reformed Churches, and as soon as he had opportunity he sought to complete the organization and to bring the French church under the care of a Presbytery. Le-Mercier took an active part together with his Scotch-Irish friends in the organization of a Presbytery in 1729. The meetings of the Presbytery were frequently held in the French meeting house and from all accounts the French pastor appears to have taken an prominent

part in the deliberations and discussions of that body for several years.<sup>24</sup>

Another aspect of the Presbyterian migration from abroad was the Scots from the North of Ireland. While they were loyal to the Scottish Presbyterian system, they nevertheless chose New England as one of their sites for migration. In order to better understand these Scotch-Irish Presbyterians it is necessary to make a brief survey of their previous life in Ireland.

In 1610 under the direction of King James I of England a plan was formulated for the settlement of enterprising Scots and Englishmen onto certain lands which he had newly acquired in the North of Ireland.<sup>25</sup> The primary purpose was to place there an armed group to act as a buffer against the ravages of the undisciplined and marauding clans of the native Irish. The actual settlers were mostly Scottish with the result that the Ulster plantation took the character of the Scottish occupation of the North of Ireland. They were more inured to hardships and they proved themselves more capable of enduring the vicissitudes of the settlements than the English of that period.

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<sup>24</sup>Blaike in his book "Presbyterianism in New England," frequently refers to Le Mercier in connection with the Presbytery of Londonderry. His active participation is shown by his part in the Hillhouse controversy which split the Presbytery. Le Mercier is credited with having written the tract entitled: "Remarks on the Preface of a Pamphlet published by John Presbyter in order to vindicate Mr. James Hillhouse," cf. library of Massachusetts Historical Society, small quarto, 17 pp. Baird footnote, p. 242.

<sup>25</sup>For a full description of the Ulster settlement see Bagwell, Richard, Ireland Under the Stuarts, Vol. I, (New York, 1909), pp. 63-90.

It was early that the Scots in Ulster showed a definite interest in religion, especially as administered in the Presbyterian way. They had brought with them their own Presbyterian pastors and supported them even though it had been an added burde , since in some places they also had to support the established Church of England. Their interest in religion was further evidenced by the fact that they attended in large numbers the lengthy morning and afternoon church services; and also by the fact that before some communion services people were known to spend the whole night in conference and prayer. Moreover, there are records of religious revivals in the early period of the Ulster settlement.<sup>26</sup> It is not surprising, therefore, that within a few years the colony was under the careful control of the pastors and elders of the Presbyterian church, which came to be regarded with real affection by these Scots.<sup>27</sup>

The causes underlying the emigration of the Scotch-Irish to America may be briefly summarized:<sup>28</sup> they were surrounded by hostile, native Irish who felt they had been cheated and deprived of their rights. Also the Scots were subjected to misrule on the part of the local governors and blocked frequently by the English Parliament in their

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<sup>26</sup> Reid, James Seaton, History of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland (Belfast, 1867), Vol. I, pp. 106-112.

<sup>27</sup> Bagwell, op. cit., p. 231.

<sup>28</sup> Ford, Henry Jones, The Scotch-Irish in America (Princeton, 1915), pp. 165-208. Ford discusses the various causes underlying this migration to America; however, he does not seem to stress sufficiently the religious factors involved. See also Frederick W. Loetscher, "Presbyterianism in Colonial New England," Journal of Presbyterian History, June, Sept., Dec., 1921, p. 99.

designs for the advancement of their economic life. Examples of this latter fact were the prohibition of shipping foodstuffs to England and in 1699 the prohibition to export one of their main manufacturing products, woolen goods. The British Parliament threw obstacles in their path so they could not develop a trade with foreign countries, and as a result of these actions poverty abounded in the Ulster plantation. The settlers were frequently caught in the shifting political and religious movements of the period, a fact which often led to suffering on their part, as is illustrated by the famous siege of Londonderry in 1688-1689. As time went on they were not allowed the degree of religious toleration they wanted, for as Presbyterians they came to be excluded from public offices, and in the second decade of the 18th century they were forced to endure certain forms of persecution for their adherence to their ecclesiastical system. Under these conditions they naturally became dissatisfied religiously, politically, and economically.

These Scottish settlers were not the type to give in mildly before a hostile situation.<sup>29</sup> They were men who would fight at great personal cost if they felt it was the thing to do. This they demonstrated time and time again when they battled for their rights against the government and the power of the established church. Their uncongenial environment seemed to bring out certain sturdy and forceful qualities which enabled them to face hardships courageously.

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<sup>29</sup> Ford, p. 157.

Their very religion did not encourage any form of softness; even in warfare they were inspired by the thought that they were fighting on the Lord's side and they marched to their conflicts singing the Psalms.

It was not, then, as weaklings running away from trouble that they contemplated moving to America, but as people convinced that in spite of hardships they would have greater opportunity for the kind of life they desired. In Ireland they came to feel that they were walled in by the impossible circumstances which they were not in position to change, but in America they expected to have a fighting chance. America seemed to offer them the opportunity which they craved, and consequently they came in droves, glad to put up with great personal inconveniences for the sake of economic opportunity and religious freedom.

Their first attempt to come to America in considerable numbers had been as early as 1636 when a group of them had built a ship called the "Eagles Wing" and started for New England.<sup>30</sup> However, when the party of 140 was in mid-ocean the ministers came to the conclusion that the violent storms were a sign of the Almighty that they should not go on but should return to Ireland, where they felt God must still have some important work for them to accomplish. Nevertheless, they cherished the hope that if life should become too unbearable for them they would make another attempt.

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<sup>30</sup>Reid, Vol. I, pp. 189-90; 203-06 and Ford, pp. 165-67.

It was not until the second decade of the 18th century that events seemed to combine against the Scotch-Irish so that for the sake of their own self respect many felt impelled to move to America. They found themselves discriminated against by the narrow, commercial policy of the English Parliament; they were increasingly oppressed for their adherence to Presbyterianism; and to climax all this many of the long term leases which had been made following the Restoration in 1688 matured in 1717 and 1718, and the landlords took advantage of the situation to raise unjustly the rental for the land. These circumstances inspired them to make an effort to bring to fulfillment their cherished dream of new life in America. The actual migration set in about 1714 and by 1718 it reached the point where whole communities were being transported. This stream of Scotch-Irish migration continued to flow steadily throughout the greater part of the 18th century.

Generally speaking New England was their first choice because of the generally favorable attitude toward Presbyterianism there. Boston records show that in 1718 five shiploads carrying about 120 families arrived.<sup>31</sup> They felt that since they had so much in common with the Puritans they would be well received, but they were somewhat disappointed in that the Bostonians did not extend as warm a welcome as the Scots had expected; this expectation was a result of

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<sup>31</sup>Blaikie, pp. 47-49.

the Scots belief that they and the New Englanders shared a common religious background. Nevertheless there were many shiploads that decided to remain in New England, and as a result they made quite an addition to the colony.<sup>32</sup>

These Scots arrived in New England with an intellectual and a emotional attachment to the Presbyterian way. For them Presbyterianism was not a weak and sentimental theory; it was a martyr-filled tradition which stirred them as they recalled the struggle against Prelacy and Popery. They associated it with solemn leagues and covenants, with blood stained moors, and with lengthy, harrowing sieges of Presbyterian towns. This was part of the faith of these hardy Scots, who hoped to establish the Presbyterian system in their own towns in the New World. To survey Presbyterianism in colonial New England it is necessary to study some of the towns which were founded or settled in considerable numbers by the Scotch-Irish for these towns were quite significant in the growth of the Presbyterian movement in New England outside of the Puritan churches. The Presbyterian congregations with strong input from the Scotch-Irish element were quite strong over a period of years, and they offered important sustaining power for colonial Presbyterianism in New England in the 18th century.

In the early part of the 18th century the Massachusetts authorities were anxious to have more people settle upon the frontier to act as a buffer against the Indians. So many of the settlements on the western edge of the Bay Colony had been attacked by marauding

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<sup>32</sup>Wood, Sumner Gilbert, Ulster Scots and Blandford Scouts (West Midway, 1926), p. 106.

bands of Indians that the colonists had become exceedingly fearful for their lives. In desperation whole groups of them had forsaken their outposts and returned to Boston. This practice became so common that the General Court had felt obliged to pass a law prohibiting the settlers on the frontier from abandoning their locations. Naturally under these circumstances there was a demand for strong, fearless settlers who would scatter along the exposed region. This incoming group of Scotch-Irish represented the type sought, for they had come from a land where they had been surrounded by hostile neighbors and many of them were veterans of fierce struggles in Ireland.

At the time of their arrival in Boston the frontier was about fifty miles to the westward. The town of Worcester had previous to 1713, been occupied on two different occasions but each time it had been abandoned because of the danger from the Indians. Nevertheless in 1713 it was revived again by certain English settlers and a block fort was built and at least four houses which could be used as garrisons were erected.<sup>33</sup> The town had about two hundred English inhabitants when the Scotch-Irish immigrants arrived in 1719.<sup>34</sup> It is estimated that the population was almost doubled by the new addition of approximately fifty families. The lands which they

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<sup>33</sup>Lincoln, William, History of Worcester (Worcester, 1837), p. 42.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., p. 48, pp. 163-64.

occupied in the north part of Worcester were given them by a direct grant of the General Court of Massachusetts. The opinion has been advanced that it was the poorer and more illiterate part of the five shiploads that were sent to Worcester.<sup>35</sup> Whether or not this is true they seemed to make good settlers, for in a short time they were represented upon the town board of Selectman and some of their number were elected to town offices. Their English neighbors undoubtedly valued them as a reinforcement to the safety of the town, but in some other respects they did not appreciate their presence. Unquestionably the uncleanly habits of the Scots must have been distasteful to their neighbors.<sup>36</sup> This does not mean that the English were models of cleanliness, but it seems that their personal habits were better than those of the Scots'. The practice of washing one's face and hands daily was almost unknown among the Scots of the period. Rarer still was the person among them who took time to bathe oftener than once a year, and some even lived a whole lifetime without taking a bath. When one considers the long religious services in small meetinghouses one begins to appreciate the odors which must have arisen to inspire the English to witticisms at the expense of the Scots.

Realizing the uncouthness of their appearance and the uncleanness of their habits it is easier to understand why the English

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<sup>35</sup>Perry, Arthur Latham, Miscellanies (Williamstown, Mass., 1902), p. 42.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., p. 41.

resented the assumed superiority of these Scots in matters of religion. The Scots were certain that their system of doctrine and ecclesiastical discipline had been revealed to them through the Holy Scriptures. To them all other systems were in a large measure false. Much of their difficulty with their English neighbors is explained by their conviction that Independency was sure to be chaotic and would lead to anarchy. They did not hold these opinions quietly but voiced them so loudly and persistently that they provoked much strong resentment. Undoubtedly this explains in a large measure the unhappy character of their relations with their Worcester neighbors.<sup>37</sup>

The English had erected a crude log meetinghouse the year before the Scots had come and shortly after their arrival they built a larger and better one. It proved to be exceedingly difficult for the English settlers to understand why the Scotch Presbyterians wanted to worship by themselves according to their own distinctive modes. For a time the Scots attended the services in the regular meetinghouse but they soon wanted a service more to their liking so they occasionally held some of their own services in the open air or in bad weather in one of the garrison houses. They went so far as to form a separate religious society, which was for a short time under the leadership of Rev. Edward Fitzgerald.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup>Wood, pp. 106-07.

<sup>38</sup>Lincoln, p. 163. Lincoln states that Mr. Fitzgerald accompanied them from Londonderry, Ireland.

It is not meant to infer that they cut off all connection with the Congregational Society on the Common, for under Massachusetts regulations they were obliged to support and participate in the official church of the parish. Naturally the poor Scots were not pleased to be compelled to contribute to the support of the Congregational society when they were anxious to support more adequately their own pastor. At a time when the Congregational church was without the services of a pastor the English element invited Mr. Fitzgerald to supply the pulpit for one Sabbath, which he did, but he was not asked to return. Therefore even before the Congregational society called another man in 1725, Mr. Fitzgerald was compelled to leave on account of insufficient support.<sup>39</sup>

In 1725, Mr. Issac Burr was settled as pastor of the Worcester Congregational Church. At that time the unwritten understanding between the two groups was that if the Presbyterians would aid in his support they would be permitted on occasion to have Presbyterian ministers in the pulpit. With this in mind the Scots united with the other body, but as time went on they discovered that their hopes were not being realized so they withdrew and ordained and installed William Johnston as their pastor.<sup>40</sup>

While the exact date of his installation is unknown it was sometime before 1737 for in that year a group of nine Scots under the leadership of Mr. John Clark presented a written petition to the town

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<sup>39</sup>Lincoln, pp. 144, 164.

<sup>40</sup>Lincoln, p. 164.

meeting, appealing to the justice of their fellow townsmen for relief from the payment of the tax support of the town church so that they might be free to provide for their own pastor, William Johnston. The copy of the appeal presented to the town by the Scots has been lost but the reply of the English settlers of Worcester has been preserved in the town records. Since the reply illustrates the attitude of the English settlers of New England toward Presbyterians, we quote it in full:

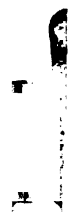
"At a meeting of the inhabitants of Worcester, March 14, 1736, 37

In answer to the Request of ten persons Desiring to be Dismist and Released from the Support of the Rev. Mr. Issac Burr, Pastor of the Church in the Town, or from any other Except Mr. Johnston, &, The Town Came into the following vote, vizt:

The Town upon mature Consideration think that the Request is unreasonable and they they ought not to comply with it upon many considerations:

i first, that it Doth not appear in the Petition who they are that Desire to be Set off, only from the names of the Subscribers. that it would it would be for the Town to act too much at random to set them off upon such a general request.

ii secondly, it doth not appear that the Petitioners or others joining with them have been actuated by Just reason or any such principles of Conscience as should at all necessitate their forsaking the assembling themselves with us. For as to the Westminster Confession of Faith which they say they promised adherence to in their baptism, it is the same which we hold and maintain and desire to adhear to. and asto the worship discipline & government of the Church as it is set forth by the Assembly of Devines at Westminster, they are not substantially differing from our own professed principles. as themselves well know, they may enjoy the same worship, ordinances and Christian privileges & means of their Spiritual Edification with us in the way which they call Presbyterian and their consciences not be imposed upon anything.



Forasmuch also, as a number of those now withdrawing from us were jointly concerned in the settlement of the Rev. Issac Burr our present minister, and joined with us in church for worship and communion, and we know not why it should be contrary to their consciences to continue in communion and worship with us, but rather reason to think that their separation is from some irregular views and motives which would be unworthy for us to countenance.

iii we look upon the petitioners and others breaking off from us as they have done, full of irregularity and disorder, not to mention that the ordination of their minister they speak of was disorderly with respect even to the principles which they themselves pretended to act by, as well as with respect to us to whom they stand related, and with whom they cohabit and enjoy with us in common all proper social Christian & civil rights & privileges. But their separating from us being contrary to their own Covenant with us, and also very unreasonably weakening to the Town whose number and demensions, the North part being expected by the vote of the Town from paying to Mr. Burr, will not admit of the honorable support of two ministers of the Gospel.

Upon which and other accounts the Town refuse to comply with the request of demissing said Petitioners.

The above passed in the affirmative by a great majority, & therefore ordered that the Petition or Request aforesaid be dismissed."<sup>41</sup>

The significance of the Worcester situation is the way in which the English on the scene viewed the Scotch-Irish Presbyterian. They saw very little difference between the two groups but it is the clanishness of the newcomers and their generally anti-English attitude that forced them to make further attempts elsewhere to build a church of their own.

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<sup>41</sup>Early Records of the Town of Worcester, Book I, pp. 106-08 contained in the Collections of the Worcester Society of Antiquity, Vol. II published by the Society, 1881, Worcester, Mass.

Boston was the port of entry for most of the Scots coming to colonial New England. In the summer of 1718 five shiploads, containing about six or seven hundred of these Scotch-Irish, arrived in Boston.<sup>42</sup> Such a large influx naturally taxed the ability of the town to provide for their necessities. Of course they had no intention of remaining in Boston, but many made it a temporary home. As we noted before, a large section of them moved to Worcester. Another large division went up to Casco Bay in Maine and spent the winter there. There were some who were attracted by Boston and decided to remain in or near it. Because some of these Scots were poor the Selectmen of Boston on August 13th chose an agent to appear in court,

"To move what he shall think proper in order to secure the town from charges which happen to accrue or be imposed on them by reason of the passengers lately arrived from Ireland or elsewhere."<sup>43</sup>

Again in the records of the Selectmen for August 22nd,

"A list of strangers obtruding themselves into this Town who by order of the Selectment were warned to depart vizt- Sundry persons who arrived in this town from Ireland about two months since vizt Thomas Walker, John Rogers, James Blare, Elizabeth Blare, Rachel Blare were accordingly warned October 22th."<sup>44</sup>

During the winter a number were warned to leave or find sureties for their support. This does not mean that all the Scots who came in this migration were paupers. They had all paid their passage over as

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<sup>42</sup>Cullen, James Bernard, The Story of the Irish in Boston, (Boston, 1889), p. 51.

<sup>43</sup>"A Report of the Record Commissioners of the City of Boston," containing the Records of Boston Selectmen, 1716 to 1736, pp. 41-42.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., p. 46.

none were for slaves or bondsmen, but undoubtedly some of them had used most of their resources to pay for their passage. On the other hand, there were men of considerable estate who came with these immigrants.

As we have seen most of the Scots moved out of Boston, but there were some who were in a position to assure the town of their ability to support themselves in various trades or in farming in the vicinity. This scattered group in the Boston area was alert to the possibility of setting up a Scotch-Irish Presbyterian Church. About ten years later their hopes were aroused by the incoming of an additional group of their countrymen who settled in Boston. However, it was under the leadership of a young man who had been trained for the ministry in the University of Edinburgh that the actual process of gathering together a Presbyterian congregation in Boston took place. This man was John Moorhead who came from the vicinity of Belfast, Ireland. He came to Boston sometime between 1727 and 1729, licensed to preach.<sup>45</sup> He set about the task of drawing together the Scotch Presbyterian elements in Boston and by July, 1730, had completed the arrangement for a church there. Before this time he had been ordained by the newly organized Presbytery of Londonderry, Ireland. From all available sources it appears that the date of his ordination was either March 30 or 31st. The Rev. Moorhead made a notation in his "Registry of Marriages and Baptism" as follows:

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<sup>45</sup>Writers disagreed on the exact year of his coming. See Sprague, William B., Annals of the American Pulpit, Vol. III: 44, (New York, 1859), compare with Blaikie, op. cit., p. 63, Snow, Caleb Hopkins, A History of Boston (Boston, 1825), p. 221.

"I began to baptize on and after March 31st, 1730."<sup>46</sup> He was probably installed as pastor of the congregation on March 31, 1730.<sup>47</sup> The congregation was not fully developed at that date but in a few months the interested parties gathered in the home of John Little on Milk Street to elect their ruling elders according to the government of the Church of Scotland. On the 14th of July, 1730, they elected John Young, Robert Patton, Samuel McClure, Richard McClure and Thomas McMullen as their Elders.<sup>48</sup>

John Little, a market gardener, was one of the Scots in Boston who by his industry had been able to accumulate some money and property. He favored the plan to establishing a Presbyterian church in Boston. Many of the early meetings of the society, it appears, had been held in his home. On May 14, 1729, he purchased a lot on which there stood a barn, which was located on Long Lane. A short time later he converted the barn into a place of meeting for the "Church of the Presbyterian Strangers."<sup>49</sup> Shortly thereafter he gave the property in a perpetual trust to the Presbyterian

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<sup>46</sup>Blaikie, p. 65.

<sup>47</sup>Odiorne, James C., A Complete List of the Ministers of Boston, Etc. in the N.E.H. & G.R. Vol. I: p. 135.

<sup>48</sup>Blaikie, p. 65. Blaikie is the most reliable writer on the early history of the Boston church. He was for many years a pastor in Boston and was engaged in a long suit to get back the property of this first Presbyterian Church. He investigated the early sources carefully. The original records of the church are not now available.

<sup>49</sup>Snow, p. 222.

church. There was a dispute between John Little and the representatives of the church regarding certain claims of Mr. Little before it was finally conveyed to the church. The matter was agreeably settled by a board of arbitration which was probably composed of three men from among the French Presbyterians, and as a result the property was given to the Presbyterian church in 1735.<sup>50</sup>

The barn given by John Little was the first place used by the congregation for worship. When it became too small it was made more commodious by the addition of two wings. This rude structure remained their place of meeting until 1742 when they felt impelled to build a better place of meeting. By 1744 they had their new and more attractive church. The society was now flourishing under the leadership of the Rev. Moorhead and a church session composed of twelve elders, each one having charge of a certain section of the membership.<sup>51</sup> It was Moorhead's duty to visit and pray with the sick in his area, to advise or reprove, and to obtain aid for the poor.<sup>52</sup> Six years after the founding of the church the communicants were about two hundred and fifty.<sup>53</sup>

Rev. John Moorhead was a sincere and earnest worker; he was zealous in the enforcement of the doctrines of the Scottish church, and he watched carefully over the morals of his people. Occasionally

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<sup>50</sup>Blaikie, pp. 68-73.

<sup>51</sup>Snow, p. 221.

<sup>52</sup>Sprague, Vol. III, p. 45.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid., p. 46.

he was so severe in his exercise of the discipline of the church that some were offended and withdrew from the society.<sup>54</sup> He visited the sick frequently. Once or twice a year Mr. Moorhead took with him one of his Elders and visited every member of his congregation. On these visits he inquired into the spiritual state of the heads of the family, catechised the children and servants and prayed especially for the spiritual needs of each one. Twice a year he called together all the families in each of his twelve districts to meet at the church where he questioned the older persons on the doctrines of the Confession of Faith and again catechised the children and youth.

Edward L. Parker gives an illuminating reference to Rev.

John Moorhead:

"He was a man of distinguished talents, and eminent for his piety; but subject to a natural temperment so excitable as not infrequently to lead to rash and imprudent acts and expressions, which called forth on one occasion from Mr. David Macgregor, his particular friend, this reproof: 'Mr. Moorhead, you have double the grace of common Christians, but not half enough for yourself.' "<sup>55</sup>

Rev. David McClure gives us a good first hand account of the method and content of the Rev. Mr. Moorhead's preaching:

"Mr. Moorhead was a plain, evangelical and practical preacher. He paid very little attention to the ornaments of style in his pulpit performances. His discourses appeared to be extemporaneous. He expounded the Scriptures in course in the morning, and delivered a sermon in the afternoon. He preached the Law and

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<sup>54</sup>Ibid., pp. 45-6.

<sup>55</sup>Parker, Edward L., History of Londonderry (Boston, 1898), p. 131.

Gospel in their spirituality and purity. He insisted principally on the peculiar doctrines of the Gospel - the deep depravity of human nature; the Divinity of Jesus Christ, and the efficacy of the atonement; the special agency of the Divine Spirit in regeneration; the necessity of repentance, o faith in Christ, and of good works."<sup>56</sup>

The Rev. John Moorhead continued as pastor of the Boston church for about forty-four years until his death in December, 1773. The Boston church was stronger during his pastorate than at any other time during the colonial period.

In 1738 the migration to Pelham was a formal organization of a band of discontented Scots from Worcester for the express purpose of establishing a frontier settlement of their own where they could have complete freedom in their religious services.<sup>57</sup> They selected a spot about thirty miles west of Worcester. The Indian situation had improved sufficiently by this time so that it was fairly safe to move westward. In making their contact with Colonel John Stoddard who owned the land upon which they settled, this revealing statement appears:

"The said Robert Prebals engages for himself and for his heirs... to have with himself twenty families of good conversation settled on the Premies, who shall be such as were inhabitants of the Kingdom of Ireland or their Descendants being Protestants and none be admitted but such as bring good and undeniable credentials or certificates of their being persons of good conversation and of the Presbyterian Persuasion as used in the Church of Scotland, and Conform to the Discipline thereof unless they shall otherwise agree hereafter."<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>56</sup>Sprague, p. 46.

<sup>57</sup>Lincoln, pp. 48, 165.

<sup>58</sup>"Proprietary Records of the Town of Pelham" as copied in C. W. Parmenter, History of Pelham (Amherst, Mass., 1898), p. 15.

In August, 1740, the proprietors voted to build a meetinghouse to raise 120 pounds towards building it and chose a committee to agree with a workman to raise the house and provide for the settling of a minister.<sup>59</sup> After this they raised 220 pounds in two installments for the erection and completion of the structure. The new church first extended a call to their former pastor at Worcester, the Rev. William Johnston, but in the meantime he had moved to Windham, New Hampshire, and did not see fit to accept it. In 1742 the Rev. Robert Abercrombie a native of Edinburgh, Scotland, began to supply the pulpit, and two years later he was settled as pastor, which position he continued to hold for ten years.<sup>60</sup>

Scots from Worcester were probably among the company of those who began to occupy what was known as the "Boston Township" about 1736.<sup>61</sup> This township was located near the border of the present state of Vermont, and for a number of years was not large enough to support a pastor. However, it does appear later in the annals of New England Presbyterianism in connection with various presbyteries, and especially during the pastorate of Samuel Taggart.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>59</sup>Ibid., p. 38.

<sup>60</sup>Parmenter, p. 261.

<sup>61</sup>One reason for feeling the Worcester men were among the settlers of Coleraine is the fact that John Clark whose name headed the list of petitioners in Worcester who sought exemption from the parish taxes now appears among the first settlers of Coleraine. See Vital Records of Coleraine "Massachusetts", p. 155; also see Perry, p. 16 and Holland, Josiah G., History of Western Massachusetts, Vol. III (Springfield, 1855), p. 336.

<sup>62</sup>Rev. Samuel Taggart will appear in connection with the Synod of New England and the Associate Reformed Presbytery.

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The town of Londonderry, New Hampshire, was founded in 1718 by a group of the Scots who came through Boston. This group had previously lived in the valley of the Bann in Ireland on the Antrim side of the river. They set forth as a body under the guidance of their faithful pastor, Rev. James MacGregore. Soon after their arrival in New England they explored for a suitable place to settle. They had a promise from Governor Shute of the Province of New Hampshire that they could have a grant of land in any unappropriated portion of the territory under his jurisdiction.<sup>63</sup> The Governor was especially anxious to have the northern and eastern areas of the colony settled to give greater protection from the Indians and the French. For that reason he probably directed their attention to the eastward along the coast of what is now part of the state of Maine. Late in the autumn they sailed eastward to explore the vicinity of Casco Bay in which place their ship anchored for the winter. It was a hard winter for the little company since they did not have a sufficient food supply, but fortunately there were no deaths during the winter. The severity of the winter was undoubtedly a factor which led them to turn their thoughts southward when the spring time made it possible for them to continue their search for a home. However, some few in the company had been attracted by this territory and they remained at Portland and Wiscasset. The remainder of the group turned their

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<sup>63</sup>Early Records of Londonderry, Vol. I, pp. 10-11, 17.

attention toward another location near the Merrimac River in the southern part of the state of New Hampshire. They sailed back down the coast and up the Merrimac River to the town of Haverhill where they anchored. It is said that the people of Haverhill were not pleased to see so many "Irish", as they called them, move into their territory. The Scots had in mind a location about fifteen miles to the north which was known as Nutfield owing to the prevalence of many walnut, chestnut and butternut trees. A representative group of the men went out to examine the tract and decided that it was the kind of place which they had been seeking. According to their previous arrangement with the colonial authorities they selected an area of twelve square miles for the township which was granted to John Moor and one hundred and seventeen others by Governor Samuel Shute on June 21, 1722.<sup>64</sup> Even before they returned to the ship, however, the prospecting party set about to erect a few temporary huts.

Having settled upon a location the leaders of the party were anxious to get their pastor, James MacGregore, to accompany them. During the previous winter he had received a call from the townspeople of Dracut which he had accepted and he had served as pastor and teacher for them that winter. A party of the men from the boat now came around by way of Dracut to prevail upon Rev. James MacGregore to accompany them to their new community. He made the trip with them and on April 11, 1719 (O.S.), the two groups met at Londonderry and Pastor MacGregore,

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<sup>64</sup>Early Records of the Town of Londonderry, Vol. I, p. 12, 38-41.

according to the tradition, delivered them an impressive address in which he congratulated them upon the propitious termination of their wandering and their signal preservation as a company while crossing the ocean, and he exhorted them to continue their confidence in God in their new country. The next day, standing under a large oak, he delivered to the company the first sermon ever preached in that place. He spoke on the text "Isaiah 32:2, A man shall be as an hiding place from the wind, etc." After that he returned to Dracut for a few weeks before joining the company permanently. It is significant of the veneration which the people had for their pastor that one of the very first frame houses built was for Pastor MacGregor. The faithfulness of Rev. James MacGregore was demonstrated by his willingness to forsake his secure position at Dracut and join with his old friends in their new struggling community. In May 1719,<sup>65</sup> he came to them with his family of seven children and remained with them as their pastor until his death in 1729.

One of the first tasks of the settlers was to make provisions for their religious services according to the Presbyterian order. As soon as they were organized as a town and parish they formally invited the Rev. McGregore to become their pastor.<sup>66</sup> He accepted their call, but as no Presbytery then existed in New England, the installation ceremony was dispensed with. On a day appointed for the

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<sup>65</sup>Early Records of the Town of Londonderry, Vol. I, p. 17.

<sup>66</sup>Early Records of Londonderry, p. 17.

purpose, the people met, and he solemnly assumed the pastoral charge of the church and the congregation; they in turn recognized him as their pastor and spiritual guide. He preached for them on the occasion from the text, "Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them; and it will be an everlasting covenant with them; and I will place them and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in the midst of them forevermore."<sup>67</sup>

The church and the community had a long continued growth, which began during the pastorate of MacGregore. At a communion season in 1723, there were one hundred and sixty communicants; at another a few months later, two hundred and thirty; and at the one immediately preceding his death, three hundred and seventy five.<sup>68</sup>

As the first pastor of this important Presbyterian Church of Londonderry, the Rev. James MacGregore holds a special interest for us. Before coming to America he had been ordained in Ireland on June 25, 1701, and had held a charge at Aghadowey until it became evident the church could not support him adequately. The records of the Ulster Synod of this period reveal an interesting sidelight regarding him.<sup>69</sup> In 1704 he was brought before them and admonished for his behavior at Coleraine in having taken several cans of ale, when as he admitted "less might have served", but it was not shown that he was drunk. One must keep in mind that this was an age of hard drinking

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<sup>67</sup>Parker, p. 129.

<sup>68</sup>Early Records of Londonderry, p. 11 and Parker, p. 131.

<sup>69</sup>Ford, p. 346.

among all classes, and it was taken for granted that ministers would drink moderately. This seems to have been the only time his behavior was questioned publically. This was viewed very highly by his contemporary, Cotton Mather, who after two month's association with him at Boston was the means of helping to find him employment at Dracut. In his diary Cotton Mather made the following notation on October 3d, 1718, "Encouraged the people of Draycot unto inviting of a worthy Scotch Minister lately arrived here, to settle among them."<sup>70</sup> From other sources we have a portion of his letter of recommendation for Mr. MacGregore, "a person of very excellent character; and considerably qualified for the work of the ministry as well as his Christian piety, serious gravity, and as far as we have heard, every way exceptional Behavior."<sup>71</sup> He was chosen from among fifteen candidates for the pastorate of the church at Dracut on October 15, 1718. In the town meeting it was voted that he should be invited "to settle at Dracut to preach the Gospel, and do the work of a settled minister" for which services he was to receive a salary of 65 pounds a year for the first four years, after which it would be increased to 70 pounds, and if the community should grow to have over fifty families he was to receive eighty pounds per year. His loyalty to his own people is shown by his willingness to forsake this position and work in the infant community of Londonderry where he was to receive

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<sup>70</sup>Diary of Cotton Mather, Park II, October 3, 1718.

<sup>71</sup>Ford, p. 347.

as salary every year twenty shillings out of every occupied "lott" in the said town and also every lot was to give a day's work to the minister's settlement.<sup>72</sup> He was said to be strictly evangelical in his doctrinal views, and particularly spiritual and experimental in his preaching.<sup>73</sup> He has been described as having had a robust constitution and enjoying good health up until his last severe illness. His services to the people of Londonderry were cut short by his death at the age of fifty-two years on March 5, 1729.<sup>74</sup>

Shortly after the death of Pastor MacGregore the Rev. Matthew Clarke assumed the leadership of the church although he did not become its formal pastor. During the interim that Clarke was supplying the church the congregation remained on the alert to find a regular pastor. A considerable group of the English Puritans who had settled in the town was not anxious to have another Scotch-Irishman, but since the Presbyterians were in the ascendancy they succeeded in October, 1733, in calling the Rev. Thomas Thomson, a Scotch-Irishman of the Presbytery of Tyrone, Ireland, to be the regular pastor of the church. His ministry was acceptable to the Scots for he was friendly, affable, pleasing in his manners, and interesting as a public speaker. The Puritan element was not content, however, and made the few years of Thomson's pastorate unpleasant by their persecution. The leader of this group, John Taggart, had to stand trial before the session for

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<sup>72</sup>Early Records of Londonderry, N.H., pp. 17, 18.

<sup>73</sup>Parker, p. 136.

<sup>74</sup>Early Records of the Town of Londonderry.

slandering the minister.<sup>75</sup> Thomson's troubled ministry, which lasted five years, came to an abrupt end with his death on September 22, 1738 at the age of thirty-four. The sincere affection which his parishioners had for him is demonstrated by their generosity in providing seventy pounds towards the education of his infant son.<sup>76</sup> That the church grew under his guidance is demonstrated by the fact that at one of the sacramental seasons in 1734 there were 700 in attendance.

The turmoil during the pastorate of Thomson was only one indication of the difference of opinion which was developing in the town. The community had grown to such an extent that it was possible for it to support two churches. Therefore, the inhabitants of the western part, who were mainly Scots, were in 1738 incorporated into the West Parish of Londonderry. The East Parish contained a greater number of the English but the church in the East parish continued to function along Presbyterian lines at least until 1791, thereafter becoming Congregational. The East Parish church will be seen especially in connection with the Presbytery of Londonderry under the ministry of the Rev. William Davidson. There was not a strict parish division in Londonderry, however, for about forty families in the West Parish went to the East Parish church and about an equal number from the eastern part attended the services in the western parish during the period when Rev. David McGregore served as pastor of the West Parish.

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<sup>75</sup>Parker, p. 141, 142.

<sup>76</sup>Early Records of the Town of Londonderry, p. 153.

During the first half of the eighteenth century the population of the province of Maine was increased by a considerable infiltration of Scotch-Irish. This was a frontier area for the Massachusetts colony during this period and the authorities of the colony followed their practice of directing the Scots as much as possible along the frontier. It is impossible to state definitely how many individual families out of the five shiploads which arrived in Boston in August, 1718 found their way there. Part of this group, as we have seen, went to Worcester, and another section explored northward and eastward along the coast, spending the winter in Casco Bay. The following spring a considerable share of this party then returned southward and became the settlers of Londonderry, New Hampshire. However, not all of them left for part of the group disembarked at Falmouth township, now Portland and a larger number settled at Wiscasset. Thus the migration of 1718 brought some Scotch-Irish into at least two communities in Maine.

The second considerable influx followed the visit of Captain Robert Temple, an Irishman, to the coast of Maine in 1717. He came to New England in order to examine land that would be suitable for a plantation. He was personally escorted by the owners of a tract of land on the west bank of the Kennebec River in Maine to view their holdings, but while there his attention was caught by the attractiveness of the land on the opposite bank. This land belonged to Colonel Hutchinson of the Plymouth Company, so he became a partner in that enterprise and then agreed to secure settlers for it. In line with

his plan he secured in 1719 and 1720 several hundred families from Ulster who were settled along the eastern shores of the Kennebec from its mouth to Merrymeeting Bay. Many settled in the sections later known as Topsham and Bath. The Merrymeeting colony, however, was broken up by the Indians in 1722, when many of the inhabitants were killed or captured and the towns of Brunswick and Georgetown were temporarily destroyed. This experience caused many of the survivors to remove to Pennsylvania, but others remained and afterwards became part of the population of Topsham, Brunswick, Boothbay and Pemaquid.

Another important detachment of Scotch-Irish came to Maine under the leadership of Colonel Dunbar, a Scotch-Irishman who obtained a commission from the Crown to act as governor of Sagadahoc, a tract of land lying between the Kennebec and the St. Croix Rivers. Fort Frederick at Pemaquid was the headquarters for his settlement. The actual colonization began about 1730 and within two or three years more than a hundred and fifty families, chiefly Scottish, came into the colony at the request of Colonel Dunbar. Among these settlers was the Rev. Robert Rutherford who served as a preacher in many of these Scotch-Irish settlements. He will be seen again in connection with the Presbytery of Londonderry.

About twenty-seven Scotch-Irish families were settled in 1735 on a tract of land lying between the St. George and the Penobscot Rivers by Samuel Waldo, the owner of the tract. Waldo brought a second colony from Ireland in 1753 which consisted of about sixty adults and many children. They were located in the western part of the Warren township and their settlement was called Stirling.

Thus during this first half of the eighteenth century there were Scotch-Irish located in the settlements of Topsham, Brunswick, Boothbay, Pemaquid, Noblesboro, Warren, Bristol and other localities in Maine. All of these towns feature more or less in the story of Presbyterianism in New England. For while they were not able to support Presbyterian pastors for long periods of time, they were definitely connected with the Presbyteries of Londonderry and Boston, the first synod of New England, and the Presbytery at the Eastward. Frequently the people of these towns sought the assistance of the presbytery in settling a pastor among them or in requesting that some Presbyterian minister be sent to supply them. By the close of the eighteenth century the Scotch-Irish element had so far changed their views of that, for the most part, they adopted the congregational mode.

During this early period in Maine there were some Scotch-Irish ministers that came into the area and preached in various communities. One should keep in mind the fact that the communities were seldom in the complete control of the Scots for there were a sufficient number of English Puritans who had moved into this region either before the Scots came, or along with them, that they usually had much to say in the calling of a pastor. The fact was that most of the settlements were unable to support a minister regularly and were not in position to give him a call. Thus the ministers frequently went from one place to another and preached a few weeks or months in each place and then went elsewhere. When the people

of these early settlements could call a minister they often paid him in produce and foodstuffs, or by getting him wood or assisting him on his farm.

A few ministers with Presbyterian inclinations appear in the history of the early days of the settlements in Maine. One of them, the Rev. Hugh Campbell who had a Master of Arts degree from the University of Edinburgh, spent the year 1720 at Scarboro, Maine. In 1722 his place was filled by the Rev. Hugh Henry.<sup>78</sup> Another Presbyterian minister was the Rev. James Woodside who arrived in Maine in 1719 with one of the groups that came from Ulster. The townspeople of Brunswick, Maine in 1719 invited him to preach six months on probation.<sup>79</sup> Evidently his relations with his parishioners were not entirely satisfactory to them, for at the expiration of the six months the town voted to continue his services for six months "provided those of us who are Dissatisfied with his Conversation (as afore Said) Can by Treating with him as becomes Christians receive such satisfaction from him as that they will Heare him preach for ye Time Aforesaid."<sup>80</sup> At any rate, he did not improve sufficiently to satisfy them and so the town voted on September 10, 1719 to dismiss him. It seems that not long afterwards he returned to Boston, for in a letter of January 25, 1720 Cotton Mather wrote that "poor Mr. Woodside, after many and grievous calamities in this uneasy country, is this

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<sup>78</sup>Ford, p. 353.

<sup>79</sup>Wheeler, G. A. and Wheeler, H. W., History of Brunswick, Topsham, and Harpswell, Maine (Boston, 1878), p. 824.

<sup>80</sup>Brunswick Town Records as quoted in Wheeler, op. cit., p. 824.

taking ship for London."<sup>81</sup>

As we noted, the Rev. Robert Rutherford, an ordained Presbyterian minister who came to New England in 1729, first settled in Colonel Dunbar's colony. He preached to the Scots of Bristol and Pemaquid until about the year 1735 when he began to preach in Brunswick;<sup>82</sup> here he was considered to be a pious and orthodox minister. Apparently he was never installed as the pastor of the church but rather was the regular supply of the pulpit up until the year 1742. From the minutes of the town it appears that arrangements were made for him for his support from year to year. In 1747 he appears at Henderson's Fort at Pleasant Point. He died in October, 1756 at Thomaston.

Other Presbyterian ministers who preached in Maine during the first half of the eighteenth century were William McClenachan, James Morton, and Robert Dunlap.

Presbyterianism in Maine did not flourish in this early period. Many parishes were nominally organized along Presbyterian lines, but, owing to their inability to support a regular pastor and to a dearth of well qualified ministers, the churches did not have a favorable start. Presbyterianism here rose to its greatest height under the direction of the Presbytery at the Eastward from 1771 to 1793.

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<sup>81</sup>Ford, op. cit., p. 250.

<sup>82</sup>Wheeler, p. 355.

The conclusions that can be made from this second impulse toward Presbyterianism from abroad via migrations are quite clear. Not only was it not too difficult for the New England churches to accept these new Presbyterians, largely because the New Englanders' ties to English Presbyterians, but by the end of the Seventeenth Century they were even able to accept those who were of the Scottish type of Presbyterianism. It is also significant to note that in the process there was developing in New England their own "home grown" variety of Presbyterianism.

## Chapter IV

### THE PRESBYTERY OF LONDONDERRY

A careful investigation of the material indicates that the first presbytery in New England was organized by the Scotch Presbyterians and was called the Presbytery of Londonderry; it was popularly called the "Irish Presbytery."<sup>1</sup>

The sessional records of the Londonderry Church have apparently been lost since the time (before 1850), when Edward L. Parker wrote his History of Londonderry. However, Parker had access to them and frequently made direct quotations from them. Referring to the presbytery, he writes:

"Presbyterian churches were so multiplied in New England, that, as early as 1729, we find in the records of the Londonderry church session, a notice of a meeting of presbytery in Boston; and that an elder was appointed to attend its session."<sup>2</sup>

In another place Parker quotes from the session records of 1736 showing that during that year the names of six men were presented to the presbytery for its approval as to whether these men were

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<sup>1</sup>The minutes and records of this body have apparently been lost, but there is considerable indirect material which has proven that the presbytery did exist. Some writers of this period seem to have been unaware of this presbytery and have stated that the first New England Presbytery was founded in Boston in 1745. However, most of the writers have acknowledged the existence of the Presbytery of Londonderry: see Loetscher, Presbyterianism in Colonial New England; Grant, Presbyterianism in New England; Briggs, American Presbyterianism; Thompson, Presbyterians; Blaikie, Presbyterianism in New England; Parker, History of Londonderry. The most convincing evidence regarding the existence of this presbytery has been references to it found in certain indirect sources. These references are the Proprietary Records of certain towns and individual church records.

<sup>2</sup>Parker, History of Londonderry, p. 131.

worthy to be made Elders of the Londonderry church.<sup>3</sup> This indicates that there was an active presbytery to which they could appeal for guidance in the selection of new elders.

Certain direct references to a presbytery are also found in Early Records of the Town of Londonderry, New Hampshire; they state:

"At a meeting of the proprietors and free holders of Londonderry held at their meeting-house October ye 24th 1730... 2ly voted that they will not send a commisioner to the next presbytr to be held at Boston."<sup>4</sup>

"October 6, 1739--it is voted and a Greed upon by sd Inhabitants that they will adhear & a Gree to the Rules of the presbytr which is to be held at Londonderry afore sd the 10th Day of this Instant Currant."<sup>5</sup>

In the parish records of the town of Windham, New Hampshire, we find this article on March 8, 1741: voted "that Nathaniel Hemphill attend the Presbytery at Boston in order to have a supplier to preach the gospel to us."<sup>6</sup>

In the Proprietary records of the Elbow settlement, later the town of Palmer, Massachusetts, there are definite references to the Presbytery of Londonderry. The year 1734 found them making provision for the entertainment of the Presbytery of Londonderry so that the Presbytery could meet in their settlement and ordain Mr. John Harvey

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<sup>3</sup>Parker, Ibid., p. 131.

<sup>4</sup>Early Records of the Town of Londonderry, New Hampshire, Vol. I, p. 118.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 225.

<sup>6</sup>Records of the Parish of Windham, New Hampshire, as copied in Morrison, The History of Windham, p. 124.

and install him as their pastor.<sup>7</sup>

It is unnecessary to quote from all the town records and histories references which pertain to the existence of a presbytery in New England prior to 1745. As we examine the information we have been able to gather which shows the various activities of the presbytery, it will become increasingly obvious that such a presbytery did exist. The exact date of its organization cannot be ascertained, but the evidence available indicates that it had probably been organized sometime prior to 1730.

Because of the loss of the records of the presbytery it is impossible to name the men who were responsible for its organization. In order to discover who may have organized it, we must attempt to find what Presbyterian pastors were located in New England about 1730. James MacGregore had been located at the Londonderry settlement since 1719, and it is possible that the Presbytery of Londonderry owed its beginning to his initiative. On the other hand, it must be remembered that he died on March 5, 1729 so that his work as a presbyter was at best not very long.

To replace James MacGregore there came an elderly minister from Ireland, the Rev. Mathew Clarke. By September, 1729, he was in active charge of the Londonderry congregation, even though he refused to become the regularly installed pastor, because of his advanced

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<sup>7</sup>The Proprietor's Records of the Elbow settlement are copies in Temple's History of Palmer, p. 89.

age. However, as a staunch Presbyterian, it is possible that he may have been one of the moving spirits behind the erection of the Presbytery. We know he was undoubtedly active in that organization until his death on January 25, 1735.<sup>8</sup>

The pastor of the French Presbyterian Church in Boston was Andrew Le Mercier, who had been active in the field since 1715; there is strong reason to believe he was one of the first members of the presbytery.<sup>9</sup>

Another ordained Presbyterian minister was Rev. Robert Rutherford; he came to New England in 1729 and, as we noted before, he went to Colonel Dunbar's settlement in Maine.<sup>10</sup> Preaching as he did to settlements on the northern and eastern frontier it is hardly likely that he was a regular participant in the presbytery meetings.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>Baird, Huguenot Emigration, p. 242.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 242.

<sup>10</sup>Willis, William, The Scotch-Irish Immigration to Maine (Portland, 1859), p. 33.

<sup>11</sup>Andrew Le Mercier in his pamphlet on the Hillhouse controversy speaks of Rutherford as being a "man of amiable and excellent disposition." See subsequent citation, Le Mercier, "Remarks on the Preface of a pamphlet published by John Presbyter" etc. Le Mercier mentions he was at a meeting of the Presbytery in 1736.

Another who may have been associated with the Presbytery of Londonderry was the Rev. Ward Clark.<sup>12</sup> He became pastor of the church at Kingston, New Hampshire, on September 29, 1725. While he was settled in time to be one of the charter members, there are no direct references to show that he was a member of the Presbytery of Londonderry.<sup>13</sup> Obviously, there were at least a sufficient number of Presbyterian pastors available before 1730 to form a presbytery.

During the next few years several additions came to the membership of the newly organized presbytery. John Moorhead, pastor of the Presbyterian Church in Boston, was probably the first man ordained by the Londonderry Presbytery. His ordination probably took place March 30, 1730.<sup>14</sup> He became one of the most active members of this presbytery for the few years he was connected with it.

In October, 1733, the Rev. Thomas Thomson was installed as the pastor of the Londonderry Church by the Presbytery. Shortly thereafter he participated in the affairs of that body for we know that he took part at the Elbow settlement in the ordination of

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<sup>12</sup>Ward Clark was considered a man of tact and was quite influential in the affairs of the town and church. The church grew and prospered under his leadership, and it increased his salary regularly ten pounds each year. He died on May 6, 1737. See Lawrence, New Hampshire Churches, pp. 83-84.

<sup>13</sup>His name appears upon the list of members of the presbytery prepared by Blaikie, Presbyterianism, p. 58, and also the list prepared by Hanna, Charles A., The Scotch-Irish in America, Vol. II (New York, 1902), p. 97.

<sup>14</sup>Blaikie, Ibid., p. 64.

Mr. John Harvey who also became a member of the presbytery. This is shown in the Proprietary Records for the Elbow settlement:

"On the fifth day of June, Anno-Domini 1734, the Rev. Mr. John Harvey was ordained the first minister of the church and congregation of the Elbow settlement. The ordination was performed by the delegates of the Reverend Presbitery of Londonderry, upon a scaffold made under a tree, being a great white oak tree.... within Mr. Harvey's lott. The Rev. Mr. Thomson of Londonderry preached the sermon, and the Rev. Mr. Moorhead (of Boston) gave the charge.....One other Presbyterian minister was present, though what part he took in the service is not specified. They were all countrymen of Mr. Harvey's."<sup>15</sup>

The Rev. John Wilson was hired sometime during the year 1734 by the Scotch Presbyterians in the town of Chester, New Hampshire.<sup>16</sup> This action by the Scots to provide a Presbyterian pastor for themselves was the cause of a quarrel with the local Congregationalists who were provoked because the Scots wanted to have their own church and would not contribute to the support of their minister. Mr. Wilson continued as pastor of this church until 1778. He was a quiet man, careful to mind his own affairs, spending much time in his study and having little to do with the affairs of the town.<sup>17</sup> There is evidence to show that he was a member of the

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<sup>15</sup>"The Proprietor's Records of the Elbow settlement" as contained in Temple, J. H., History of Palmer, Massachusetts (Springfield, 1889), p. 89.

<sup>16</sup>Chase, J. C., History of Old Chester from 1719 to 1869 (1856), p. 78.

<sup>17</sup>Lawrence, Robert F., New Hampshire Churches (1856), p. 30.

Presbytery of Londonderry.<sup>18</sup>

Previous to 1736 the Rev. William Johnston settled with the Scots in Worcester.<sup>19</sup> He remained with them until it became apparent to him that they were not in a position to carry forward their plans for a Presbyterian Church, when he removed in 1742 to Windham, New Hampshire, at the request of the people of the town.<sup>20</sup> He was installed as pastor there in 1747 by the Londonderry Presbytery and remained with them until 1752 when he was forced to leave them because of inadequate support. During his ministry there was no meeting-house for public worship and their services were held in barns. As long as he was in New England he was a member of the Presbytery.<sup>21</sup>

In 1734 the Rev. William McClenachan came to Maine to serve along with Robert Rutherford. He preached in various towns in Maine, but chiefly at Cape Elizabeth and Georgetown. He was called to Blandford, Massachusetts, in 1744 and remained there until 1747 when he was dismissed by the Presbytery.<sup>22</sup> He then moved south

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<sup>18</sup>Blaikie, Presbyterianism, p. 58; Wheeler, G. A., History of Brunswick (Boston, 1878), p. 358-59.

<sup>19</sup>Lincoln, History of Worcester (Worcester, 1837), p. 164.

<sup>20</sup>Morrison, Leonard A., The History of Windham, in New Hampshire, 1719-1883 (Boston, 1883), pp. 123-24. He quotes from the parish records.

<sup>21</sup>Blaikie, Presbyterianism, p. 58, 84, 89.

<sup>22</sup>The relation of McClenachan with the Blandford Church is told in Keep's Historical Discourse, p. 16 and S. G. Wood, Ulster Scots & Blandford Scots (1926), pp. 213, 223, 225, 344 ff.

and became an Episcopal minister.

When one considers the manner in which the Scots were scattered along the frontier, and the struggling nature of most of their ecclesiastical organizations it appears remarkable that this presbytery could have had so many additions to its membership in the first five years of its existence. From an initial membership of three or four, it had within five years grown to the point where it had at least eight Presbyterian ministers upon its roll, Andrew Le Mercier, Robert Rutherford, Ward Clark, Thomas Thomson, John Harvey, John Wilson, William Johnston, John Moorhead.<sup>23</sup>

The first major point of dissension which arose in the Presbytery of Londonderry was in connection with the admission of Rev. James Hillhouse, a Presbyterian minister from Ireland, who became in 1722 the pastor of the North Parish Congregational Church of New London (now Montville), Connecticut.<sup>24</sup> Apparently conditions were peaceful in his small congregation until about 1730 when disputes began to develop between him and some members of his congregation. The cause and nature of the contention is uncertain. It may have started from a dispute which Hillhouse had with one of his neighbors over the exact boundary of his property. Or it may have been due indirectly to the fact that the small congregation was in arrears in the payment of the Rev. Hillhouse's salary; one of the points at

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<sup>23</sup>Le Mercier, Andrew, Remarks on the Preface of a Pamphlet (Boston, 1737), p. 12.

<sup>24</sup>Caulkins, Frances M., History of New London, Connecticut (Hartford, 1866), pp. 432-34.

issue certainly was a matter of finances. On one occasion Mr. Hillhouse had made an extended trip of several months duration to Ireland, and yet on his return he insisted that the congregation pay him for the entire time he was away. Due to these differences the majority of his members came to oppose his remaining as pastor and they appealed to a council of Congregational Churches which in 1735, after a careful study of the matter, ordered the Rev. Hillhouse to resign. He refused to do this and continued to preach and demand his salary.<sup>25</sup> In order to protect himself ecclesiastically he applied to the Presbytery of Londonderry for admission.<sup>26</sup> He presented his credentials as a member in good standing of the Presbyterian Church in Scotland, contending that he was really a Presbyterian and that he should only be judged by a Presbyterian body. However, certain members of the presbytery were discriminating enough to see that if they accepted Mr. Hillhouse to their body and then proceeded to consider his case it would be a means of directly antagonizing their Congregational brethren. They saw that in reversing the decision of the council, the presbytery would be indirectly denying the power and efficacy of

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<sup>25</sup>Baker, Henry A., History of Montville, Connecticut (Hartford, 1896), pp. 636-50. Baker gives a good, detailed account of the troubles in the parish, but he apparently was unaware of the appeal of Mr. Hillhouse to the Londonderry Presbytery.

<sup>26</sup>Our most authoritative discussion of the Hillhouse case in relation to the presbytery has been given by Rev. Andrew Le Mercier, pastor of the French Presbyterian Church in Boston and an active member of the presbytery. He wrote a pamphlet entitled, "Remarks on the Preface of a Pamphlet published by John Presbyter in order to vindicate Mr. James Hillhouse." (A copy of this is to be found in the Library of the Massachusetts Historical Society. Small quarto, 17 pages. A photostatic copy of this is now in the Presbyterian Historical Society at Philadelphia.) See p. 13.

the Congregational Councils. The correspondence between Presbyterian and Congregational ministers over this matter became heated. Realizing the dangerous implications of the situation, a majority of the members of the presbytery refused to accept Mr. Hillhouse into their membership. However, at a meeting of the presbytery in 1736 when but five ministers were present, and by the aid of the votes of the ruling elders, Rev. Moorhead and Rev. Harvey succeeded in voting Mr. Hillhouse into the membership of the presbytery by a majority of one vote. This, of course, deeply incensed the other three ministers present and they entered a protest. It was unfortunate that there was no synod nearer than Ireland to which they could appeal for guidance and supervision in this matter.

This action on the part of the presbytery did not heal the difficulties between Hillhouse and his congregation.<sup>27</sup> Also his unpleasant bearing made his relationship with the presbytery of short duration.<sup>28</sup>

Furthermore, the controversy had disastrous effects on the presbytery, for it resulted in a division which did not heal. Mr. Le Mercier felt that the action of a congregational council should be recognized as being valid, while Mr. Moorhead maintained that even if a Presbyterian minister were hired by a Congregational society, since he was not ordained by a council, he was, therefore

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<sup>27</sup>Caulkins, New London, p. 434. His church continued to be divided until his death, December 15, 1740.

<sup>28</sup>Blaikie, Presbyterianism, p. 56.

not amenable or subject to them. The dispute became more than an academic discussion of policy for each side began to employ the press and the pulpit to hurl vindictive remarks at the other. During this period Mr. Moorhead preached to the presbytery using as his text, "Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts."<sup>29</sup> Naturally such a sermon did not help to re-establish good relations. Finally the controversy rose to such a pitch that in October, 1736, the presbytery suspended Mr. Harvey, and after rebuking Mr. Moorhead twice it also suspended him from the ministry.

The Hillhouse controversy was not the only grievance which the majority had against Moorhead and Harvey. Le Mercier has given us an account of an additional cause of irritation:

"In the Presbytery held in Boston in October 1736, when the Names of the several Members were called among the rest was the Name of Mr. David McGregore of Nutfield or New-Londonderry: As he had never sat before as a Member of the Presbytery, Mr. Rutherford desired to know how he came to be a Member of the Presbytery, who ordained him, and who gave the Ordainers Power to do it. He and the major Part of the Presbytery desir'd to be satisfied about those Things, before they admitted Mr. McGregore to vote as a Minister or a Member of the Presbytery. Mr. John Moorhead, who was then Moderator, and had been one of the Ordainers, not giving a satisfactory Answer, the major Part of the Presbytery

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<sup>29</sup>Luke 16:15.

persisted in denying Mr. McGregore's Admission into it. After much Debate and some fruitless Proposals Messieurs Moorhead and Harvey declared, that they would not sit in Presbytery with the rest of the Members, except Mr. McGregore was admitted to vote. For that time indeed they were as good as their Word; for the Moderatore left the Chair and the Meeting House, and Messieurs Harvey and McGregore follow'd him. Several Messengers were sent after them to desire them to come in again, but all in vain; and they refus'd to do it."<sup>30</sup>

From this it appears that David McGregore had been ordained at a previous meeting of the presbytery when but a few were present. It was not that the majority had anything against the popular young David McGregore, but they resented not having a voice in the action, especially since it was taken at the time when the presbytery was disturbed over the Hillhouse matter. Coming as it did added more fuel to the fire of the controversy, and became the immediate factor in the division of the presbytery.

When Moorhead, Harvey, and McGregore walked out of the presbytery it was the beginning of a permanent cleavage. Nine years later Moorhead and McGregore were instrumental in forming the Presbytery of Boston which held itself aloof from the Londonderry Presbytery. From this point onward the forces of Presbyterianism in colonial New England were definitely divided.

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<sup>30</sup> Le Mercier, Remarks, p. 25.

Following the withdrawal of Moorhead, Harvey, and McGregore, the Presbytery of Londonderry continued to carry on with reduced strength for several years. There is less material for the later period as compared with the earlier one. Owing to the lack of direct material it is impossible to determine how active this presbytery was in supervising the affairs of the pastors and churches under its care. There is, however, some information about the men who composed the presbytery in some of the town histories. Following the division in 1736 when the presbytery was reduced to about five or six active members, there were still further losses. Ward Clark of Kingston died on May 6, 1737. Thomas Thomson, the young pastor of the Londonderry Church died September 22, 1738. James Hillhouse did not fit in well with the presbytery owing to his overbearing manner and did not really become an active participant in it. He died in 1740.

From all evidence the presbytery never fully recovered from the extensive losses which it suffered during the latter part of the first decade of its existence. To be sure, there were some additions to its membership which helped to rejuvenate it, but on the whole it seems to have become a rather weak, and ineffective body.

The most prominent man connected with the Presbytery during the later stage of its existence was the Rev. William Davidson,<sup>31</sup> Pastor of the first or East Parish Church at Londonderry, New Hampshire.

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<sup>31</sup>Davidson was born in Ireland about 1714 and was educated in Scotland, graduating in 1733 from one of the Scottish Universities.

In 1739 he was called to be the successor of Thomas Thomson, and was ordained and installed by the Londonderry Presbytery early in 1740.<sup>32</sup> He remained as the pastor of the church until his death on February 15, 1791. Parker, in his History of Londonderry gives a somewhat prejudiced account of Davidson owing to the fact that he did not participate in the Great Awakening. He says:

"Mr. Davidson and his church stood aloof from all participation in the work and rather deprecated its approach. Mr. Davidson dissented from such evangelical views, opposed the religious movements of his day, and as the consequence, shared not in refreshing influences which descended copiously upon sister churches and congregations.

Although he and those in the Presbyterian connection who sympathized with him, adhered to the Confession of faith, and had in constant use the Assembly's Larger and Shorter Catechism in their families, schools, and congregations; yet in their preaching they left out, as has been justly said, the distinctive doctrines of the Calvinistic system; dwelt chiefly on moral and practical duties; were not zealous for the conversion of sinners, and in their preaching and devotional services lacked that action and fervor which distinguished the advocates, promoters, and subjects of the great revival. The result was that vital godliness greatly declined in this church, few were added by profession, discipline was much neglected, and the distinctive lines between the church and the world nearly obliterated."<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup>Early Records of Londonderry, pp. 225, 226.

<sup>33</sup>Parker, Londonderry, pp. 150-51.

For Mr. Parker to say that "vital godliness declined in Mr. Davidson's church owing to the fact that he did not participate in the so-called revivals of religion which occurred during the period is an injustice to Davidson. It is obvious that the sympathies of Parker are definitely with the revivalists and in his mind they represent the true movement of religion.

Davidson approached his work in a mild, friendly way. It was said of him that he was not particularly distinguished for the brilliance of his talents but that he was loved and respected for the qualities of his heart and the virtues of his life.<sup>34</sup> Frequently throughout his long pastorate he was known to remit to individual parishioners their tax for his support when he knew that it was too great a hardship upon them to pay it. He studied constantly to maintain the peace and harmony of his society. Many elders were added to his church session during the more than fifty years that he was pastor. Undoubtedly he was an active member of the Londonderry Presbytery throughout the years during which it existed.

There were other ministers beside Davidson who turned to this presbytery after 1740. In August or September, 1747 the presbytery ordained Robert Dunlap at the French Presbyterian church in Brunswick, Maine. The Brunswick town records show that the presbyters who participated were Le Mercier, Morton, Davidson, Wilson, and Lothlius.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup>Parker, Ibid., p. 159.

<sup>35</sup>Wheeler, History of Brunswick, p. 339.

Dunlap was dismissed from his pastorate in 1760. It is hardly likely that he was a very regular attendant at the meetings of the presbytery owing to his location.<sup>36</sup>

The name of Morton appears in connection with the ordination of Dunlap. From other sources we know that James Morton was installed at Blandford, Massachusetts, in 1748 and continued there until 1767 when he became involved in certain disputes with his people and was dismissed.<sup>37</sup> He spent the remainder of his life farming. He was probably associated with the presbytery from 1747 to 1767.

The Londonderry Presbytery also installed John Kinhead as pastor of the church in Windham, New Hampshire in 1750.<sup>38</sup> Within five years he was dismissed for conduct unbecoming a minister and his successor in Windham, Simon Williams was ordained and settled by the Presbytery of Boston.

The Londonderry Presbytery is generally thought to have gone out of existence sometime between 1765 and 1781. A survey of the presbyterial strength for the year 1765 reveals that two of the men who were active in 1740 had died, Rutherford in 1756 and Le Mercier in 1764. Other members had been dismissed from their charges--McClenachan

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<sup>36</sup> The name of Lothlius appears among those who ordained Dunlap. There appears to be no reference to him in any other account so we do not know anything more about his connection with the Londonderry Presbytery.

<sup>37</sup> Keep, Historical Discourse, p. 17.

<sup>38</sup> Lawrence, New Hampshire Churches, p. 144. See also Morrison, History of Windham, p. 52.

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from Blandford in 1747, Robert Dunlap from Brunswick in 1760, and John Kinkead from Windham in 1765. This survey reveals that there were only three active members after 1765 of whom we have any record. James Morton remained as pastor at Blandford until 1767, John Wilson was pastor of the Presbyterian church in Chester until 1778 and William Davidson was pastor at Londonderry East Parish until 1791.

The fact that Simon Williams, the successor of John Kinkead at Windham, was ordained and installed by the Presbytery of Boston in 1765 is suggestive regarding the condition of the Londonderry presbytery. It may indicate that the Windham church had changed its presbyterial affiliation owing to the fact that the first presbytery was no longer functioning. However that may be, there is no definite record of any actions of the Londonderry Presbytery after this period. This, of course, does not mean that the few remaining members did not keep it going in a feeble sort of way for several years. We are, however, certain that some time previous to 1781 the Londonderry Presbytery had been dissolved. This we know from the fact that on October 23, 1781, William Davidson, together with a commissioner from his congregation, applied to the Presbytery at the Eastward requesting that they be admitted to that body inasmuch as the Presbytery of Londonderry was no longer in existence owing to the death and removal of its members. On the weight of this testimony they were received into the membership of the Presbytery at the Eastward.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Minutes of the Presbytery at the Eastward October 23, 1781. A typed copy of these minutes is in the possession of the Presbyterian Historical Society in Philadelphia.

## Chapter V

### THE PRESBYTERY OF BOSTON

In 1745 three Presbyterian ministers, John Moorhead, David McGregore, and Robert Abercrombie, who were unaffiliated with any presbytery felt a need for some type of organization to supervise the program of their respective churches. They gained the support of their individual congregations for their undertaking and set aside the third Wednesday of March, 1745, as a day of fasting and humiliation to ask the counsel of God in this matter.<sup>1</sup> Following this day of preparation they met at Londonderry on April 16, 1745, together with their respective elders, and "being satisfied as to the divine warrent, with dependence upon God for Counsel and Assistance by prayer they constituted themselves into a presbytery, to act so far as their present circumstances would permit them according to the Word of God and the Constitution of the Presbyterian church of Scotland, agreeing with that perfect rule."<sup>2</sup> This organization was known as the Presbytery of Boston. Robert Abercrombie was chosen the first clerk and John Moorhead the first moderator.

As previously noted Moorhead and McGregore had been associated with the Presbytery of Londonderry until they dropped from the roll in 1736.<sup>3</sup> These two men had remained without any presbyterial

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<sup>1</sup>Minutes of the Presbytery of Boston. The minutes of this Presbytery have been preserved, and this author has had available a typed copy of them through the courtesy of the Department of History of the Presbyterian Church, U.S.A.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., Minutes for April 16, 1745.

<sup>3</sup>See Chapter 4, p.

affiliation until they were joined by a young man who had been licensed to preach before leaving Scotland, Mr. Robert Abercrombie. He arrived in New England in 1740 and was ordained and installed at Pelham, Massachusetts in 1744. He had preached among the Presbyterians of Boston and Worcester before settling at Pelham. It was while at Worcester that he met the group which later moved out to settle the town of Pelham. He had been ordained there on August 30, 1744, by a council consisting of Moorhead and McGregore and four congregational pastors.

John Moorhead, another of the charter members, has previously appeared in connection with the establishment of the Presbyterian church at Long Lane, Boston, and also a member of the Londonderry Presbytery. He was a vigorous champion of Presbyterian principles and his participation in this presbytery continued more than thirty years.

The third charter member, David McGregore, pastor of the West Parish Church of Londonderry, New Hampshire was the son of James MacGregore who was the first pastor of the Londonderry Church. David McGregore studied theology under the Rev. Matthew Clarke, the elderly minister who took charge of the Londonderry Church following the death of James MacGregore. With this training he was called in 1739 to be the pastor of the newly formed West Parish in Londonderry.<sup>4</sup> David McGregore was particularly acceptable to the orthodox Scots, for

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<sup>4</sup>On the formation of the West Parish see Chapter III, pp.

while not having the privilege of a university education he was capable and interesting preacher. Many people from the surrounding communities came to hear him. Indeed, his ability became so widely known that he was given a call in 1755 by the Presbyterian Church in the city of New York, but he declined it and remained with his congregation in Londonderry until his death on May 30, 1777.<sup>5</sup> He was particularly faithful in the pastoral supervision of his people; he visited them regularly, catechizing the children, and checking on the religious practices of the adults. His concern for the Presbyterian cause did not confine itself to his own congregation, for he was one of the most active and aggressive members of the Boston Presbytery throughout its entire existence. He endeavored to draw the small churches on the frontier into a vital connection with the presbytery, and he himself often went to preach at these vacant churches. He also realized the need for training young men in the work of the ministry and he took it upon himself, as was the custom in that day, to train several young men.<sup>6</sup>

Unlike other presbyteries, the Presbytery of Boston was one presbytery in eighteenth century New England that did not die out for want of a sufficient number of members to carry it on. There was a steady

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<sup>5</sup>Alexander, S. D., The Presbytery of New York 1738 to 1888 (New York, 1888), p. 17.

<sup>6</sup>It is definitely known that he trained Samuel McClintock, later the pastor of the Congregational Church at Greenland, New Hampshire; and also John Houston, later pastor of the Presbyterian congregation at Bedford.

increase in its membership throughout the thirty years which it existed. By 1775 the membership had grown to the point that they felt that they were in position to go ahead with the organization of a Synod.

During the first stage of growth (1745-1755) two ordained ministers and their congregations joined the presbytery. On October 4, 1748, the Rev. Jonathan Parsons and his Newburyport congregation were received into the membership of the Presbytery. Jonathan Parsons had come to this church from the Congregational Church at Lyme, Connecticut, where he had been ordained in 1731.<sup>7</sup> He was an active participant in the affairs of the presbytery for more than twenty-five years. When Jonathan Parsons accepted the call of the Newburyport church on March 19, 1746, it did not look like a very promising field. The church was composed of nineteen people who had left the First Congregational Church and of thirty-eight who had withdrawn three years before from the Third Church.<sup>8</sup> The excitement of the Great Awakening had been largely responsible for the division in the other two churches. George Whitefield had shared actively in this and he was responsible for inviting Jonathan Parsons to come and take over this new church. Jonathan Parsons came to the church and was installed in a very simple

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<sup>7</sup> Additional material on Jonathan Parsons may be found in Coffin's History of Newbury, American Quarterly Register, Vol. XIV, Stearn's and Vermilye's Historical Discourses and Sprague Annals of the American Pulpit, Vol. III, and Dexter, Yale Graduates.

<sup>8</sup> Coffin, Sketch of the History of Newbury, p. 216.

manner, without the assistance of any Council. He simply stood before the congregation, and with uplifted hand said: "In the presence of God and these witnesses, I take this people to be my people," and the Congregation arose and clerk said in their behalf: "In the presence of God and these witnesses we take this man to be our minister."<sup>9</sup> Thus was begun a relationship which continued until the death of Parsons July 19, 1776. Shortly after the installation of Parsons the church considered the matter of affiliating with some presbytery. With this in mind they elected six ruling elders to constitute the church session. They did not join the Presbytery of Boston without taking time for careful consideration. They investigated the manner in which it had come off from the first presbytery, they made sure that the presbytery would not object to their custom of electing their elders annually and that they would not be bound to any particular form in the administration of the sacraments, and they proved to their own satisfaction that the presbytery was loyal to "the great doctrines of Grace, as contained in the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms."<sup>10</sup> After this careful investigation Parsons and his congregation applied to the Presbytery and were accepted October 4, 1748.

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<sup>9</sup> Hovey, Origin and Annals of the First Presbyterian Church, Newburyport (Boston, 1896), p. 28.

<sup>10</sup> Hovey, Ibid., pp. 30, 31.

The second combination of pastor and people that turned to the presbytery during this period was the Rev. Solomon Prentice,<sup>11</sup> and his church at Easton, Massachusetts. His church did not represent the whole community but only that portion of it that were loyal to Prentice after years of haggling over the location of the meeting house. The majority of the church members adhered to Prentice, but the majority of the parish turned against him. His supporters built their own meeting house on November 2, 1752, and decided to change their form of ecclesiastical government to conform to the Presbyterian Form. They declared in favor of the discipline and order of the "ancient and renowned" church of Scotland. The minutes of the presbytery do not show the exact date when this Easton congregation was received into that body but it was probably in the latter part of the year 1752, for at the meeting of the presbytery in August, 1753, Solomon Prentice and his congregation are listed on the roll of the Presbytery.<sup>12</sup>

During the first ten years three men were ordained to the ministry and settled in parishes by the Presbytery. On June 14, 1748, Alexander Boyd was licensed to preach by the Presbytery. He was sent

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<sup>11</sup> Solomon Prentice was born in Cambridge, Massachusetts May 11, 1705 and graduated from Harvard University in 1727. He was ordained and settled first at Grafton, Massachusetts December 29, 1731. During his ministry he became such a fervant supporter of George Whitefield, and came to adopt so many of the prculiarities of the "new light" preachers, and had so many of the itinerant evangelists in his pulpit that his congregation became alienated against him and he was compelled to request his dismissal in 1747. He was then called to Easton and was installed there November 18, 1747. For a detailed discussion of the troubles which rent the Easton Church during the pastorate of Prentice see, Chaffin, William F., History of the Town of Easton, Massachusetts (Cambridge, 1886), pp. 105-40.

<sup>12</sup> Minutes of the Presbytery of Boston, August 19, 1753.

out to supply among the vacant churches which looked to the presbytery for preaching, and as a result he received calls from the churches at Kingstown, Georgetown, Sheepscoate, Rousick, none of which he accepted. In 1754 he accepted a call from New Castle, Maine and was ordained by the presbytery at Newburyport, Massachusetts on September 19 of that year.<sup>13</sup>

Mr. Alexander McDowell was licensed to preach by the Presbytery March 18, 1752. The next year he was given a call by the town of Colerain, Massachusetts, which he accepted. On the last Tuesday of September, 1753, he was ordained and installed pastor at Colerain.<sup>14</sup>

On August 19, 1753, Mr. Robert Burns was licensed to preach by the Presbytery, and the following month the congregation and District of Palmer united in extending a pastoral call to him. The Presbytery met at Palmer on November 14th and proceeded with his ordination and installation.<sup>15</sup>

By the end of the first ten years the Presbytery also had three men under its care who had been licensed to preach but who had not been ordained. They were John Houston, Samuel McClintock and Daniel Mitchell.

A survey of the first ten years reveals that beside the three charter members five other ordained ministers had been added to the presbytery. However, the net gain in membership was only three, for

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<sup>13</sup>Minutes of the Presbytery of Boston, September 18, 19, 1754.

<sup>14</sup>Minutes of Presbytery of Boston, September 1753, on the last Tuesday.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., November 14, 1753.

two of the ministers had been dropped from the roll of the Presbytery during this period. Solomon Prentice was dismissed in 1754 and Robert Abercrombie was suspended in 1755. The presbytery not only had more pastors and more candidates for the ministry than when it was organized, but it also had more vacant churches which looked to it for support and aid in obtaining ministerial services. The Presbytery of Boston had grown considerably during its first ten years.

The minutes of the presbytery had been lost for the second period (1755-1770) of the presbytery's development. We would be unable to follow the progress of the presbytery through this time if it were not for the fact that the minutes begin again in 1770 and a list of the ministers and churches is given at the beginning of the minutes. With this information it is possible to piece together the development of the presbytery during this fifteen years by using biographical and historical material from other sources. The roll is given by the clerk of the presbytery for the year 1770 on the title page which reads as follows:

"This Book begins Octob. 24th 1770  
 A True and Correct Copy of the  
       Minutes  
 of the Revd Presbytery now called  
       of Presby of Boston  
 consisting of Twelve Congregas whose  
       Ministers  
 are as followeth  
   John Moorhead.....Boston  
   David McGregore.....Londonderry  
   Jonathan Parsons.....Newburyport  
   Danl Mitchell.....Pembroke  
   John Huston.....Bedford  
   Moses Baldwin.....Kingston  
   \*Richd Graham.....Pelham  
   Saml Perley.....Seabrook  
   Thoms Pierce.....(His place ye Scribe  
                               knos not)  
   Simon Williams.....Windham  
   John Strickland.....Oakham

\*Since deceased"<sup>16</sup>

Apparently the scribe who drew up this list deliberately refused to mention the name of John Morrison of Peterborough who had been located there in 1766 and certainly was a member of the presbytery but was under a cloud owing to his questionable conduct. Thomas Pierce was located at Scarboro, Maine and Moses Baldwin may have been at Palmer, Massachusetts instead of Kingston, New Hampshire. In other respects this list of the members of the presbytery for the year 1770 appears to be accurate. The first question which naturally arises is in regard to the men, who were connected with the presbytery in 1755 but who do not now appear on its roll. Alexander Boyd is one of these. He had been settled at New Castle, Maine in spite of a minority protest in 1754. This minority was chiefly composed of Congregationalists and they continued their agitation against him after his installation. At the annual meeting in 1756 the town decided to inquire into the reasons why the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper had not been administered by Mr. Boyd since his ordination. The town further voted that the conduct of Boyd was a grievance to them and they sent a man to presbytery to give an account of the matter. Before the end of the year 1758, the town had succeeded in getting the presbytery to remove Mr. Boyd from his pastorate.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>At the beginning of the Minutes of the Presbytery of Boston for October 24, 1770.

<sup>17</sup>Greenleaf, Jonathan, Ecclesiastical History of Maine (Portsmouth, 1821), pp. 101, 102. The subsequent history of Boyd is not known.

Robert Burns, who had been settled at Palmer in 1753, had a brief and troublous pastorate. The Session records hint at one cause of the dissatisfaction: "At the quarterly session held June 3, 1756, the Elders then present unanimously refused to assist Mr. Burns in the administrating of the Lord's Supper unless he would perform ministerial visits, and catechize yearly the several quarters of the parish; likewise unless he would preach the Saturday before and the Monday after the Sacrament."<sup>18</sup> Charges of immorality were also brought against him and he ceased to perform the duties of pastor early in the year 1757.<sup>19</sup> The exact date when his relation with his congregation was severed by the Presbytery is not known owing to the loss of the presbyterial records.

Alexander McDowell, who had been settled in Coleraine, Massachusetts in 1753 continued in this pastorate for about eight years when he was dismissed owing to his intemperate habits.<sup>20</sup>

On analyzing the roll of the Presbytery in 1770 it becomes obvious that John Houston, one of the three licentiates in 1755, had been ordained sometime during that interval and settled at Bedford, New Hampshire. From the Bedford town records it appears that he was ordained to the work of the ministry of September 28, 1757, and settled as the first minister of the town.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>The Session Records of the Palmer Church as quoted in Temple, History of Palmer, p. 143.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 143. Temple says that Burns afterwards moved to Pennsylvania and spent the rest of his life on a farm.

<sup>20</sup>McClellan, Charles F., Early Settlers of Coleraine, Massachusetts, (Greenfield, 1885), p. 38.

<sup>21</sup>History of Bedford, New Hampshire (1891), p. 140.

Daniel Mitchell, another of the preachers licensed before 1755, appears in 1770 as the pastor of the Presbyterian church in Pembroke, New Hampshire. A good share of that town were Scots and they were not satisfied with a Congregational minister, so in 1760, when they were strong enough to support a pastor of their own faith, they called Daniel Mitchell.<sup>22</sup> He was ordained and settled as pastor of this church December 3, 1760.<sup>23</sup>

Samuel McClintock, the third man who had been licensed by the Presbytery in 1755, does not appear on the roll in 1770. This was due to the fact that he had been called to the Congregational Church in Greenland, New Hampshire, and had been ordained and settled there November 3, 1756.<sup>24</sup> Since he changed denominations, he evidently gave up his affiliation with the Presbytery.

The number of men on the roll of the Presbytery in 1770 indicates that several men had joined the Presbytery during the intervening fifteen years. These were Simon Williams, Thomas Pierce, Moses Baldwin, Samuel Perley, Richard Graham, John Strickland and John Morrison.

Simon Williams came to New England from Pennsylvania at the request of Jonathan Parsons and settled in Windham, New Hampshire, in December, 1766.<sup>25</sup> He was ordained and installed by the Boston

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<sup>22</sup>Carter, N. F., and T. L. Fowler, History of Pembroke, New Hampshire (Concord, 1895), pp. 257-59.

<sup>23</sup>Lawrence, Robert F., New Hampshire Churches (1856), p. 402.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 58. For additional material on Samuel McClintock see Diary of David McClure, p. 2; Spragues Annals, Vol. I, p. 525-28; and Brewster, Rambles about Portsmouth, Vol. II: 160-66.

<sup>25</sup>Lawrence, New Hampshire Churches, pp. 144, 145; Morrison, History of Windham.

Presbytery. He was proficient as a classical scholar and soon after his ordination opened a private academy which he conducted during most of his ministry. Under his tuition many young men were given a classical education, for he sometimes had forty or fifty scholars in his academy. Simon Williams carried this work in addition to his regular duties as the pastor of the Windham church. Many of the pastors during this period took it upon themselves to train the young men, since there was a great scarcity of secondary and higher institutions of learning.

Thomas Pierce, whose location is not mentioned, was listed by the scribe as a member of the Presbytery. From another source we find that he was located at Scarborough, Maine.<sup>26</sup> He had been invited by the town to settle as their pastor in September, 1762. Since he favored the Presbyterian polity the ordination was performed by the Presbytery of Boston in the Presbyterian meeting house in Newburyport within a few months after the town extended him their call. The church at Scarborough continued Presbyterian only throughout the pastorate of Pierce which ended with his death January 26, 1775.

Moses Baldwin was the pastor of the church in Kingston or Palmer, Massachusetts. He had been installed by the Boston Presbytery on June 17, 1761.<sup>27</sup> He remained with them until 1811. He is said to have been patient and longsuffering, remaining with his people in

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<sup>26</sup> Greenleaf, Ecclesiastical History of Maine, p. 48.

<sup>27</sup> Temple, History of Palmer, pp. 217-221.

spite of a very meager income.<sup>28</sup>

Samuel Perley on January 31, 1765 became the first pastor of the newly organized Presbyterian church in Seabrook, New Hampshire.<sup>29</sup> He may have had something to do with the gathering of the church as he probably lived in the town prior to his settlement. He remained an active member of the Presbytery of Salem, which was a descendant of the Presbytery of Boston, until it ceased to function in 1791.

Richard Graham appears on the roll of the Boston Presbytery in 1770 as the pastor at Pelham, Massachusetts. From the records of the town of Pelham we discovered that he had been ordained and installed in 1763 by the Boston Presbytery. He continued there until his premature death February 25, 1771, at thirty-two years of age.<sup>30</sup>

John Strickland appears in 1770 as the pastor at Oakham, Massachusetts. The town called him in August, 1766, at a salary of sixty-six pounds per annum. Within a year he had gathered a church with about thirty members, and since the church was organized along Presbyterian lines, he was ordained and installed by the Presbytery of Boston as pastor of the church in April, 1768. It was not long, however, before the congregationalists of the town began to

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<sup>28</sup>Town Records as quoted in Temple, History of Palmer, p. 218: His salary part of the time was paid in food products, wheat at five shillings per bushel, rye at three and four pence per bushel and good grass fed beef at twenty shillings per hundred.

<sup>29</sup>Lawrence, New Hampshire Churches, p. 133.

<sup>30</sup>Parmenter, History of Pelham, pp. 116-18, 123, 261.

object to the Presbyterian procedure. By 1772 the majority of the inhabitants were Congregationalists and they voted to change the polity of the church and requested the dismissal of Strickland who left Oakham on June 2, 1773. This did not mean that his contact with the Presbytery of Boston was broken, however, for he was installed on July 13, 1774 as the pastor of the Presbyterian church in the township of Nottingham-West, later Hudson, New Hampshire. He remained there until 1782.<sup>31</sup>

As we have noted, the Presbytery of Boston in 1770 consisted of at least eleven ministers and their respective congregations. During the remaining five years of the presbytery's existence and its third stage (1770-1775) there were still further additions to its membership. Joseph Patrick was ordained and installed by the presbytery as the pastor of the church at Blandford, Massachusetts on the last Tuesday of June, 1772.<sup>32</sup> On the second Wednesday of July, 1773, Alexander McLean, a native of Scotland and a physician as well as a minister, was installed by the Boston Presbytery as the pastor at Bristol, Maine.<sup>33</sup> He remained there as the active pastor until 1795. At this same meeting of the presbytery George Gilmore was ordained without a charge. Nathaniel Whittaker, D.D., together with his congregation at Salem, Massachusetts, joined the Presbytery of

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<sup>31</sup>Dexter, Graduates of Yale College, Vol. II, pp. 716-18.

<sup>32</sup>Minutes of the Presbytery of Boston, May 13, 1772.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., Second Wednesday of July 1773, cf. Greenleaf, Ecclesiastical History of Maine, p. 148.

Boston May 25, 1774.<sup>34</sup> Also at this time two other ordained ministers joined the presbytery, Nathaniel Merrill, and Aaron Hutchinson. John Urquhart, a Presbyterian who had been licensed to preach by the Presbytery of Allon in North Britain, was taken under the care of the Presbytery of Boston September 13, 1774, and the next year he was ordained and installed as the pastor at Warren, Maine. Thus during the last five years seven additional ministers were affiliated with the Presbytery.

There were, however, certain losses for this period which must be considered in evaluating the growth of the Presbytery. Joseph Patrick was dismissed in 1774 from the pastorate of Blandford owing to his pronounced intemperance.<sup>35</sup> John Morrison of Peterborough was in bad repute and therefore was not considered to be an active member of the presbytery. There had been three losses by death. Richard Graham, the pastor at Pelham, died February 25, 1771, and John Moorhead, of Boston, died in December, 1773 and Thomas Pierce of Scarborough, Maine, died January 26, 1775. After the death of Moorhead part of the Boston congregation withdrew from the Boston Presbytery and joined the Presbytery at the Eastward. In 1775 Jonathan Parsons and his Newburyport

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<sup>34</sup> Nathaniel Whittaker, D.D., was born February 22, 1732 at Long Island, New York. Graduated from Princeton 1752, settled in Salem July 28, 1769. Resigned Salem February 24, 1784, died January 21, 1795. See Joseph B. Felt, Annals of Salem (Boston, 1855), Vol. II, p. 626.

<sup>35</sup> Keep, John, Historical Discourse (Ware, 1886), p. 19.

congregation withdrew in an irregular manner from the Boston Presbytery and also joined the Presbytery at the Eastward.

Nevertheless, in spite of the losses by death and removal the Boston Presbytery appears in 1775 to be in a strong position for a presbytery in New England. It has grown from a little group of three pastors and their churches to more than a dozen pastors and even more congregations. This, of course, is not to imply that all the churches were strong. Many of the vacant Presbyterian congregations were only small groups of ten, fifteen or twenty families which could do little more than support an occasional supply preacher. These Scots did, however, make heroic efforts to settle a regular Presbyterian pastor in their communities. They frequently struggled for years with their Congregational neighbors in an effort to make the church of the town Presbyterian. This naturally meant that the Presbyterian Church and pastor were frequently in a precarious position, for on occasions more Congregationalists would move into the town and uproot the Presbyterian order. In spite of such difficulties the Scottish element which had spread out into many towns in Maine, New Hampshire, and Massachusetts were making a serious effort to support the church in Presbyterian manner.

The growth of the Presbytery had been such through the thirty years since its organization that it is not remarkable to find the members optimistic for the future and making plans for a Synod. It now looked at last as if Presbyterianism were going to get a strong foothold in New England, for ministers and churches were turning to it. From the standpoint of the members of the Presbytery of Boston it was a hopeful day for Presbyterianism.

Chapter VI  
THE SYNOD OF NEW ENGLAND

The synod of New England was essentially a continuation of the Presbytery of Boston. Ever since 1770 the members of the Boston Presbytery had been planning to organize a Synod. As has been pointed out before, a Synod is a higher ecclesiastical court than a presbytery and is essentially a court of appeal from the decisions of the lower judicatures. A Synod covers the territory of several presbyteries. The aim of the Boston presbyters was to establish a Synod. For reasons which will be explained later there were no other presbyteries in position to join with them in their Synodical enterprise. Thus in spite of the fact that they were faced with great obstacles and had only a slight hope of success, thirteen members of the Boston Presbytery met at Seabrook, New Hampshire on May 31, 1775 and proceeded with their plans to divide their one presbytery into three smaller ones so that they would be technically in position to organize a Synod.<sup>1</sup> The churches in the eastern part were grouped together in the Presbytery of Salem, which was composed of the following ministers and their congregations: National Whittaker of Salem, Samuel Perley of Seabrook, Alexander McLean of Bristol, Maine, and Benjamin Blach. John Urquhart of Warren, Maine was also probably a member of this presbytery. The churches in the central area, chiefly

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<sup>1</sup>Minutes of the Presbytery of Boston, May 31, 1775.

in the vicinity of Londonderry, New Hampshire, were formed into the Presbytery of Londonderry which consisted of: David McGregore of Londonderry, Daniel Mitchell of Pembroke, Simon Williams of Windham, John Strickland of Nottingham, and some congregations without pastors such as Peterborough and others. The western territory, mainly in Massachusetts, was called the Presbytery of Palmer and consisted of: John Houston of Bedford, New Hampshire, Moses Baldwin of Palmer, Nathaniel Merrill of Pelham, Aaron Hutchinson, George Gilmore, and Joseph Patrick and congregations at Blandford, and Coleraine. The Presbytery of Boston had now become three separate bodies. This move appeared to be highly reasonable, for it was easier then for the various churches to take their problems to the presbytery and it was also easier for the presbytery to meet in the town where the difficulty existed. The weakness was that the new presbyteries were so small that it would be difficult for them to consider their problems objectively. Unfortunately for our study these presbyteries either were careless about their records or else they were lost; consequently the independent actions of these presbyteries is not available for our study.

Two days later on June 2, 1775, these three presbyteries officially united together in forming the Synod of New England.<sup>2</sup> With typical Scottish thoroughness they drew up their terms of organization with great care. They had previously made out a model

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<sup>2</sup>Minutes of the Synod of New England, June 2, 1775.

for a Synod which they now adopted as the Synodical Platform. As revealed by the minutes, this model contained seventeen specific items:

- (1) Each presbytery is to meet at least once a year.
- (2) Session books are to be examined by the presbytery and the presbytery books are to be examined by the Synod.
- (3) Appeals from the Session are to be first to the Presbytery and then to the Synod, and no step in this order is to be omitted, except that a body may act ex officio.
- (4) No one is to speak on any question until the Bill is read by the clerk and the case opened by the moderator. After that each member shall be allowed reasonable liberty in his turn.
- (5) No member is to have any precedence over another, except that members are to be called upon according to their seniority in office.
- (6) A minister or church may shift to another Presbytery with the consent of the Synod or mutual consent of the presbyteries.
- (7) Direction that the papers of the Boston Presbytery be delivered to Simon Williams, the stated clerk of the Synod.
- (8) The Synod adopts the Westminster Confession of Faith,<sup>3</sup> Catechisms and the standing rules of the Church of Scotland.
- (9) Each Presbytery is to be subject to the Synod in the same manner as the members of the Presbyteries are subject to their respective bodies.

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<sup>3</sup> You will recall this Confession was also adopted by the Congregational Churches in New England.

- (10) The Synod is to meet at least once a year and elect a clerk and moderator who will continue in office until the next regular meeting.
- (11) All members of the Presbyteries are to meet in the Synod unless by special arrangement on account of distance, in which case a Presbytery may be allowed to send delegates.
- (12) Members of the Synod hope to maintain friendly correspondence with the Synod of New York and Philadelphia.
- (13) They will hold communion with Christians of other denominations of Protestants, provided they hold the Doctrines of Grace agreeable to the Westminster Confession of Faith, although they may differ as to the mode of Church Government.
- (14) Since this Synod is the highest judicature of the Presbyterian Churches in New England, its decisions are final, but parties who are not satisfied with its decisions may enter their protest with their reasons in the Synod's books.
- (15) The present "regulations" may be altered from time to time as God shall give light.
- (16) They assert their right to decide "ecclesiastical" cases as a church court, independent of the power and authority of civil princes. In all civil matters they own their subjection to civil authority.
- (17) Every Presbytery belonging to the Synod is to keep a book of records of their doing and they are to place a copy of the Synod's covenant in the beginning of this book.

The above described terms of organization were accepted by the solemn signing of the following covenant by the ministers and elders of the churches:

"We.....do solemnly covenant one with another that by the help of divine Grace we will conscientiously observe and adhere to the foregoing regulations of the Synod now formed by the Covenant and that we will as we have Ability and opportunity endeavour to promote the Union and Peace, maintain the lawful Authority and future Prosperity and good order of the Synod now named the Synod of New England, agreeable to the foregoing Articles and looking to the great King and Head of the church for his presence with and blessing on this Synod and all its Presbyteries and Churches and for his gracious guidance into all such Measures as may issue in the Exaltation of Christ to his Throne, kingly authority, and Rule in these churches.

"In testimony of this our Covenant, consent and solemn Engagement, we do in the Fear of God herewith subscribe our Names this 2d day of June, 1775."<sup>4</sup>

On the surface the prospects for this Synod in New England looked hopeful. It had about fifteen ordained ministers connected with it and a larger number of churches, and could be compared favorably with the Presbyterian organizations in New York and Pennsylvania. However, the strength of this Synod was more apparent than real. As one examines the facts one is impressed by the absence of certain important ministers and churches. Jonathan Parsons and his strong church at Newburyport were not connected with the Synod, for

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<sup>4</sup>Quoted from the Minutes.

as has been shown, he and his church had joined the Presbytery at the Eastward. After the split in the Boston Congregation only a meager remnant was left to participate in the Synod, and as events worked out this fragment never really became active.

Unfortunately the Synod of New England did not, therefore, include all Presbyterian Churches nor all the presbyteries in New England. A growing Presbytery known as the Presbytery at the Eastward had been organized in Maine and New Hampshire in 1771.<sup>5</sup> It was largely the product of the initiative of the Rev. John Murray, the pastor of the Presbyterian Church in Boothbay, Maine, and largely represented Presbyterianism in Maine. As will be seen in a later chapter, the Presbytery of Boston and Synod of New England held aloof from this body because they did not consider it to be a legitimate presbytery owing to the fact that it allowed John Murray to be a member in good standing when he was under censure by the Presbytery of Philadelphia and the Synod of Ulster, in Ireland.<sup>6</sup> Consequently while the Presbytery was located so that it could have participated in the functions of the Synod and while it would have made a substantial increase to the Synodical strength it was nevertheless ostracized by the Synod of New England. This seriously limited the power of the Synod.

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<sup>5</sup> A fuller account of the presbytery will be found in Chapter VIII.

<sup>6</sup> The Case of John Murray and its bearing on the relations between the New England presbyteries is given in detail in Chapter IV.

There was still another Presbytery which had been organized by 1775 in the vicinity of Hanover, New Hampshire, which was called the Presbytery of Grafton.<sup>7</sup> The men of the Synod were friendly toward this organization and made repeated efforts by communication to induce the Grafton Presbytery to associate with their Synod. There are no records to indicate any willingness on the part of the Grafton men to share in the Synod, and the Grafton Presbytery remained independent from all other Presbyterian organizations throughout the period of its existence. Thus the Synod of New England was in the peculiar position of not accepting one presbytery into its organization and at the same time not being accepted by another. Essentially this first Synod did not represent all the Presbyterian churches in New England but only that portion which had previously joined the Presbytery of Boston.

The prospects for the success of the Synod were also darkened by the rising political turmoil of 1775. In order to appreciate the difficulty which these men faced in the formation of their synod at this particular hour in American history, we need to keep in mind the events which were taking place in the political arena. For several years the emotions of the colonists had been boiling because of the failing of the British parliament and the English King to understand their viewpoint. The government's stupid blundering as a consequence of its policy to extract revenue from the colonists and to control their

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<sup>7</sup>A fuller account of the Presbytery of Grafton will be found in Chapter X.

trade only added fuel to the fire. The Stamp Act of 1765 had almost produced open revolt and a boycott of British goods ensued. In 1768 the quartering of British troops in Boston further aroused the patriots. From this time until the actual outbreak of hostilities the British made a series of unfortunate moves which increasingly stirred up the colonists. The famous Boston Tea Party and actual hostilities were but the flaming out of a long smoldering bitterness.

The Presbyterians of New England could scarcely have selected a more difficult time to establish their Synod than the year 1775. The people's attention was directed toward the possibilities of the coming strife, and they were busy preparing for it. The leading men of the communities were occupied in directing the affairs of the towns and getting support for the conflict. When actual hostilities developed, many of the men went away to the army. As the war progressed, there developed disastrous fluctuations in the currency; it became more and more inflated until it was almost impossible for the ministers and their people to get the bare necessities of life.

The brief life of this Synod was almost coextensive with the struggle of the colonies for independence. It met successively for seven years from 1775 to 1782, having a total of eight regular meetings and one special. The number of ministers in attendance at these annual meetings of elders represented the churches, all of which indicates that many of the churches were seldom represented.

From the records which we possess it appears that the Synod devoted its time to details of administration and the consideration of cases similar to those which it had taken up as the presbytery of Boston. One is impressed by the absence of a forward reaching program.

As has been pointed out, the Synod was operating in a difficult period. The towns were having a difficult time to support their pastors and meet all the extra demands made upon them during the war with England. To add to their difficulties the currency was not dependable, and in some towns, the ministers were paid what appeared to be a fabulous salary, such as two or three thousand pounds a year, but this was depreciated currency and it meant that five or six pounds were not worth one dollar of hard money. During this time some congregations were not careful to see that the minister received his proportionate increase on account of the inflation. The synod records show that John Strickland, while pastor at Nottingham-West was one of the civtims. He appealed to the Synod in September, 1778 for assistance in getting his congregation to pay up his salary saying that he "can't subsist his family thro' the extravagant Price of the Necessaries of Life on account of the Smallness of his Salary & the neglect of the people to pay up his arears."<sup>8</sup> The Synod then recommended that the Society at Nottingham pay up his arrears and make an addition to his salary in order to compensate for the rise

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<sup>8</sup> Minutes of the Synod of New England September 30, 1778.

in price on the necessities of life. The Synod then proceeded to make a general appeal to all the churches under its jurisdiction to see that the pastors were adequately cared for, since many of them are reduced to the "greatest Straights & indegence." The Synod advised the respective presbyteries under its charge to be especially watchful in this regard and assist the pastors in obtaining occasional supply preaching in vacant churches if their own congregations were not in a position to pay them adequately.

Having thus considered this immediate problem of the pastors under its care the Synod took time to examine the cause of the hardships and troubles which were then so much in evidence. The statement of the Synod on this matter is very illuminating and shows its interpretation of the situation.

The Synod enquiring into the Cause of God's Controversy with this Land are of Opinion that among many Causes the following are the principal 1-- the great & general Declinsion of Religion, occasioned by too general a Neglect of the Duties of public & family Worship -- by the Neglect of Church Government which has opened a Door for the spread of Error & increase of erroneous Teachers in the Churches, for the neglect of Family Government & Religion & for the Neglect of civil Government - hence arises the dreadful increase of vice & immorality -- injustice -- oppression -- defrauding & <sup>9</sup>injuring -- a Neglect of the Ministry & their Support.

This statement comes as near to a social pronouncement as we find anywhere in the minutes of these early Presbyterian bodies in New England.

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<sup>9</sup>Minutes of the Synod, September 30, 1778.

Another problem which confronted the Synod was the political views of John Houston of Bedford and the resulting conflict with his congregation. The main cause of his trouble was not that he had committed any personal indiscretions, but that he was not an ardent supporter of the colonies in their struggle for independence. In fact, being a rather outspoken advocate of the continuance of English control, he was certain to get in trouble with the vast majority of his congregation and fellow presbyters who were ardently and aggressively supporting the colonies. As a consequence the members of his congregation refused to renew his contract to preach and the town voted his dismissal on June 15, 1775.

The following incidents show that before his dismissal he suffered personal indignities because of his political views. One night he was taken from his home and ridiculed and insulted. At another time a Congregational minister stopped at his home to have dinner with him. When he found, however that Houston's sympathies were pro-British and that he served tea with his dinner his guest refused to eat with him.

The position of Houston naturally came before the Synod. At its meeting September 4, 1776, it interrogated him concerning his attitude toward the "States of America" and it required him to bring evidence at their next meeting that he had satisfied the civil authorities on the matter of his loyalty. For a couple of years he could not satisfy his fellow presbyters on this score and he was

denied a seat in the Synod. In 1778 the Synod concluded that he could no longer be useful to the congregation at Bedford and by the consent of both parties his pastoral relation was dissolved. However, at the meeting of the Synod September 15, 1779, he presented a satisfactory statement from the civil authorities of New Hampshire regarding his political views and the Synod restored him to his former good standing in that body but not to his church.<sup>10</sup>

Besides dealing with cases which arose from the peculiar circumstances of the period, the Synod was called upon to consider the usual matters relating to sexual irregularities and intemperance. In one case of bigamy<sup>11</sup> where both parties had remarried the Synod judged that the man might lawfully live with his second wife, and that the children by his second marriage could have the privilege of baptism if he made proper public manifestation of repentance. One of the ministers, Nathaniel Merrill of Pelham, came to have a bad reputation because of certain indiscretions in his behavior toward some members of the opposite sex. Of his own volition he made a statement to the Synod in which he spoke of his sorrow for the dishonor which he had brought upon the cause of God because of his actions which, he admitted, were of a character unbecoming a minister. He further stated that he had not indulged in any gross acts. Apparently

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<sup>10</sup>The account of John Houston's partorate and troubles at Bedford are told in the History of Bedford, pp. 140-151.

<sup>11</sup>Since the minutes read that his "first wife is dead in Law to him even if yet alive" it may be that a divorce was obtained, but the implication is that he lived with his second wife unlawfully for a period. See Minutes of the Synod for September 3, 1777.

he regretted exceedingly his conduct for he stated his determination to be, with the help of the Lord, more cautious in the future. The Synod admonished him to walk with greater circumspection relying on divine grace through meek and earnest Prayers for strength.<sup>12</sup> In reviewing the case of Richard Cutler the Synod sustained the Session of Nottingham Church for condemning him for intemperance, and he was required to submit to the sentence imposed upon him or else to remain without his church privileges.

It should be remembered that only a few of the disciplinary cases tried by the individual Sessions ever found their way to the floor of the Synod -- The records of local Sessions abound in various types of disciplinary cases.

When the Synod was organized in 1775 it consisted of three small presbyteries which were a division of the original Boston Presbytery. During the seven years that the Synod was functioning it sustained several losses, as an examination of the membership of the three presbyteries will reveal.

A study of the western Presbytery of Palmer in 1782 reveals the fact that John Houston had been dismissed from Bedford and had joined the Presbytery of Londonderry. The Bedford congregation, as will be seen shortly, shared in the declinature of Simon Williams and withdrew from the Synod in 1782. Moses Baldwin was still the pastor at Palmer, Massachusetts. Nathaniel Merrill had been accused of immorality and as a result had ceased to serve the church in

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<sup>12</sup>Minutes of the Synod for May 15, 1782.

Pelham about the year 1780. Theoretically he still remained on the role of the Presbytery, but not as the pastor at Pelham. George Gilmore and Aaron Hutchinson, while listed as being on the role of the Presbytery in 1775, in reality never took an active part. It is highly probable that Aaron Hutchinson had transferred to the Grafton Presbytery.<sup>13</sup> Joseph Patrick had been dropped by the Presbytery. There had been one addition to the Palmer Presbytery in the person of Samuel Taggart who was ordained and installed at Coleraine, Massachusetts in February, 1777. This indicates that the Presbytery of Palmer was not in a very healthy condition with only two or three settled pastors left on its roll.

By 1782 the middle Presbytery of Londonderry was even in worse condition than the Presbytery of Palmer. The most severe loss was the death on May 30, 1777 of David McGregore, pastor West Parish Church, Londonderry. In 1782 this church was still without a regular pastor and the next year, as will be shown later, the Londonderry congregation joined the Associate Reformed Presbytery of Londonderry.<sup>14</sup> Simon Williams and the Windham Church withdrew and declined the authority of the Synod at its meeting September 11, 1782. Simon Williams was an eccentric character.<sup>15</sup> According to the description of him in the records of the Synod he had frequently conducted himself in a disorderly

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<sup>13</sup> Aaron Hutchinson's name appears on the roll of that body.

<sup>14</sup> For a more complete account of the Associate Reformed Presbytery, see Chapter XI.

<sup>15</sup> Lawrence, New Hampshire Churches, p. 145.

manner, often threatening the Synod that if matters did not please him he would withdraw. At other times he had even insulted and mocked his fellow presbyters and had given way to sudden outbursts or anger. The items which Williams listed in his declinature were such that they could easily have been solved by mutual conference but it appears that he had no intention of trying to resolve these matters, and really used them as an excuse to withdraw. He took with him the elders from two vacant churches, Benjamin Smith the elder from Bedford and James Robertson the Elder from Pembroke. For this and other previous actions he was suspended by the Synod. Daniel Mitchell, the pastor at Pembroke, died December 16, 1776, and no one had taken his place in 1782. As we have seen the Elder from Pembroke was one of those who declined the authority of the Synod along with Simon Williams.<sup>16</sup>

John Strickland of Nottingham-West transferred his membership to the Presbytery of Salem in 1781.<sup>17</sup> The congregation at Peterborough was vacant in 1775 and was attached to the Londonderry Presbytery. In 1778 it called the Rev. David Annan, a member of the Associate Presbytery of New York and at his request withdrew from the Synod of New England and joined his Presbytery. As nearly as can be ascertained John Houston was the only addition to the roll of the Londonderry Presbytery. He transferred his membership after he was put out of his congregation in Bedford. The result of this investigation

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<sup>16</sup>Minutes of the Synod, September 11, 1782.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., Second Wednesday of September, 1781.

shows that in 1782 except for John Houston, who was not a settled pastor, there were no other ministers connected with the Londonderry Presbytery and therefore it was impossible for it to continue to carry on.

The eastern Presbytery of Salem had fared the best of the three. Nathaniel Whittaker, Samuel Perley, Alexander McLean, and John Urquhart were all still on its roll and in addition John Strickland had united with it.

Thus having observed the practical collapse of two of the three presbyteries composing the Synod it is possible to understand the action of the Synod on September 12, 1782: "This Synod taking into consideration the broken circumstances to which the Providence of God hath brought us, by the Death of several of our members, & otherwise, therefore we judge it necessary to dissolve this Synod for the present and form a Presbytery of the whole, by the name of the Presbytery of Salem--Voted".<sup>18</sup> When this Synod dissolved "for the Present" they little suspected that it would be 130 years before another Presbyterian Synod would be established in New England.

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<sup>18</sup>Minutes of the Synod, September 12, 1782.

## Chapter VII

### THE PRESBYTERY OF SALEM

The Synod of New England had not prospered. Its meetings had been poorly attended and it had steadily lost in membership. The few remaining members decided to consolidate into one presbytery. This they did at Londonderry September 12, 1782, in the home of Elder Fisher. The new body was called the Presbytery of Salem. It is obvious that this presbytery did not have a fresh start but that it carried over into it many of the problems which had been so bothersome to the Synod.

The non-participation of many of the so-called members of this presbytery is an index of its weakness and ineffectiveness. Six ministers--Whittaker, Houston, Strickland, Perley, Merrill, Taggart--were present when the presbytery was organized in 1782; but it nominally had on its roll six more ministers, some of whom had churches. They were Urquhart, Baldwin, Williams, McLean, Balch and Gilmore. This meant that supposedly there were twelve ministers and perhaps that many churches still connected with the presbytery. Such a large figure is greatly misleading, however, when one discovers that four of the ministers, Balch, Baldwin, Gilmore, and Williams, never attended a single meeting of the presbytery. It is apparent that these four men had given up their position in the presbytery, and while their churches may have functioned along Presbyterian lines they were no longer of this family of Presbyterian churches. As we know from other sources, Williams of Windham had in 1782 declined the authority of the Synod and had withdrawn, but even so

the Presbytery of Salem apparently considered him to be a member of their organization. Baldwin's church at Palmer became Congregational after he ceased to be pastor and may have done so before that time. In the records of the Presbytery of Salem there is a reference to Gilmore in which they state that they did not know where he was and therefore he was dropped from the roll in 1789. In reality he was never a participant in the presbytery. There is nothing definitely known about Benjamin Balch except that he never was active in the presbytery.

This means that there were really only eight men who at one time or another shared in the activities of the presbytery. Even this becomes less impressive when we realize that Samuel Taggart of Coleraine was present at the organization meeting in 1782, but never bothered to attend after that. In 1785, he and his congregation joined the Associate Reformed Presbytery of New England. John Houston, the former pastor of Bedford, only attended the meetings for two years when he was dismissed and given a letter of recommendation as a minister in good standing. John Urquhart of Warren and Union River, Maine, only attended the presbytery meetings until 1785. Alexander McLean of Bristol only attended the meeting of the presbytery on June 9, 1784 at which time the presbytery dismissed him from their membership and gave him a letter stating he was a Presbyterian minister in good standing. Nathaniel Merrill only attended two meetings of the presbytery one in 1782 and another in 1784.

The record indicates that after 1785 only three ministers, Whittaker, Strickland, and Perley ever attended the meetings of this body. These three men carried the presbytery on for six more years.

The men who actively participated in the Presbytery of Salem spent the most of their time trying to solve the difficulties in which its members were at one time or another involved. The cases of Simon Williams and Nathaniel Merrill which were considered by the presbytery were really carryovers from the days of the Synod. As we observed, at the last meeting of the Synod Simon Williams of Windham declined the authority of that body and withdrew; for this action he was suspended. The Presbytery of Salem reconsidered his case and continued his suspension from year to year. As clerk of the Synod he had all its records which he refused to turn over to anyone else in spite of the repeated efforts of the Presbytery of Salem to secure them. There is no record to show that they were ever successful in getting them. The presbytery finally lost patience with Williams and excommunicated him at their meeting on October 1, 1789.

Nathaniel Merrill had been suspected of immoral conduct before the Synod dissolved and his case was reviewed by it. The Synod had accepted his penitential statements but the reports of evil doing continued and the Presbytery of Salem found it necessary to reconsider his case. The presbytery endeavored to get data concerning his behavior by instructing the members to gather all the information they could through private investigation, but they did not locate much that was definite. Their effort to be absolutely fair is revealed in the following quotation from the minutes of their meeting in Groton

June 9, 1784:

"After the most thorough enquiry & search after evidence against him, respecting the various evil reports spreading about the world concerning him, they find none which can be sustained by this Judicature as at all sufficient to support a censure, they being all without Proof, or at most second hand evidence; and some of them proven to be false."<sup>1</sup>

The presbytery then took the attitude that until positive evidence to the contrary was submitted to them Merrill was to be considered a member in good standing. Since they were of the opinion that the evil reports probably were due to some imprudent action on Mr. Merrill's part they instructed the Moderator to exhort Mr. Merrill to greater watchfulness in the future.

Until the meeting June 11, 1784, Merrill apparently was considered in good standing with the presbytery in spite of many evil reports. He attended that meeting and read a paper in which he expressed the opinion that the voice of the people is the voice of God and that no minister's character ought to be supported against whom a popular clamor has been raised. He stated that this was a matter of conscience with him. Hearing his views the presbytery determined that he could not continue to preach the gospel any longer as he was under general reproach according to his own principles. This action by the presbytery evidently was more than he expected, and

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<sup>1</sup>Minutes of the Presbytery of Salem, June 9, 1784.

before he gave a copy of his paper to the clerk he changed certain words with the design of altering the meaning. However, the presbyters discovered the changes by noting that he had used different ink in the interlineations. He denied making these substitutions, and, for his obvious falsehood coupled with the many scandalous stories circulated about him, the Presbytery judged it necessary to suspend him from the work of the ministry until the next meeting of the Presbytery. He never attended the Presbytery again and each year they renewed his suspension until their meeting October 1, 1789, when they deposed him from the ministry for conduct unbecoming a minister.

Another type of problem the Presbytery frequently had to deal with was that of smoothing out the strained relations between ministers and their congregations. One of the most difficult to handle was that of John Urquhart and his congregations at Warren and later at Union River, Maine. His second marriage was the chief cause of the difficulties. He had been married while in Scotland and had had one daughter, but when he came to America in 1774 he left them in the old country. Since he did not know where he would be located he neglected to give them any mailing address. As we noted before, he was settled as pastor of Warren, Maine, about 1775 and was regularly accepted and settled by the Presbytery of Boston. After his settlement in Warren he began to take a friendly interest in the young women of the community and particularly one young lady. About this time he supposedly received a letter with a black seal which he showed

to a few people but which he lost soon after. He went into mourning as a husband who had lost a wife and he even offered public prayers with his sorrow in mind. It was not many weeks later, however, that his sorrow was changed to joy by the prospect of his second marriage. Not long after he was married to the young lady of his choice, but the people of the community were divided in their opinion regarding Urquhart's actions. Some retained implicit faith in Urquhart and were convinced that he had actually received a letter informing him of the death of his first wife. Others were exceedingly skeptical and thought that he may have forged the letter. His case was brought before the presbytery and after hearing his statement of the case he was upheld. It was not long afterwards that a letter was received by Alexander McLean, the pastor at Bristol, which definitely proved that the first wife was not dead and that she was coming to America. However, the presbytery still sustained Urquhart since they were of the opinion that he was the victim of a forged letter, but believing that his usefulness at Warren was at an end they recommended that he accept a call which he had from the people of the neighboring section of Union River. This he did and he was installed as pastor in September, 1785. Soon his reputation followed him to Union River and he again was the center of violent controversy. This time the trouble was augmented by the arrival of his first wife who came into his home and abused him with the most bitter and offensive language she could command. She arrogantly took possession of the home and ordered the second wife around like a servant. By her tempestuous behavior she disrupted the life of the parish and forced Urquhart to resign. He

gave up his pastorate in the early part of the year 1790 and spent the remainder of his life in retirement. Such an involved issue as this naturally took much of the presbytery's time.<sup>2</sup>

From all accounts probably the most distinguished member of the Presbytery of Salem was Dr. Nathaniel Whittaker, pastor Third church in Salem. He was a man of such impressive bearing that he was selected by Eleazar Wheelock to go to England and Scotland to raise money for Dartmouth College. He had an attractive personal appearance and the reputation for being an excellent pulpit orator. That his interests were wide is indicated by the fact that he mixed in the political agitations of his day and even engaged in trade, but these activities were not always helpful to his position as a pastor. Whatever his good points were he had other qualities which caused him to become the center of controversy wherever he was.<sup>3</sup> He came to Salem in 1769 and before his installation he was careful to explain that he was a Presbyterian and that the church was to be organized on Presbyterian lines.<sup>4</sup> This appeared agreeable to the church for they voted to adopt "his form of church government".

Evidently the decision was not clear to the entire membership for in April, 1772 some forty or fifty families withdrew because the church was being organized along Presbyterian lines with a regular

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<sup>2</sup>The case of John Urquhart appears in the Minutes of the Presbytery of Salem and in Cyrus Eaton, Annals of the Town of Warren (1877), pp. 166-168, 184-187, 198-212.

<sup>3</sup>Richardson, Leon Burr, History of Dartmouth College (Hanover, 1932), p. 51.

<sup>4</sup>Phillips, James Duncan, Salem in the Eighteenth Century (Boston, 1937), p. 342.

session; the society never fully recovered from this loss. On November 27, 1773, a majority of the church requested the pastor to join with them in applying to the Boston presbytery "to take the church under their watch and care". This action was taken in accordance with the conditions of Dr. Whittaker's settlement. As we saw in a previous chapter the church was received by the presbytery in 1774. These various transitions were not accomplished smoothly, for the group that withdrew in 1772 unsuccessfully claimed that they were the real church and that its property belonged to them.

Nor were things peaceful in the relations of Whittaker and the group that had remained with him. He was such an ardent patriot during the Revolution that he antagonized certain members of his church. The fact that after the struggle was over he strongly urged that Tories should not be allowed to return to their homes added to his unpopularity. The dissatisfaction in Whittaker's church in Salem reached such a proportion that on January 7, 1784, about twenty of his members held a meeting and declared that they would no longer be subject to the Presbyterian Government. After investigation into this act the Presbytery declared them to be unworthy of the Communion of Saints until they manifest proper repentance. This group had also called in a Congregational Council to consider the matter a procedure which the presbytery considered to be highly disorderly since they had previously covenanted to be Presbyterians;<sup>5</sup> the society never fully

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<sup>5</sup>Minutes of the Presbytery of Salem, June 11, 1784.

recovered from this loss. The presbytery wrote a long statement of its views and a defense of Dr. Whittaker, but it also recognized the depth of the rupture in the Third Church Salem and his pastoral relationship was dissolved. The Salem church voted February 11, 1784 to reassume the Congregational mode of church government.<sup>6</sup> At their meeting on September 8, 1784, when a call was presented to Whittaker from Canaan in Maine, they advised him to accept it, which he did. In less than five years the presbytery was called upon to investigate the difficulties of Whittaker at Canaan, and decided to call a council of neighboring ministers to consider the nature of the trouble.<sup>7</sup>

The Presbytery of Salem came to an end at Gray, Maine, on September 14, 1791, for the obvious reason that its membership was so reduced that it could not carry on. As we have seen, the active participants in the presbytery had dropped to three ministers after 1785. In 1791 the ranks of these three were reduced by the dismissal of Samuel Perley from his pastorate at Gray, Maine. His parish had been divided by an act of the General Court of the Commonwealth and therefore he considered it advisable for him to give up his pastorate. He was reluctantly dismissed by his fellow presbyters, Whittaker and Strickland, for he had been a regular attendant at all the meetings of that body. Whittaker and Strickland were scarcely in a position to carry on the presbytery for they were both having serious difficulties

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<sup>6</sup>Osgood, Charles S. and Batchelder, H. M., An Historical Sketch of Salem, 1626-1879 (Salem, 1879), pp. 89-90.

<sup>7</sup>Minutes of the Presbytery of Salem, January 15, 1789.

with their own congregations. Thus the presbytery adjourned without setting a definite date for a subsequent meeting and from the records we have no evidence that the presbytery ever met again.

The end of the Presbytery of Salem is significant in the history of Presbyterianism in New England, for it represents the failure of what appeared at one time to be a promising line of Presbyterian churches and presbyteries. It had started in 1745 with the Presbytery of Boston, and that body had grown until at its highest point it had sixteen or seventeen ministers and at least that many churches connected with it. In 1775 the Presbytery of Boston had hopefully proceeded to divide into three presbyteries and then to erect a Synod. However, shortly before the organization of the Synod it had really begun its decline and this continued so sharply under the Synod that it was compelled to retrench after it had been operating only seven years and combine into the Presbytery of Salem which ended in 1791.

When the Presbytery of Salem finished its course in 1791 it was not the end of all the Presbyterian churches which had been at one time or another connected with the Presbytery of Boston and its descendant organizations. It is true that several of the congregations had swung away from the Presbyterian procedure but others had just transferred their connection to another presbytery. When the Presbytery at the Eastward was organized in 1771 there was an opportunity for the churches connected with the Boston body to change their membership if they were so inclined. Thus the Newburyport Church and the major part of the Boston congregation found it

desirable to join the Presbytery at the Eastward. By 1791 the Associate Reformed Presbytery of Londonderry, which had been operating in New England since 1782, had attracted the congregations of Coleraine, Peterborough, Londonderry and the remnant of Boston. Thus the Presbyterian churches which had been at one time or another connected with the Boston Presbytery were not all defunct nor had they all turned to Congregational procedure, but many had merely changed their presbyterian affiliation.

## Chapter VIII

### THE PRESBYTERY AT THE EASTWARD

On June 27, 1771, four elders from the churches of Boothbay, Brunswick, Bristol, and Topsham, all in the province of Maine together with three ministers, Joseph Prince of North Parish, Pownalboro, John Miller of Brunswick, and John Murray of Boothbay met in the meeting-house in Boothbay and organized themselves into the Presbytery at the Eastward. The manner in which this presbytery came to be established is revealed in its constitution: "It having Pleased Almighty God in his adorable providence by a Series of wonderful Steps to bring and fix one minister of Presbyterian Principles, and to Convince and bring over thereto two others of the Congregational way, seemed to be a Special and very particular Call to them to associate themselves into a Presbytery."<sup>1</sup> The Presbyterian minister referred to in this account was John Murray and this clearly indicates that he was the prime mover in the establishment of the presbytery. He convinced two Congregational ministers that the Presbyterian form of church government was the scriptural and superior way of conducting the affairs of the church, and they, in turn, persuaded their congregations to accept the new policy and join in the formation of a presbytery.

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<sup>1</sup>From the Constitution of the Presbytery at the Eastward, a copy of which is attached to the front of its minute book. The Constitution of the presbytery is illuminating as regards the procedure, and doctrinal views of the presbytery.

The Presbytery at the Eastward having organized, then encountered opposition from the other Presbyterian organization in New England as a result of its acknowledgement of John Murray as a Presbyterian minister in good standing. It is impossible to understand the peculiar position of this presbytery apart from a thorough knowledge of the abilities and difficulties of John Murray.

John Murray was born in the County of Antrim in Ireland May 22, 1742. He studied for the ministry at the University of Edinburgh, where he received his Master of Arts degree at the age of eighteen. He came to America in 1763 and within two years had three calls for his pastoral services: Boothbay in Maine, New York City, and the Second Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia. He accepted the latter and thus became the successor of Gilbert Tennent. He was the regular pastor there from the spring of 1765 to the spring of the following year when at his own request, his pastoral relation was dissolved by the Presbytery of Philadelphia. In July, 1766, he became pastor of the Presbyterian church at Boothbay, Maine, where he remained actively engaged in the work of the ministry until after the outbreak of the Revolution, when to protect himself from the British he was forced to reside in Newburyport. While there the Old South Presbyterian Church, which had been without a minister since the death of Jonathan Parsons in 1776, extended him a call. The church at Boothbay strenuously opposed a permanent change, therefore the presbytery did not transfer him until June 1781. Under his leadership the Newburyport church became one of the largest in New England. He died there March 13, 1793.

It is clear from all accounts that John Murray was one of the most eloquent and effective preachers in colonial times. Some of his contemporaries described him as the equal of George Whitfield, and Jonathan Parsons at Newburyport said he had not been surpassed since the days of the apostles. His popularity as a preacher is well attested by the fact that shortly after his arrival in America three churches extended him calls, and each was insistent in its demands for his services. The local histories of Boothbay and Newburyport abound with stories of the manner in which the people were held under the spell of Murray's preaching for an hour or two.<sup>2</sup> It is told that when some of the men of Newburyport unsuccessfully attempted to enlist a company of men in the cause of the colonies they called upon Murray to help them; he delivered such a striking appeal that after he had finished speaking there was a full company of volunteers. Whenever he went to preach at neighboring churches it is a known fact that people would come from far and near to hear him, and that some of the meeting-houses had to be reinforced to meet the strain made upon the building by the crowd which came to hear John Murray. It is also related how one member of the church in Newburyport who wanted to test Murray's ability as a preacher handed him a text just before he went into the pulpit, and Murray used this text to such good advantage that everyone was well pleased.

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<sup>2</sup>Green, Francis B., History of Boothbay (Portland, 1906), p. 81; History of Newburyport (Boston, 1854), p. 17.

John Murray did not rest content with a presentation of his message through sermons, for he was assiduous in his personal visitations and endeavored to guide the spiritual welfare of his people by private counselling and catechizing. As pastor at Boothbay, John Murray began a course of pastoral visitations in which he went to the homes of all the inhabitants, catechizing old and young separately, conversing with everyone individually concerning the state of his soul, and concluding each visit with prayer.<sup>3</sup> An account of each day's visit, with the names of all the persons in each family and the observations made regarding them was entered in his personal record book of which we fortunately have several excerpts. Near the close of the year 1766 after a day spent in visiting he wrote:

"O! pour out thy spirit on these poor families that they may not forget the promises this day made in they sight, that they worship shall be daily, morning, and evening maintained in their houses, and that they will never rest until they have received the Christ into all their hearts...eight unbaptized--all prayerless. Alas! Alas!"

"September 25th: Now this week's visits are finished; what have I done? Have I been faithful? ....I trust the great things of religion have, in my poor way been pressed upon them: Some appear really resolved for God, all were more or less affected ....I fear some have professed what they know not; all have promised family worship, etc. regularly, morning and evening: all have promised to be in earnest about salvation. O LORD, I commit the whole to Thee: breathe on my poor feeble attempts; grant the success, 'tis of thee...Show them thy salvation."

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<sup>3</sup>From the Sessional Records of Boothbay.

"November 11...here I have a sad view of ignorance and carelessness in every house...they acknowledge everything, assent to all that is said; yet conscience sits in a corner inaccessible. It gives me some comfort that I have found one prayerful family...Lord,...increase the number!"<sup>4</sup>

As the above excerpts indicate, John Murray was faithful and thorough in his visitation of the homes of his parishioners. His procedure when calling was as follows:

"1st: Salute the house  
 2nd: Compare list with the family--mark them who can read--catechisables--convenanters--church members  
 3d: Address--1. Children to engage in early religion.  
 2. Young ones to reading, secret prayer, the sabbath, public worship, ordinances, good company, good houses, good tongues, love and concord, fidelity, conversion  
 4: Address parents--1. about their spiritual state  
 2. secret devotion, 3. family worship, government, catechising, 4. sabbath, public worship, sacraments; If church members see what profit--if not remove objections--if in error or vice, convince, reclaim; if in divisions, heal, if poor help.  
 Lastly: exhortation to all-pray."<sup>5</sup>

In his pastoral activities John Murray not only visited his parishioners individually but he also conducted catechising classes in the various quarters of the town. He divided the inhabitants into three classes according to their ages; all under 14 years into one class, all unmarried persons from that upwards in another, and all heads of families into the third. Each class was catechized by itself. The method was to propose questions in the order of the

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<sup>4</sup>Excerpts of his diary are to be found in Greenleaf, Ecclesiastical Sketches, pp. 134-36.

<sup>5</sup>Excerpts, Ibid., p. 133.

the catechism, and to have each person give his answer; there after he would make his comments and see that the question was understood by all. Such a service concluded with a sermon, prayer, and singing. Since he catechized once every month in each quarter of the town and every person once every three months, he thus finished the catechism with each class once each year.

As an outgrowth of his fervent and evangelistic preaching and persistent pastoral visitation, a revival developed in the winter and spring of 1767.<sup>6</sup> This revival was so memorable that the Session described it at length in their records. "It had been very observable that through the whole of the Winter a very unusual seriousness and solemnity appeared amongst the generality of the people here, accompanied with an insatiable desire after the word, and several persons awakened to an anxious concern for their souls....religion became the conversation of all companies....the Pastor's lodging's were then daily crowded with poor souls, that knew not what to do; with whom he often found sweet employment day and night, sometimes till three o'clock in the morning, often till midnight, one company after the other."<sup>7</sup> John Murray always showed himself to be indefatigable in making personal contacts with his members for the sake of considering with them the place of religion in their lives. Not only

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<sup>6</sup>Sessional Records of Boothbay Church.

<sup>7</sup>Sessional Records of the Boothbay Church. An account of the history of the church is given as an introduction to the Sessional Records.

was he instrumental in starting a revival in his own town, but he was equally effective in many of the neighboring places where he visited and preached.

As stated earlier the presbytery began in 1771 with a membership of three pastors, Murray, Miller, and Prince, together with their congregations, and some other vacant churches. The membership of the presbytery grew steadily. The records show that on May 31, 1774 the Rev. Nathaniel Ewer and his congregation at New Market, New Hampshire, were admitted into the presbytery. Jonathan Parsons and his Newburyport congregation foresook the Presbytery of Boston, and on May 8, 1776, were made a part of the Presbytery at the Eastward. It was only two months later, June 19, 1776, that the Newburyport church suffered the loss of its pastor by death. On October 23, 1781, the Rev. William Davidson, the pastor of the East Parish Church in Londonderry, who had been formerly connected with the original Presbytery of Londonderry which had now become defunct, applied, together with his church, to the Presbytery at the Eastward for admission and they were received. Thus after ten years the presbytery had grown to the point where it had five ministers on its roll and numerous churches.

The presbytery had further additions during the remaining twelve years. The Rev. Simon Williams of Windham, New Hampshire, an active member of the Synod of New England until he declined its authority on September 13, 1782, approached the Presbytery at the Eastward shortly after and presented his causes for grievance against the Synod. After showing the Declinature which had been written by him and

stating that he had withdrawn from them he expressed a desire to be received into the Presbytery at the Eastward. The presbytery, on October 1, 1782, weighed the matter and decided to enroll him.

On May 29, 1783, the Rev. Solomon Moore and his congregation at New Boston, New Hampshire, were received into the presbytery. During that same year, November 12th the Rev. Thomas Hibbert and his Congregation at Amesbury, Massachusetts, were taken into the presbytery. During its latter stages the presbytery sustained three losses. Thomas Hibbert was dismissed from his pastorate on November 6, 1788. William Davidson, the venerable pastor at East Derry, died early in 1791 and John Murray died March 13, 1793. As will be noted later the remaining members coalesced with the Associate Reformed Presbytery of New England in 1793.

The Presbytery at the Eastward was an active body during the twenty-two years it existed. It met two, three, and sometimes four times a year, and these meetings were particularly well attended by both minister and elders. The interests and work of the presbytery were varied. This body, like all other regular presbyteries of the time, was occupied with the consideration of certain disciplinary cases which came before it by way of review from the actions of the church sessions. The method of the presbytery in the consideration of these judicial matters is worth pointing out. First, they informed themselves of the exact charge which was being made against the accused. Then the presbytery proceeded to hear all the witnesses on both sides of the case and to examine them carefully; after that it usually

examined the defendant with due care. Having heard all the witnesses it would privately examine all documents presented, weigh the evidence, and render its decision. In this manner the presbytery reviewed charges of drunkenness and fornication which had been made against individual members of the churches.

As one reads the records of the Session of the church in Boothbay and then compares it with the records of the presbytery, it becomes apparent that only a fraction of the disciplinary cases considered by the local session were ever brought before the presbytery for review. Thus in the Boothbay minutes we find that the session considered several cases of fornication and drunkenness during the first eleven years, but only one case of each of the above mentioned were brought before the presbytery. It is apparent, then, that most of the church members were willing to submit to the decision of the session and did not appeal their cases to the presbytery.

Observing carefully the behavior of its ministers, the Presbytery did not hesitate to take drastic action against any who acted in what the Presbytery considered unsatisfactorily. The first case involved a licentiate of the presbytery, Samuel Wheeler. He was licensed November 19, 1772, and was sent to supply the church at Topsham, Maine. In less than two years reports of "gross immorality" were circulated about him. The presbytery after due examination concluded that his license to preach should not be renewed. At a later meeting when it was discovered that he was still preaching and that his "immoralities" were worse than ever the Presbytery rendered

this verdict: "Hereby do, solemnly, & in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, DEPOSE HIM, the said Samuel Wheeler from the character of a preacher of the Gospel and declare him until repentence and reformation has been evidenced to this body....utterly unworthy to [be] received countenanced or employed by the Church of Christ on earth...."<sup>7</sup>

There is no later evidence to show that he ever repented or was reinstated by the presbytery.

The only other minister whose conduct was questioned by the Presbytery was Thomas Hibbert, pastor of the church at Amesbury, Massachusetts. He was charged by certain members of his church with drunkenness. The presbytery called a long list of witnesses and came to this decision, which is so illuminating regarding the attitude and proceedure of the presbytery that we quote in full:

"Resolve unanimously that on a comparison of the several parts of the whole evidence laid before us this P.b.y. are in conscience obliged to believe that the sd Thos Hibbert was really intoxicated wt strong drink on the sd 9th day of February - & that the complaint in that part is fully proved -

2nd That on the 19th of October last he did behave in an indecent & unchristian manner in the house & at the time of publick worship on the Lord's day as it was represented in the complaint of Thos Boardman -

3rdly That in his defence before the P.b.u. he was uttered several things which did not appear consistent wt truth, or wt one another.

4th That from all these things the P.b.y. are bound by scripture by the standing publick platform of P.b.n. government & by their own consciences

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<sup>7</sup>Minutes of the Presbytery at the Eastward October 12, 1774.

to proceed to the exercise of that discipline which is requisite in such cases for maint.g the honor of Christ, the credit of religion & the purrity & peace of the Christian Chh & therefore the said P.b.y. did & hereby do in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ ye only king & head of the church & by virtue of ye power & authority committed by Christ to the officers & jusicatories of his Church, actually depose the sd Thos Hibbert from the office of the Holy ministry, prohibitg him from & discharging him to exercise the same or any part thereof any where in all time coming on pain of the highest censures of the church; & all persons & religious Societies in Commn wt us are hereby forbidden to employ or attend on him in any such act untill the reformation of his life shall have given such evidence of his real reputation as to induce this P.b.y. free from this sentence. That all Stipend promis'd him by his late charge cease from the time he ceased to serve them - That the pulpit of sd Congregation be held & declared vacant - & the said Society is exhort'd to proceed to the Settlement of another minister in his room. And finally that he appear before the sd Ch.h as a private brother & be dealt wt in due from in order to his recov'ry to their Christian charity - or his final excommunication & that they lay their proceedg. before us as far as they have proceeded in the case in our next meeting. This Sentence was pronounced from the Chair & the P.b.y. adjourn'd was before Concluded wt prayer.<sup>8</sup>

It was in this manner that the presbytery endeavored to guard the reputation of the Church of Christ and the honor of religion. The presbytery was careful to see that the position of the church was not defamed by permitting scandals to exist within it.

The Presbytery took a genuine interest in the progress and growth of the churches under its care. Thus one year it ordered that the ministers of the presbytery perform a pastoral visitation

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<sup>8</sup>Minutes of the Presbytery at the Eastward November 6, 1788.

of families in their respective charges.<sup>9</sup> It watched over the vacant congregations and made a serious effort to see that they were furnished with supply preachers; it also arranged for the regular pastors to visit these churches and baptise the children and conduct the Lord's Supper.

The presbytery revived the practice of investigating the operation of the local congregations by a systematic visitation of all the churches in the presbytery. This visitation meant that the presbytery held one of its regular meetings in the church to be examined. In the course of the day the members of the session were called before the presbytery, and they were extensively interrogated concerning the conduct of their pastor whether it was befitting his solemn office as a minister of the Gospel. After this the session withdrew and the pastor was called and several questions were asked of him relating to the conduct of the session, especially regarding its diligence and care in the discharge of its functions. Then the deacons were examined in the same manner, and last of all the representatives of the church. The presbytery made its recommendations to each group and approved or disapproved of its conduct.<sup>10</sup> In this way the presbytery endeavored to keep in touch with the progress of each of its congregations.

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<sup>9</sup>Minutes of the Presbytery at the Eastward, October 14, 1773.

<sup>10</sup>An account of the examination of the Newburyport Church is given in the Minutes of the Presbytery at the Eastward, October 13, 1791.

A period of decline for the churches of New England occurred during the last quarter of the eighteenth century. The Revolutionary struggle upset the quiet, orderly development of many communities; their youth had been scattered abroad and returned home with a diversity of religious ideas. It was also at this time that some ministers and laymen were beginning to rebel openly against the preaching of the torments of hell for those who were not of the elect. This reaction expressed itself in the advocacy of the doctrine of universal salvation. Strangely enough one of the great proponents of this view was another John Murray who was located in Boston during this period. His followers called him "Salvation Murray" to distinguish him from the John Murray because he was not averse to portraying vividly the horrors of the damned. The Presbytery at the Eastward, in order to safeguard its churches from what it considered to be the grave errors of the doctrine of Universalism, decided to exclude any of their church members from the privileges of Christians who "are not free to profess their belief of the future Eternity of Hell Torments."<sup>11</sup>

Endeavoring to counteract what it considered to be the serious decline of religion, the Presbytery published in 1783 a volume entitled "Bath-kol, a Voice from the Wilderness. Being a humble attempt to support the sinking truths of God against some of the

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<sup>11</sup>Minutes of the Presbytery at the Eastward, September 14, 1785.

of the principal errors raging at this time. Or, a joint testimony to the churches under their care by the Presbytery of the Eastward."<sup>12</sup> In this work the presbytery pointed out that the root of most of the sickness of the time was traceable to the prevalence of Deism and Origenism. They further elaborated upon the noticeable disregard for religion as a result of the eight years of war. They considered that the public worship of God was more neglected than it ever had been in New England, and believed that towns closed up their churches simply because they begrudged the expenses of keeping a settled minister. They claimed that some churches had forsaken a "learned, godly ministry for ignorant, fanatical intruders" who were willing to preach without salary, and, furthermore, that in places where ministers preached, the majority of the population seldom attended; and that, of those who did attend, many spent their time "sauntering, gazing, dozing and sneering." They pointed out also that family worship had been given up in thousands of homes and people profaned the Sabbath on wharves and in coffee-houses. They stated that the pious youth from the country learned to disregard religion while on privateers and in the camps, and that intemperance was destroying multitudes of men and some women each year. They bewailed the fact that ante-nuptial offences were almost forgotten to be a crime; that adultery was on the increase; that vile books were being printed and

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<sup>12</sup>A copy of this volume is in the Connecticut State Library.

read with avidity; and that extortion, theft, fraud and lying were becoming more prevalent. The presbytery felt constrained to deliver their testimony against these evils and to oppose the doctrines which they thought were at the root of the trouble; therefore they published Bath-kol.

An interest in the education of theological students was expressed by the Presbytery by "defraying the expenses of educating poor and pious youth for the gospel ministry."<sup>13</sup> Money toward a burse was raised by taking a collection in the various congregations of the presbytery after the pastors had preached a charity sermon. The presbytery carefully selected those who were to receive the benefit of the burse, examining them to see if they were qualified to do college work and if their personal lives were unblemished. If a young man proved acceptable he was permitted to draw upon the fund while pursuing his studies at a recognized institution. Because the Trustees at Dartmouth College made special provision for these students, they were not required to pay any fees or tuition.<sup>14</sup> This fact the presbytery greatly appreciated, and thereafter it instructed all their bursars to attend Dartmouth College. These students were also required to repay with interest the money given them if they changed their denominational affiliation. Thus the two sons of Simon Williams were required to repay what they had received through the burse, because

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<sup>13</sup>A letter of President John Wheelock stating this provision is mentioned in the Minutes of the Presbytery at the Eastward, September 13, 1785.

<sup>14</sup>Minutes of the Presbytery at the Eastward, October 28, 1789.

they entered the Congregational ministry instead of taking one of the Presbyterian churches under the presbytery.<sup>15</sup>

The members of this presbytery along with the other Presbyterians in New England ardently supported the cause of the colonies in the Revolutionary War. Perhaps the person most actively engaged in this work was John Murray. He was a delegate to the Provincial Congress in Watertown in 1775, and he also gave a large share of his time at the early part of the insurrection to organizing Committees of Safety in the towns of Maine and New Hampshire and urging men to enlist in the army. So great was the contribution which he rendered to the defense of this area and to the morale of those who opposed the British that the English-commander offered a reward of five hundred pounds sterling for his capture,<sup>16</sup> an amount equal to that placed on Samuel Adams. Owing to the fact that the British had a military post near Boothbay, it became necessary for Murray to leave his home and move to Newburyport in order to escape being taken by the English.

Later when George Washington made his first presidential tour of New England, the Presbytery at the Eastward wrote him a letter praising him highly and acknowledging their support of the new government. George Washington sent an appreciative reply to their letter.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>Minutes of the Presbytery at the Eastward, October 28, 1789.

<sup>16</sup>Minutes of the Presbytery at the Eastward, October 21, 1777.

<sup>17</sup>A copy of both of these letters is contained in the minutes of the Presbytery, Ibid., October 28, 1789.

As we have seen, the Presbytery at the Eastward bore some of the stigma which was attached to John Murray and therefore it was not recognized as a legitimate presbytery by the Presbytery of Boston. Even though the Presbytery at the Eastward offered to join with the Boston body in the formation of a Synod it was rebuffed.

This did not prevent the members of the Presbytery at the Eastward from attempting to establish friendly relations with the Grafton Presbytery. The exact status of this relationship is uncertain for we do not have enough of the minutes of the Grafton body to show what their attitude toward the Presbytery at the Eastward was but it must have been more friendly than that of the Boston group. The viewpoint of the men of the Eastward is shown in their minutes:

"It being reported to the P.b.y. that a number of Ministers of regular standing & sound principles in the back part of this state, have formed themselves into a P.b.y. by the name of Grafton & that the work of the Lord has eminently prospered in their hands: - This P.b.y. considering the low-state of the P.b.n. interest in New England at the present day & the greater danger of our numerous vacancies for want of Candidates to carry the Gospel among them: felt it to be their indispensable duty to do whatin them lies to strengthen the things yt remain; & therefore; Resolved, to enter into a Correspondence wt said P.b.y. of Grafton to the end that a greater degree of visable strength or union may appear to subsist among P.b.n.s. in this Country - as a great degree of P.b.n. strength & beauty emninently consists therein."<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>Minutes of the Presbytery at the Eastward, September 14, 1785.

Having taken this action, the presbytery then appointed two of their members to act as a committee to draft a fraternal letter of "friendship and Charity" to the Presbytery of Grafton. Unfortunately the reply to this letter is not recorded.

One of the most important steps taken toward unifying the Presbyterian forces in New England occurred in 1792. At this date the presbyteries which were still active were the Presbytery at the Eastward, the Grafton Presbytery and the Associate Reformed Presbytery of New England. It appears from the minutes of the Presbytery at the Eastward that these three bodies held a convention at Dartmouth College with the hope of establishing a Synod. The Presbytery at the Eastward "ordered that the Rev. Mrss. Solomon Moore, Simon Williams, and John Murray be commissioned the Clerk as the delegates to attend a Synodical convention at Dartmouth College, on the 23 of August next, for the purpose of uniting the Several presbyteries, into one Synod, and the Presbyteries engage to ratify as their own act whatever may be done therein, by their Said delegates or any number of them, who may attend at that meeting."<sup>19</sup> This convention met at Dartmouth College as planned but the decisions it arrived at are unknown owing to the fact that we have been unable to find minutes of that meeting.

The convention which met at Dartmouth College had adjourned to meet at Pembroke, New Hampshire. The Grafton body did not attend

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<sup>19</sup>Minutes of the Presbytery at the Eastward, June 13, 1792.

this meeting and showed no further interest,<sup>20</sup> but the representatives of the Eastward and Associate Presbyteries were there and outlined further their plans for uniting the two bodies. The last Convention held at Londonderry, New Hampshire, October 25, 1793, took the final steps toward union. The Minutes of the Convention show that the Westminster Confession and Catechisms, and directory for worship and form of government, were to be the standards of the united presbytery, and that the new presbytery was to be called the Presbytery of Londonderry.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup>Blaikie, Presbyterianism, p. 274.

<sup>21</sup>The Minutes of the Convention of October 25, 1793 are quoted in Blaikie, Ibid., pp. 276-77.

## Chapter IX

### THE ASSOCIATE REFORMED PRESBYTERY

Before we can understand clearly the name by which this next Presbytery in New England was designated, it is necessary to review briefly the events which led to its adoption. The Scotch Presbyterians who came to America in the colonial period had not all been under the same Synod in Scotland or Ireland; while the great majority of them favored the same form of church polity they did not all agree as to the fine points of doctrine, discipline, and the power of the civil magistrate, especially the British sovereign. This meant that there were numerous divisions in the ranks of Presbyterianism in Scotland. When the members of these various groups moved to America they continued to emphasize their former distinctive principles and to set up their separate organization. The two groups which are the subject of our immediate consideration were the Associate Presbyterians the Reformed Presbyterians or Covenantors. They were Presbyterians who were closely akin in their views in general but differed on the question of the position of the British sovereign. By the opening of the Revolutionary War there were two Associate Presbyteries in the colonies and one Reformed Presbytery. When the colonies declared their independence from the control of the British Crown the real point of difference no longer existed between them and they began courting each other with a view to union.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Lathan, Robert, History of the Associate Reformed Church of the South (Harrisburg, 1882), p. 171.

Several conferences were held between the Associate Presbyteries and the Reformed Presbytery in an effort to work out a basis of union. By 1780 their basis of union had been drawn up and presented to the three presbyteries for adoption. In the spring of 1780 the Associate Presbytery of New York animously accepted the basis of union, as did the Reformed Presbytery in December, 1781, and last of all, the Associate Presbytery of Pennsylvania accepted it on June 13, 1782.<sup>2</sup> The formal consummation of the union took place in Philadelphia on November 1, 1782, when the Associate Presbytery of Pennsylvania, the Associate Presbytery of New York, and the Reformed Presbytery formally united in the organization of the Associate Reformed Synod.

If we are to understand how this affected New England Presbyterianism it will be necessary to trace briefly the relation of the Associate Presbytery of New York with the Presbyterian churches in New England prior to this union in 1782. This presbytery, when it was organized in 1776, included not only New York but the territories to the east. It was not long before it began to attract some of the Presbyterian churches of New England. In 1778 the church at Peterborough, New Hampshire, withdrew from the Synod of New England and came under the care of this presbytery. In 1782 the Presbyterian congregations in Boston affiliated with this presbytery. Thus the congregations at Peterborough and Boston were part of the Associate Presbytery of New York when it joined in the formation of the Associate

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 178.

Reformed Synod. Henceforth it was known as the Associate Reformed Presbytery of New York but in reality its territory and membership were not changed. The next year the presbytery met in Londonderry, New Hampshire, and admitted the West Parish church of Londonderry into its membership. In 1785 Samuel Taggart and his church in Coleraine were regularly dismissed from the Presbytery of Salem, and they immediately united with this presbytery. By 1786 the Associate Reformed Presbytery of New York had four settled pastors in New England churches-- David Annan at Peterborough, Samuel Taggart at Coleraine, William Morrison at Londonderry, and Robert Annan at Boston--and several other vacant congregations in New England which looked to it for supervision. At the meeting of the Associate Reformed Synod on June 2, 1786, the large number of churches in New England was observed and it was decided to form a new presbytery which would include only New England; thus it formed the Associate Reformed Presbytery of Londonderry.

The fact that the name of this presbytery was changed twice while it was connected with the Synod has made for some confusion. Until 1791 the presbytery was called the Associate Reformed Presbytery of Londonderry, but in that year the Synod changed its name to the Associate Reformed Presbytery of New England. This was the official title of the presbytery until October 25, 1793, when it united with the Presbytery at the Eastward and they took for themselves, without the advice of the Synod, the name of the Presbytery of Londonderry. This name was retained by this presbytery throughout its existence in the nineteenth century.

It should be kept in mind about this presbytery that while it appeared to be a new organization it was in reality only a realignment of the churches which had been the backbone of New England Presbyterianism prior to the Revolution. The churches which composed this presbytery had been affiliated previously with the presbyteries of Boston, Londonderry, Salem, and the Eastward. At this period the Associate Reformed Presbytery was more attractive for some reason to the Presbyterian churches in New England than the remnants of their former presbyteries.

To analyze the Associate Reformed Presbytery a brief sketch of the churches and pastors must be given.

The first to leave the Synod of New England and turn to the Associate Presbytery of New York was the church at Peterborough, New Hampshire. The church was dismissed by the Synod to this presbytery on October 1, 1778, in order that it might receive David Annan, a member of the Associate Presbytery of New York as its pastor. The Peterborough church was unfortunate in the type of ministers which it obtained. It was first served by John Morrison who became immoral and intemperate, and who deserted to the British during the Revolution. From all available accounts David Annan, their next pastor, was no better. During the fourteen years he remained with them he became notorious for his vulgar speech and intemperate habits, as well as for the abusive manner in which he treated his wife and children. In a fit of anger he once forced his wife and children to spend the night in the woods. Because of his repeated mistreatment, his wife finally had to divorce him. The town historian quotes an elaborate

complaint that was made against him by the town and presented to the presbytery in 1788.<sup>3</sup> The town charged him with indecent speech, drunkenness, and neglect in the preparation of his sermons. The presbytery did not see fit to suspend him from his office because of these charges. However, four years later his situation became so uncomfortable that he requested his dismissal from his pastorate and the presbytery granted his request. He remained a member of the presbytery until 1800 when his conduct appeared so unsuitable to the character of a minister that he was deposed. It was unfortunate for the Presbyterian cause in Peterborough that its first two pastors were men of such unworthy character, for their behavior brought an odium upon Presbyterianism and a prejudice against orthodox Calvinism in the mind of the townspeople. Consequently after the dismissal of Annan the church, in 1799, called a Congregational minister and adopted the Congregational practice.<sup>4</sup>

The West Parish of Londonderry, which during the long pastorate of David McGregore had been one of the most prominent churches connected with the Presbytery of Boston, changed its presbyterial affiliation on February 13, 1783 at the time of the installation of William Morrison, who was a licentiate of the Associate Reformed Presbytery of New York.<sup>5</sup> Morrison was a worthy successor to David McGregore. By

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<sup>3</sup>Smith, Albert, History of Peterborough, (Boston, 1876), pp. 87-90.

<sup>4</sup>Lawrence, New Hampshire Churches, pp. 240-41.

<sup>5</sup>Scouller, J. B., A Manual of the United Presbyterian Church of North America (Harrisburg, 1881), p. 48.

his faithful pastoral endeavors and his effective preaching he held the congregation together and trained them in the Presbyterian principles.<sup>6</sup> Because the church at Londonderry was exceptionally fortunate in the quality and length of its first two pastorates, it had a solid foundation which enabled it to remain loyal to the principles of the Presbyterian church. Morrison remained as the much loved pastor of the Londonderry church until his death in 1818. Besides his own church work he was also active in promoting the Presbyterian cause in New England among the vacant churches that looked for help to the presbytery. He went about conducting communion in these churches and preaching for them, even though in later years it was a great drain upon his strength.

In 1785 Samuel Taggart, the pastor of the church at Coleraine, Massachusetts, was given a general letter of recommendation and dismissal by the Presbytery of Salem, and he immediately transferred to the Associate Reformed Presbytery of New York.<sup>7</sup> Taggart had been ordained and installed pastor of Coleraine on February 19, 1777, by the Presbytery of Palmer and remained in that pastorate until 1818.<sup>8</sup> According to a contemporary, he was given to preaching long and didactic sermons in a style which lacked animation, and he did little

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<sup>6</sup>Parker, Londonderry, pp. 163-67.

<sup>7</sup>Minutes of the Presbytery of Salem, June 2, 1785.

<sup>8</sup>For additional material on Samuel Taggart see McClellan, Charles H., The Early Settlers of Coleraine, Massachusetts (Greenfield, 1885), pp. 41-45 and Parker, Londonderry, pp. 246-47, and Sprague, Annals of American Pulpit, Vol. III, p. 377 ff.

pastoral calling. He was greatly respected, not only by his parishioners, but by the people in that region. From 1803 to 1817 he was a member of the United States Congress. He was probably most famous for his unusually retentive memory, especially his ability to remember the names of people, their ages, and the number and age of their children. He was equally famous for his absent-mindedness, for the accounts which have been written about him abound with stories of this characteristic. During his pastorate the church at Coleraine functioned along Presbyterian lines.

The successor of John Moorhead in Boston was Robert Annan, brother of David Annan. After the death of Moorhead in 1773 the Boston church spent nineteen months trying to persuade John Murray and the Presbytery at the Eastward that he should become their minister. In order to better their chances of securing him, the majority of the members of this church withdrew from the Presbytery of Boston and nominally placed themselves under the Presbytery at the Eastward. Even with this move they were still unable to secure Murray, and their pulpit remained vacant until September 25, 1783, when Robert Annan was installed pastor.<sup>9</sup> The period of vacancy and the withdrawal from the presbytery depleted and divided the congregation. After this long vacancy the Boston congregation was divided and discouraged. Under the

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<sup>9</sup>The best account of Robert Annan's pastorate at Boston is given by Blaikie, Presbyterianism, pp. 252-66.

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circumstances Annan was not the type of man for the church. He was rather uncouth, tactless and outspoken and, on various accounts, he antagonized several members of the church. He had formerly served in a small settlement in Wallkill, New York, and did not adjust very well to the life of Boston. He insisted on public acknowledgement of repentance before the congregation by those who committed some heinous sin or were involved in a scandal. His parishioners objected to this practice and some of the wealthier ones withdrew from the church because he either rebuked them too sharply or insisted upon a public statement. Some of the younger members of the congregation had learned to enjoy dancing but from the pastor's viewpoint they could not possibly indulge in this practice and yet remain in good standing in the church. Even with these ideas he might have gotten along better if he had had more tact. His deficiency in this regard may be seen in the following illustration. He was requested to break the news to the wife of a sea captain that her husband had died while away on a voyage. Annan came to her home while she and her daughters were at supper and she suspected that he might have some news. She asked the question, "Is there any news?" and he bluntly replied, "Yes, you are a widow." The fact that he was an interesting preacher did not compensate sufficiently for his inability to adapt himself in his pastoral relationships. Realizing that he was unsuited to the church he accepted a call in 1786 from a church in Philadelphia and so transferred his membership to another presbytery. The important fact

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in this connection is that the majority of the members of the Boston church, following his dismissal, forsook the Presbyterian form of church polity and voted on August 4, 1786, to "embrace the Congregational mode of government."<sup>10</sup> During the next year the Rev. Jeremy Belknap was settled there according to the usual manner of the Congregational churches.

The Rev. Zaccheus Colby, pastor of the Congregational Church in Pembroke, applied to the presbytery in 1790 for admission along with the Presbyterian society of that town. The two churches in Pembroke had worked out a plan of co-operation by which both churches functioned together in the support of Colby while at the same time each retained its own ecclesiastical organization. This plan was submitted to and approved by the presbytery which then received Colby and the Presbyterian church into its membership.<sup>11</sup> In 1798 these two churches were united, but the Presbyterian element broke off from this united church in 1800 and eventually died out. Colby remained as pastor in Pembroke until 1803.<sup>12</sup>

September 11, 1793, the presbytery Ordained and installed Andrew Oliver as the pastor of a new church at West Pelham, Massachusetts. Oliver was still pastor of the church at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

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<sup>10</sup> Blaikie, Presbyterianism, p. 263.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 271.

<sup>12</sup> Lawrence, Londonderry, p. 403.

The church at Hampton, New Hampshire, became Presbyterian under peculiar circumstances. The majority of the townspeople disagreed with the church members as to who should be called as pastor, and there was an open rupture between these two groups. According to Congregational procedure the town could not settle a minister without the consent of the church; to surmount this difficulty the townspeople voted to make the church Presbyterian and accordingly applied to the Presbytery of Londonderry for admission. The presbytery received them and ordained and installed their pastor-elect, William Pidgin on January 27, 1796.<sup>13</sup> Pidgin had previously been a candidate under the Presbytery at the Eastward and was one of the young men who had been assisted through Dartmouth College by that Presbytery.<sup>14</sup> He remained as pastor in Hampton until July, 1807.

The members of the presbytery cherished the hope of uniting the various New England presbyteries at least five years before their desire was partially fulfilled. At their meeting on October 1, 1788, they approved the following motion:

"This Presbytery taking into serious consideration the broken state of the Presbyterian interest in New England, and the importance of doing something to unite the various bodies of Presbyterians. Voted, that letters be written--one to the Presbytery at the Eastward, relating to the expediency of some proposals of a coalescence of the several Presbyteries."<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Lawrence, Ibid., p. 72.

<sup>14</sup> Minutes of the Presbytery at the Eastward, June 13, 1792.

<sup>15</sup> Minutes of the Associate Reformed Presbytery for October 1, 1788 as quoted in Blaikie, Presbyterianism, p. 269.

Thus began between these New England presbyteries a three cornered correspondence on the subject of union. The Grafton Presbytery evidenced some interest in this project and sent a fraternal delegate to a meeting of the Associate Reformed Presbytery in 1789. The Presbytery at the Eastward, as we have previously noted, was always desirous of entering into such a union. The outgrowth of this correspondence was a definite plan for a Synodical Convention to be held at Dartmouth College, August 23, 1792. The Associate Reformed Presbytery appointed William Morrison and David Annan as their delegates. Annan went so far as to draw up preliminary articles of union to be submitted to the convention.<sup>16</sup> The minutes of this convention have been lost, but from other sources it can be seen that the Convention met and then adjourned to meet later at Pembroke, New Hampshire. The Presbytery of Grafton did not attend the session at Pembroke and from this point on apparently lost interest in the projected Synod. As an outgrowth of the meeting at Pembroke the Associate Reformed Presbytery expressed itself as follows:

"The expediency of forming a union with the Eastern Presbytery was considered and approved. Voted, agreeably to the proceedings of the convention at Pembroke, that the delegates be appointed to form a union."<sup>17</sup>

The delegates of the two bodies met on October 24, 1793, and dissolved

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<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 273.

<sup>17</sup> Minutes of the Associate Reformed Presbytery of New England October 9, 1793, as quoted in Blaikie, Ibid., p. 276.

the two presbyteries and formed a new one, to be known as the Presbytery of Londonderry.<sup>18</sup>

The reunion of several Presbyterian churches in New England was brought about by this action. For example, for the first time since the split in the first Presbytery of Londonderry in 1736 the churches in East and West Londonderry were united under the same presbytery. The union of these two presbyteries in 1793 brought together the Presbyterian churches of Windham, New Boston, New Market, Peterborough, and Londonderry in New Hampshire; and Coleraine, Pelham and Newburyport in Massachusetts. This action added considerably to the strength of the Presbyterianism in New England at the close of the eighteenth century.

In 1793 there were two settled pastors who came with their congregations into the new Presbytery of Londonderry from the former Presbytery at the Eastward. Solomon Moore, pastor of the New Boston congregation, became a member of the new presbytery, and was connected with it until his death in 1803.<sup>19</sup> Nathaniel Ewer and his church at South New Market, New Hampshire, also joined the new presbytery. During the later years of his pastorate he was assisted by Samuel Toombs, who in July, 1794, was settled by the town as a colleague of Ewer. After the dismissal of Ewer in 1797, Toombs remained as the pastor of the church until 1799 when he was dismissed.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 277.

<sup>19</sup>Lawrence, Londonderry, p. 229.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 136.

The East Parish in Londonderry had joined the Presbytery at the Eastward in 1781.<sup>21</sup> Since their pastor, William Davidson, had died in 1791, the church was vacant at the time of the union of the two presbyteries in 1793, but it became a part of the new presbytery. In 1795 Jonathan Brown, who was ordained and installed pastor of the East Parish church by the Londonderry Presbytery. There was, however, a large minority who opposed his settlement and they withdrew and formed a Congregational Church and Society. This Congregational basis, Jonathan Brown continued his services in Londonderry until September, 1804 when he retired from the ministry.<sup>22</sup>

On March 13, 1793 John Murray died and therefore the Newburyport church was also vacant at the time the two presbyteries united; nevertheless, it became a member of the new body. Daniel Dana, who was the successor of Murray, was ordained and installed November 19, 1794.<sup>23</sup> Dana had been born at Ipswich, Massachusetts, and had graduated from Dartmouth College in 1788. His settlement at Newburyport had been preceded by a disruption in the congregation for which he had not been responsible. During the last few years of Murray's pastorate he had been unable to carry the full load of his work on account of his poor health, therefore a young man by the name of Milton had been engaged to supply the pulpit in 1792. By his

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<sup>21</sup>Minutes of the Presbytery at the Eastward, October 29, 1789.

<sup>22</sup>Lawrence, Londonderry, p. 41.

<sup>23</sup>Coffin, Newbury, p. 372.

eloquence and original manner as a preacher he had won many friends who wanted to make him a colleague of John Murray, but the majority of the church members would not agree to this. Therefore, fifteen of his friends withdrew from the church and met by themselves until after Murray's death, when they formed the Independent Calvinistic Church. After the settlement of Dana there was another split in the Newburyport church which grew out of the fact that several people suspected that his orthodoxy was not sound. They were misled in their opinion by the fact that he clothed his doctrinal views in a more attractive style, which they confused with heresy. This group of thirty-three people withdrew in 1795 and were formed by the presbytery into Second Presbyterian Church in Newburyport. The remainder of the first church continued happily united under Daniel Dana until he left them to take up his duties as President of Dartmouth College in 1820.

The churches which composed the Associate Reformed Presbytery of New England were not new organizations which had been gathered together because of their attachment to the principles of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church. Rather, they had come into the Synod largely because it happened that the ministers they wanted were connected with that body, and, being rather broad-minded about their presbyterial and synodical relationship, they were willing to change their affiliation so long as it did not affect the practice in their churches.

The New England Presbytery never really became an integral part of the Associate Reformed Synod. Evidence of this is found in the fact that, during the fifteen years it was connected with the Synod, the presbytery sent a representative to only one of its meetings. In the year 1791 David Annan was in difficulties with his congregation at Peterborough, and the presbytery advised him to take the case to the Synod for their examination and judgment. Annan attended, and at this meeting requested that the name of the Presbytery be changed to the Associate Reformed Presbytery of New England, which suggestion was adopted by the Synod. Naturally the Synod was much disturbed that the presbytery in New England never sent delegates to their meetings. Each year the Synod would inquire whether there were any men present from New England, and finding none they would consider what should be done regarding their negligence. The men in New England pleaded that the distance to Pennsylvania, where most of the meetings were held, was so great that they could not attend, to which the Synod pointed out that their members living in the southern states came from even greater distances. In spite of all their correspondence the Synod failed to bring the men in New England into regular participation in the affairs of the Synod.

An indication of the real gap which existed between the two bodies was the failure on the part of the presbytery in New England to attend the meetings of the Synod. The New England men were independent and carried out their plans without seeking the advice or opinion of the Synod. This is very clearly shown in the manner in which the Associate Reformed Presbytery of New England coalesced with the

Presbytery at the Eastward without making even a pretense of asking the opinion of the synod in this important matter. They went so far as to dissolve their own presbytery and form a new one under the name of the Presbytery of Londonderry. This new body included the remaining churches from the Presbytery at the Eastward. This step was taken in 1793 when this presbytery was still technically considered to be a member of the Associate Reformed Synod. Furthermore their independence from the Synod is shown by the free and open way in which the presbytery permitted the churches under its care to sing the "Songs of David Immitated in the Language of the New Testament" by Issac Watts D.D. The Presbyterian churches in New England had been gradually foresaking the exclusive use of the Psalms for other religious songs. These churches were entirely in sympathy with the action of the Synod of New York and Philadelphia when in May, 1787, it decided "that Dr. Watt's imitation of David's Psalms, as revised by Mr. Barlow, be sung in the churches and families under their care."<sup>24</sup> However, the presbytery in New England was not connected with the Synod of New York and Philadelphia but with the Associate Reformed Synod, and this latter body had as one of the specific items of its testimony that it did not approve of the use of anything but the Psalms in the public worship of God. The attitude of the Synod toward its insubordinate presbytery in New England is best revealed in two

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<sup>24</sup>"Revords of Presbyterian Church in the United States of America," p. 535.

letters which the Synod directs should be written to the New England presbytery. At the Synod's meeting in 1795 the moderator and the clerk were ordered to write a letter to the presbytery in New England and state its views:

"Rev. and Dear Brethren: It gives us no small uneasiness to hear of some things, which have been introduced among you, inconsistent with the comely order to be observed in the house of God. Some of these are the introduction of Watts' imitations of the Psalms into the worship of God; holding unnecessary and improper communion with oter denominations, and in the regulation of your congregational affairs, acting repugantly to the spirit of Presbyterianism.

Hearing these reports in 1794, we, by letter, earnestly requested your attendance at this meeting. We are sorry that you have not responded. Our members from the Southern States come greater distances and at greater cost. Your inconvenience cannot excuse your constant neglect of our Synodical meetings. You could not but know, that the use of Watts' imitations in the worship of God, has always met with our disapprobation. Your consistency, while you professed a connection with us, should have prevented this innovation, especially in view of our Judicial Testimony as a Synod. etc. etc."<sup>25</sup>

When this letter failed to bring the desired response the Synod at their meeting in 1797 directed Robert Annan and John Mason to write another letter to the Presbytery in New England. Excerpts from this letter illustrate further the view of the Synod toward their wayward presbytery.

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<sup>25</sup>Letter of John Dunlap and Alexander Dobbin written June 1, 1795, at the request of the Associate Reformed Synod to the Associate Reformed Presbytery of Londonderry. A copy of this letter is to be found in Blaikie, Presbyterianism, pp. 299-300.

"You cannot be ignorant, brethren, that your discarding from public worship the Psalms indited by the Holy Ghost, and substituting in their room the composure of men, is highly displeasing to the Synod and to the body of Christians under their inspection. Whether the use of such composures in the public worship of God be in itself lawful or unlawful, is a question with which, at present, we have nothing to do. But, whether considering your relation to the Synod, the edification of the church of which you are a branch, and your obligations to support the truth of the gospel, the use of them was allowable in you, is a question which demands your solemn regard. You certainly know, brethren, that the controversy about psalmody was warmly agitated both and before the formation of your connection with the Synod.....

But beside this innovation itself, the manner, brethren, in which it was effected is another cause or serious dissatisfaction.

If the Synod are rightly informed, the Psalms of the Bible were laid aside and their substitute introduced by the vote of a town meeting. You are no less sensible than ourselves that this was not only prostrating at the feet of the multitude the Scriptural authority of judicatories, but what is yet worse, was allowing a civil corporation to meddle with the interior and spiritual arrangements of the church, etc. etc."<sup>26</sup>

These letters did not change the views of the men in New England. The standpoint of the members of the Londonderry Presbytery is well stated by Wi-liam Morrison in a letter which he sent to the Synod at the request of the Presbytery in 1796.

"Distance renders personal interviews with our Southern brethren very inconvenient; we have ten settled ministers; we consider ourselves competent as a judiciary; we are best acquainted with the

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<sup>26</sup> Letter of Robert Annan and John Mason written January 24, 1797 at the request of the Associate Reformed Synod to the Associate Reformed Presbytery of Londonderry. Portions of this letter is to be found in Blaikie, Ibid., pp. 302-06.

customs, temper and manners of our churches and their situation with respect to other denominations; we have voted to reply to the act of Synod respecting Psalmody as injurious to the cause of Presbytery in New England.

Your committee starting your terms would gratify a few and mortally wound others. Common observation and experience concur with revelation in teaching us the necessity of governing a people in a manner best adapted to their circumstances, for their good and for the honor of religion. America should have the most generous and benevolent system of religion."<sup>27</sup>

By the year 1797 the presbytery saw that the gap between their organization and the Synod was so great that they should consider dissolving the relationship between them, and they appointed William Morrison to represent them at the next meeting of the Synod at Philadelphia to discuss the dissolution with them. However, he was prevented from attending the meeting of the presbytery and apparently the matter was dropped. At least there is no further indication that it showed any interest in the Synod. The letters which the Synod wrote in 1799 were not answered by the Londonderry body. Considering the long, continued absence of the presbytery and its insubordination, the Synod at its meeting in Philadelphia on May 30, 1801, took the following action as recorded in the minutes:

"The situation of the Presbytery in New England, called the Presbytery of Londonderry, which has been from year to year a subject of discussion in Synod, having been resumed, and it being judged expedient to come to a final decision thereon, after serious and mature deliberation the following resolution was adopted:

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<sup>27</sup>From a letter by William Morrison written August 26, 1796, at the request of the Associate Reformed Presbytery of Londonderry to the Associate Reformed Synod. This excerpt is to be found in Blaikie, *Ibid.*, pp. 300-01.

Whereas the Presbytery of Londonderry has, for several years, been in a state of virtual separation from this synod, entirely neglecting attendance thereon, and due subordination thereto: And whereas the repeated attempts of this synod to obtain from said Presbytery information of its condition and procedure, and a compliance with the order of Presbyterian Church Government, as maintained by the Associate-Reformed Church, have proved abortive: Therefore,

Resolved, that this Synod no longer consider the said Presbytery of Londonderry as in their connection, and do hereby disclaim all responsibility for any of its transactions.

Ordered, that a copy of the above resolution be transmitted to the Presbytery of Londonderry.<sup>28</sup>

As we have seen the Presbytery of Londonderry became independent from all Synodical control in 1801. The Presbyterian churches and presbyteries in New England were now in a similar position to that in which they had been throughout the greater part of the eighteenth century -- that is, they were independent of other presbyteries and Synods in other sections of America, but they were united among themselves. The Presbyterian churches in New England which had formerly been scattered in various presbyteries were now united in one organization.

The Presbytery of Londonderry remained in an independent position for about eight years after it was thrust out of the Associate Reformed Synod. During this period the members of the presbytery studied the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in the

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<sup>28</sup>Extracts from the Minutes of the Acts and Proceedings of the Associate Reformed Synod, May 27, 1801.

United States of America. By 1809 the presbytery was convinced that they should unite with this body. Therefore, the Presbytery of Londonderry applied to the Synod of Albany for admission and was received in 1809. The first appearance of the Presbytery of Londonderry in the Minutes of the General Assembly was in 1810, when Daniel Dana was listed as a delegate.<sup>29</sup> From this point on the Presbyterian churches in New England were part of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America.

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<sup>29</sup> Minutes of the General Assembly, 1810.

## Chapter X

### THE PRESBYTERY OF GRAFTON

During the last quarter of the eighteenth century there existed in the vicinity of Hanover, New Hampshire an ecclesiastical organization known as the Presbytery of Grafton which was not really an integral part of the Presbyterian movement in New England. The churches under its care were not primarily composed of people interested in Presbyterianism, but of those who were persuaded to adopt this form of church government because their ministers came to favor it. From all accounts it appears that the majority of these churches were really Congregational, and that they were Presbyterian for only a few years.

Since the original minutes have been lost, the accounts which we have of this body are very meager; the consensus of most writers who have searched for the records is that they were destroyed by fire. While we do not know much about the operation of the Presbytery, the fact of its existence is proven through several reliable sources. These are the original records of other bodies which were contemporary with the Grafton Presbytery and which, as their records reveal, had dealings with it. One such document is the Minutes of the Church at Hanover, New Hampshire, which were copied by the Rev. Eden Burroughs,<sup>1</sup> who was for a time a member of the presbytery. The references to the

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<sup>1</sup>The original manuscript of these records of the Hanover Center Church as copied by Burroughs are now in the Archives of the Baker Memorial Library in Hanover, New Hampshire.

presbytery in Burrough's copy of the Minutes are the most frequently quoted and the most reliable material on the subject. These records refer definitely to the meetings of the Presbytery of Grafton, give the names of the ministers and delegates present, and also the date and place of meeting. Furthermore, some of the original records of the Hanover Church are still extant and they verify the partial copy which was made by Eden Burroughs.<sup>2</sup> The early records of the Church at Dartmouth College have likewise been preserved, and in them also are references to the Grafton Presbytery, showing that that church was a member of it.<sup>3</sup> There are also references to the Grafton Presbytery in the minutes of the Presbytery at the Eastward<sup>4</sup> and also in the records of the Synod of New England.<sup>5</sup> It is by the use of these minutes and by a study of the history of the various towns and churches that we are able to piece together an account of the presbytery. These sources are sufficiently authentic to prove beyond question that the Presbytery of Grafton, sometimes called the Presbytery of the Connecticut River, did exist; but they do not show how long it carried on, the nature of its work, or the complete list of its membership.

Eleazar Wheelock,<sup>6</sup> founder and first President of Dartmouth College, was chiefly responsible for the formation of the Grafton

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<sup>2</sup>These fragments are also to be found in the Baker Library.

<sup>3</sup>These records are available in the archives of the Baker Memorial Library.

<sup>4</sup>Minutes of the Presbytery at the Eastward, September 14, 1785.

<sup>5</sup>Minutes of the Synod of New England, September 30, 1778.

<sup>6</sup>The life and work of Eleazar Wheelock has been described in many works, therefore a detailed account of his life will be omitted here except as he was related to the Grafton Presbytery.

Presbytery. He came to Hanover, New Hampshire, after thirty-five years in the pastorate of the Second Congregational Church of Lebanon, Connecticut. While Eleazar Wheelock had come from a Congregational church in Connecticut he was not wholly in sympathy with this form of church polity, even as it was modified by Consociations in Connecticut. There is substantial reason for believing that he favored the Presbyterian procedure although he had not been able to put it into complete operation in his church. In a letter to Joseph Bellamy at Bethlehem, Connecticut, in 1749, Wheelock expressed himself as follows:

"I am fully of the opinion it is high time for ministers to wake up to a redress of these evils (antinomianism, worldliness, immorality) & I can think of no way more likely, than for those who are in the same way s of thinking, to join in a Presbytery. Don't you see Arminian candidates cant settle in ye miny? Dont you see how they want the patronage of a godly presbytery who do settle? for want of it, they get broken bones that will pain them all their days.

Would not such a Presbytery soon have all ye candidates of worth under them? and consequently, presently most of ye vacant chhs, Our wild pp. are not half so much prejudiced against ye Scottish constitution as against our own. Many chhs in these parts might easily be brought into it, & my soul longs for it."<sup>7</sup>

From this letter it can easily be seen that early in his ministry he had favored the adoption of an outright Presbyterian system.

Further evidence of this fact is to be found in the Diary of Ezra Stiles

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<sup>7</sup> Letter of Eleazar Wheelock, Northampton, January 9, 1748/9 to Rev. Joseph Bellamy, Bethlem in Woodbury in the Correspondence of Joseph Bellamy as copied longhand by Richard Webster, pp. 48-49.

in which he relates a conversation which he had with the Rev. Benjamin Pomeroy, a classmate of Wheelock at Yale:

"The Rev. Jno. Bliss first Pastor of Hebron resigned about---- and Rev. Dr. Pumroy ordained there 16 Dec. 1735. Dr. Wheelock ordained at Lebanon Crank the June precedg. Both adopted Prest Clap's Idea of a chh. Committee for Discipline, as near the Kirk model as the spt of these chhs would admit. Dr. Pumroy could not carry it into Execution; but Dr. Wheelock did for many years, tho' opposed by some Congregational Brethren who came from Cape Cod.....I had thought That Dr. W. & Dr. P. had borrowed their Ideas of Chh. Govt from their Acquainta & Connex. with the Jersey Ministers after 1740, but it was otherwise."<sup>8</sup>

Thus it appears that those who knew Wheelock in Connecticut were aware that he favored the adoption of the Presbyterian polity and went as far as he could toward introducing the equivalent of the church session in his own congregation at Lebanon. Therefore, it is not difficult to understand how, when he came to the new territory of western New Hampshire he took advantage of the fact that many churches were in process of organization to influence them to adopt the Presbyterian mode of church government.

Wheelock personally favored the Presbyterian system; in view of the fact that a considerable share of the money for the support of his educational work came from Scottish sources, he had reason to believe that the Scots would have a more sympathetic view of his project if he encouraged the adoption of the Presbyterian polity.

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<sup>8</sup>Stiles, Ezra, The Literary Diary of Ezra Stiles, pp. 536-37.

In fact, his interest in Presbyterianism was so strong that it troubled some of the ministers of the Established Church of England and they complained that he was using the college to further the ends of Presbyterianism in New England.<sup>9</sup> Thus it appears logical to assume that Wheelock was the moving spirit behind the erection of the Grafton Presbytery.

It is impossible to set an exact date for the formation of the Presbytery of Grafton with the existing records. We know that the Church of Christ at Dartmouth College was organized along Presbyterian lines on January 23, 1771,<sup>10</sup> but it had no relation with any other ecclesiastical body at this time. Also in 1771 the town of Hanover organized a church, and in 1772 settled the Rev. Eden Burroughs as pastor. What evidence we have points to the fact that, since he was a friend of Wheelock's, he cooperated with him in the establishment of the presbytery. Chase, in his "History of Dartmouth College and the Town of Hanover," is of the opinion that Burroughs was the first clerk of the presbytery and Wheelock its first moderator.<sup>11</sup>

The time of the organization of the presbytery may be gleaned from the fact that the church in Hanover Center on March 3, 1773,

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<sup>9</sup>MSS Letter of John Erskine, Edinburgh, June 12, 1767, to Nathaniel Whittaker, Glasgow in the Dartmouth College Papers.

<sup>10</sup>Records of the Dartmouth College Church, January 23, 1771.

<sup>11</sup>Chase, Frederick, History of Dartmouth College and the Town of Hanover, (Cambridge, 1891) p. 194.

"voted, unanimously to adopt the word of God as the only perfect platform for the order of God's house, understanding it as explained in the Director for Orders and Discipline by the Church of Scotland."<sup>12</sup> The Hanover Church elected four elders in 1774 and five more in the year following. It is possible that there is a relation between this church's becoming Presbyterian, the election of these elders, and the organization of the presbytery; for the Hanover Church may have wanted to join with the College Church in forming a presbytery, and in that event would want regular elders to send to presbytery meetings. This, of course, is not conclusive evidence that the presbytery was organized by the year 1775, although that is the generally accepted date.

Eleazer Wheelock and Eden Burroughs evidently won some of the pastors of this area over to the idea of accepting Presbyterian polity and establishing a presbytery; this is shown by the record of attendance at the meeting of the presbytery at Hanover, March 2, 1784, which follows: from New Hampshire were John Richards of Piermont, Ebenezer Cleaveland of Bath, William Conant of Lyme, John Smith of the Dartmouth College Church, Sylvanus Riply, Professor at Dartmouth College; and from Vermont were Aaron Hutchinson of Pomfret, Asa Burton of Thetford. The names of other men from New Hampshire who attended

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<sup>12</sup>Burrough's copy of the Records of the Church at Hanover Center.

the meeting of the presbytery June 8, 1784, were Samuel Tood of Orford, and John Searles of Salisbury. From other sources we gather that Rosewll Shurtleff, Professor of Theology at Dartmouth College was a member of the presbytery, as was Samuel Collins,<sup>13</sup> pastor of the Hanover Church after the schism in 1784 under Eden Burroughs. Nathaniel Merrill of Boscawen, New Hampshire apparently was too for a few years, for his church voted on June 27, 1778 "to adopt the Presbyterian form of church order and discipline, and also that it is the desire of the church to join the Revd. Grafton Presbytery."<sup>14</sup> Peter Powers, the pastor of the Church in Newbury,<sup>15</sup> and Joseph Bowman<sup>16</sup> of Barnard, both in Vermont, were likewise on the roll. Elijah Brainerd of Randolph, Vermont is listed as clerk of the presbytery at its meeting in 1789.<sup>17</sup> This group of seventeen ministers is probably the approximate number of those who were connected with that body at one time or another. It is doubtful if in all cases the churches which these men represented were actively connected with the presbytery. Even while they were Presbyterian, the town frequently took upon themselves actions which, in a strictly Presbyterian church, would have been taken up by the session. By the beginning of the nineteenth century they had practically all re-adopted the Congregational procedure.

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<sup>13</sup>Chase, Dartmouth College, p. 211.

<sup>14</sup>Coffin, C. C., History of Boscawen and Webster, New Hampshire (Concord, 1878), p. 234.

<sup>15</sup>Wells, F. P., History of Newbury (St. Johnsbury, no date), pp. 172-73.

<sup>16</sup>Chase, Dartmouth, p. 212.

<sup>17</sup>Chase, Ibid., p. 211.

The presbytery probably started about 1775 and held meetings at least until 1794. This is the last date for which we have a definite record.<sup>18</sup> There is no way of ascertaining exactly when the presbytery ceased meeting, but it must have been prior to 1807, for at that time the Dartmouth College Church applied and was admitted to the Presbytery of Londonderry.<sup>19</sup> It is not likely that the church would have taken this action if the Grafton Presbytery were still in existence, nor would the Londonderry Presbytery have accepted them if they had withdrawn from the Grafton body. Therefore, we may assume that prior to 1807 the Presbytery of Grafton had become defunct.

To understand the activities of the Grafton Presbytery one must be aware that the only available records give a very one-sided account of what went on. The reason for this lies in the fact that the records which are now extant were copied by Eden Burroughs at the time he was having a serious controversy with the presbytery. He copied only those minutes which related to his situation, and on a few occasions also listed the members who were in attendance at the Presbytery meetings. Thus his book of copies is invaluable as a source book on the Grafton Presbytery, but it gives only a very biased account of its proceedings. From his notes it would appear that his case was the main consideration of the presbytery for several years.

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<sup>18</sup>Chase, Ibid., p. 211.

<sup>19</sup>Records of the Church at Dartmouth College, p. 62.

Undoubtedly the presbytery considered other issues of equal importance but they are not recorded; therefore to confine ourselves to authentic material we must only present the case of Eden Burroughs.

The difficulties in which Eden Burroughs became enmeshed arose over the interpretation of the place and function of church discipline.<sup>20</sup> In 1780 there was an unusual revival in the Hanover Church, as a result of which many came into the membership of the church and ceased their worldliness for lives of sober seriousness. However, it was not long before many, especially the youth, began to tire of this overemphasis upon religion, turned back to their less serious mode of living, and indulged in amusements which were considered questionable. This apparent decline of religion troubled several of the ministers in that area who came to the conclusion that the solution to this condition would be a revival of the former practices of church discipline in which a person could be called by another member of the church before the session which would then examine him about his questionable behavior. If found guilty the session would compel him to make a humble confession of his sins before the congregation. To accomplish this purpose a general convention of churches was held January 2, 1781 at Thetford, Vermont. At this conference a system of rules for the "revival of the true spirit

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<sup>20</sup>For a more detailed account of the case of Eden Burroughs see Chase, History of Dartmouth College and the Town of Hanover, New Hampshire, pp. 195-215; see also the MSS book of copies by Eden Burroughs entitled Records of the Hanover enter Church in Baker Memorial Library, Hanover, New Hampshire.

of discipline in the churches" was drawn up and when it was later presented to the Hanover Church it was adopted with the exception of the article pertaining to Matthew 18:15. Eden Burroughs was an ardent supporter of this move and began to see that the discipline of church members was carried out in his congregation. Unfortunately the matters for which people were called into question were not the "atrocious crimes", but frequently were only "more failings or errors of judgement." The emphasis on proper discipline was so great that it put a premium of prying into other people's affairs and revealing any questionable matter. After a few cases had been censured by the session, the majority of the members of the Hanover church reacted against this type of discipline and pointed out that the "weakest and most indiscreet members of the church became the chief persons in bringing forward prosecutions."<sup>21</sup> Burroughs and some members of the session refused to heed the request of the majority of the church members and continued in their course. The quarrel was brought to a climax by a case of slander in which one member of the church accused a woman of being a busy-body, of getting into things in which she had no business, and of nearly breaking up the school. This case was brought by the lady before the session, and the man who apparently was honest enough to tell her the truth was censured by the session, but rather than confess his guilt he appealed to the presbytery. As a result of this case the

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<sup>21</sup> Burroughs MSS copy of the records of the Hanover church.

majority of the church members became lined up against Eden Burroughs, the larger part of the session, and a minority of the church members who favored the stricter discipline. The group who approved the use of more lax disciplinary measures proposed as remedies that a judicious committee be chosen to investigate all matters of grievance and endeavor to reach a settlement before bringing the matter to trial, and also the additional elders be elected as often as the church judge necessary, and that a person have the privilege of being tried by the church at large if he preferred. Burroughs refused to accept this viewpoint which had been expressed in a petition, and replied in a long paper which was written in a bitter and arrogant tone. He not only denounced the petition but further challenged the petitioners to present their complaint to the presbytery. Thus the whole conflict about discipline which was agitating the Hanover church was brought before the presbytery.

The church members presented their views in a temperate and dignified manner to the presbytery at its meeting January 30, 1784. On the other hand, Burroughs evidently had reason to believe that the presbytery would not be sympathetic to his views, and, therefore, did more than merely present his side of the case for the impartial consideration of that body. He took the offensive against the presbytery and violently charged it with violating the bonds which they were under to their common Lord. He mentioned instances in which the presbytery had not upheld the strict discipline of the church.

On March 2, 1784, the presbytery examined Burroughs' statements at their meeting in Hanover and replied that "although sensible, they hope of their weakness and great imperfection, yet they profess they have acted on these matters according to the best light they had, and see no reason to alter".<sup>22</sup> The controversy continued for a few months more between Burroughs and the presbytery until he served the presbytery with the following notice: "Under a full and painful apprehension that this presbytery are not governed by a regard to the word of God as their ultimate rule in these proceedings, we are constrained, though with much grief and sorrow of heart, to declare that the reverence which we owe to the authority of God's word does sacredly bind us to come out from among them, and we accordingly declare that we are no more of them. . . ."<sup>23</sup>

The next Sabbath, after Burroughs had presented this declination to the Presbytery, he read it before his congregation in Hanover and fifty-six members of his church, a minority of the whole membership, withdrew and formed an independent society on their own. Because of this schism, the presbytery on November 24, 1784 dissolved the pastoral relations of Burroughs with the Hanover church and declared that the town was now free to call another pastor. Thus the town church remained within the presbytery and in July 1788 called

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<sup>22</sup>Burroughs MSS copy of the Hanover Church Records.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid.

the Rev. Samuel Collins, who served them until 1796. The breach between Burroughs and the presbytery was never healed even though some attempts were made several years later.

When a comparison is made between the churches and ministers composing the Grafton Presbytery and those of the other presbyteries in New England, certain distinctions become evident and explain why it was not really a part of the main stream of New England Presbyterianism. The churches and ministers in the Grafton Presbytery were won to the Presbyterian way by the efforts of Eleazar Wheelock, who came from a long line of English Puritans who had been in New England more than a hundred years before he had begun preaching in Connecticut. He had been won to the Presbyterian polity by his professor at Yale who had convinced him that Presbyterianism was superior even to the Consociated Congregationalism of Connecticut. Wheelock, therefore, had persuaded churches which would otherwise have continued along Congregational lines to turn to Presbyterianism. However, the Presbytery of Grafton never required the churches under its care to become completely Presbyterianized. Thus, when these churches found that the prevailing trend in the territory was back to Congregationalism, it was easy for them to forsake their adopted polity. On the other hand, the majority of the churches which had composed such presbyteries as Londonderry and Boston had turned to Presbyterian polity of their own accord without any outside effort to win them to a new viewpoint. Through their direct connection with Scotland and Ireland they had a sincere affection for the Presbyterian polity and were only waiting

an opportunity to establish a church in line with it. The strongest and most enduring Presbyterian churches in New England were those that could trace back a definite connection with Scottish Presbyterianism and whose ministers often were Scots.

It thus appears that this was the basic reason why the Grafton Presbytery may not have been willing to cooperate in a Synod with the Presbytery at the Eastward and the Associate Reformed Presbytery. The men of Grafton probably realized that their organization was too strictly Presbyterian and that they would not be wholly congenial in connection with a Synod controlled by Scotch-Irish Presbyterians. And so the Presbytery of Grafton and its churches never formed an essential part of the mainstream of Presbyterianism in colonial New England.

## CONCLUSION

As mentioned earlier the problem of definition has confronted us from the start of this paper. One of the common errors of church historians has been the failure of most to distinguish between the Scottish Presbyterians and the English Presbyterians when they discuss or refer to Presbyterianism in general. Alexander Gordon observed many years ago the strange tendency people have to "run off to Edinburgh or Aberdeen" to find the model of what presbyterian government ought to be. This is a mistake for there are and always have been several distinct types of Presbyterianism: Continental, Scottish, and English.<sup>1</sup>

From the very beginning the English Presbyterians showed indications of differing sharply from the Scottish. In England much greater importance was attached to the individual congregation, and while there were some times when the English Presbyterians advocated a hierarchial presbyterian system with higher courts exercising jurisdiction over the churches, they generally insisted that the synod would be primarily consultative and should not interfere with the sovereign independence of the individual congregations. On several occasions the Scots complained that the English system was not properly Presbyterian.

What has been shown then is that the Churches of New England exhibited tendencies toward Presbyterianism and this made it easier

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<sup>1</sup>The English Presbyterians, p. 20.

for Presbyterians to get a toehold in New England. In many of the principles of the Congregational churches of New England there were precedents for Presbyterians. Later, when French Presbyterians and Scotch-Irish Presbyterians settled in New England, few problems were encountered because of the similarities between the Presbyterianism of the English and the Congregationalism of the New Englanders. During the 18th century a more formal presbyterianism was formed because of the earlier actions of these two groups.

There were, however, differences, namely the relationship of pastor to congregation and the test "for saving faith" for admission to the church. Fortunately, for the newly arrived Presbyterians, these major differences were still being worked out by the Congregationalists and by the 1640's seems not to have been universal. Hence, New England was a fertile field for Presbyterianism, especially after 1660 when the Restoration in England forced both Congregationalists and Presbyterian to put aside their differences and confront the common enemy, the restored Episcopacy. In New England, then, the atmosphere was such that despite disagreements and feuds, Presbyterianism pushed inevitably toward its goal of a New England Synod and a fully implemented Presbyterian Church.

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