

## The Jacob-Jessey Church, 1616-1678.

FROM the three fore-going papers, we can comprehend the early history of this remarkable church: about 1653 we get another glimpse of it from the correspondence with Hexham, and from 1669 to 1678, we get further insight from the Broadmead Records, both printed by the Hanserd Knollys Society. On the basis of these documents of the church itself, we may briefly tell its story, with touches from other contemporary sources.

It was founded during 1616 in London, where there were at least two other Separatist churches, the Ancient Church of 1592 and the General Baptist Church of 1609. Its sympathies were rather with the Puritans within the Church of England, than with either of these. Its pastor, Henry Jacob, published a Confession and a plea for toleration, but failed to obtain it, so resigned about 1622 intending to emigrate to Virginia.

A second ex-clergyman took charge in 1624, John Lathorp from Kent; in his time troubles arose both within and without; the latter were so serious when Laud came to supreme power that Lathorp agreed to emigrate, and several members went with him in 1634 to New England, where he founded the churches at Scituate and Barnstable. The internal troubles arose with a member from Colchester begging them to renounce all fellowship with the parish churches, and in especial to repudiate the baptism they had there received. They declined, and he left in 1630 with some others. But at the request of the Ancient Church they renewed their covenant. In 1633 another group left, including Henry Parker and Mark Lucar; these were reinforced by Richard Blunt, Thomas Sheppard, and Samuel Eaton, a button-maker of St. Giles, who induced some of them to receive baptism on profession of their faith at the hands of John Spilsbury.

In 1637 a third ex-clergyman took charge of the main stock. Henry Jessey had been deprived of his living in Yorkshire for non-conformity, had come to London in 1635 and had helped this church occasionally. He remained pastor till his death in 1663, by which time the character of the church was greatly transformed.

Until the power of Laud was broken, there were frequent arrests of the members, but they did not hinder great discussions and developments. Six members left almost at once to join Spilsbury, but the death of Eaton in 1639 seems to have brought about the reunion of some. In May 1640 a fresh division occurred, half forming a church under Barbon. That same year discussion arose whether baptism ought not to be immersion, and whether any other act could be so regarded. The result was that in January 1641-2 some fifty members were immersed, and although Jessey promptly adopted immersion as the only act for dedicating infants, thence forward there was a further division and separate worship. On the other hand the church gained another ex-clergyman, Hanserd Knowles, and a young brewer's clerk called William Kiffin who was able to hold his own against the great Dr. Featley in open debate. In 1643 Knowles raised the point whether infants ought to be baptized at all, and after months' debate both he and Kiffin left the church. During 1644 Kiffin's new church and six others joined in a Confession very explicit on all these points, which called forth prompt protest and argument from an ancient member of this church. In the middle of 1645 Jessey himself was baptized by Knowles.

In 1647 and 1651 Jessey joined with Knowles, Kiffin and many other ministers, both Baptist and Pædobaptist, in issuing declarations as to the sobriety of their churches. But neither in 1646 nor in 1651 did he sign the Baptist Confession. In 1653 we find the church at home in Swan Alley off Coleman Street, but having apparently few London friends, for it joined in a letter to Hexham with eight others on the Welsh borders, whose most prominent member was John Tombes. Jessey was sent that year by several churches to visit 36 congregations in the home counties; and he expounded his views on Mixed Communion both in 1650 and 1653. By this time he needed a colleague, and found one in George Barrett. In the Bedfordshire district other Mixed Communion churches were growing, which learned to quote Jessey as justifying their practice. In April of 1657 some Baptist ministers of London begged Cromwell not to accept the title of King, and Jessey signed this request with Knowles, Spilsbury and many others. In 1663 Jessey died, and in the troubles of the times the church declined, till Vavasor Powell owned it was but small.

In 1669 a member was dismissed to the Mixed Communion church at Broadmead, and the correspondence thus initiated carries us on one stage more. A fourth ex-clergyman, Thomas Hardcastle from Yorkshire, was on trial for eldership, but Broadmead also wanted him. A letter of his on 10 March 1670-1

shows that the abandonment of Mixed Communion was being mooted by this church. Early in June a letter was sent signed by seven men including John Abbot, a fifth ex-clergyman. As Broadmead called Hardcastle, this church at last made up its mind and called him on 26 June. In his perplexity, he counselled, not with Baptists, but with three Independent ministers, while the church called in Kiffin and Harrison, another ex-clergyman became Baptist. Finally he broke away without taking formal leave, for which they never forgave him.

They found their fourth elder in his old friend, James Fitten, who was assisted by Henry Forty. This settlement was accomplished by March 1674. Underhill and Ivimey say that it was accompanied by a split, when the baptized and the unbaptized members separated. Their only authority is Crosby, III, 100:—"When Mr. Jessey died, and a difference arose in his church about mixed communion, the Baptists that were against it, fell in with Mr. Forty, than a member of that congregation." Here is a gap of eleven years jumped over, ignorance that Forty was only assistant to Fitten, assumption that he was a member at all. Under the circumstances we may decline to believe the statement that the difference arose at this juncture, for we see by Hardcastle's letter that it arose in 1671. But correspondence with Bedford in 1674 shows that Forty was dissuading a woman from joining that church because they practised Mixed Communion; the Bedford church asserts that some of this church approved it, and asked whether any change of practice had occurred. As Forty had signed the Confession in 1651, which in 1646 had been made explicitly Close Communion, there can be little doubt that between 1671 and 1674 the practice did change. It was at this period that the discussion between Kiffin and Bunyan took place on the subject. Forty left for Abingdon in 1675, and Fitten continued, associating with such Strict Baptists as Kiffin, Nehemiah Cox, Richard Deane and Joseph Morton. These all came into the west during 1676, but evaded a request to come and ordain Hardcastle at Broadmead, though they were on friendly terms with Gifford's Strict Communion church in the Friars. It may be noted that in 1677 the London churches at last gave way on the question of communion, and their confession then (adopted again in 1689) leaves the way open to fraternize with the churches of Jessey's type.

Fitten died, and a fifth Elder was chosen who soon was buried. The church sent a deputation to Broadmead to try and reclaim Hardcastle, but was refused on 8 April, 1678. At this point our information ceases.

Crosby said that when Forty went to Abingdon, his people joined with Kiffin. The date is evidently wrong, and the church books at Devonshire Square do not confirm the statement in the least, at any date whatever.

When in 1689 the Particular Baptist Assembly met, four ex-members of this church came as representatives. Samuel Buttall, who had been here in 1674, had then gone to Bristol, and came from Plymouth in 1689. George Barrett, the Teacher in 1653, came as Elder of Mile End Green. Thomas Dawson who was member here in 1671, represented Keach's church in Horsleydown. And Nathanael Crabb who had continued till 1674, came with Richard Adams from the church at Shad Thames, better known as the General Baptist church of Dockhead or Horsleydown. Since the church as a whole was not represented in 1689, the presumption is that it had disbanded, or had merged into some other. If the latter, the association of Fitten and Nehemiah Cox suggests that Petty France was the church that absorbed it, and as this church in 1727 moved to Devonshire Square, absorbing also Kiffin's church, this theory will explain the statement of Crosby.

It is conceivable that the papers which Stinton received from Adams, had been given to Adams by Crabb. In any case, as they found their way to Adams, who was at Devonshire Square from 1690 till his death in 1719, and as Stinton received them by 1711, it is probably that the Jacob church of 1616 did not maintain a separate existence for a century; while we have no evidence of its activity after 1678.

Two of the State Churches of Massachusetts could trace their origin to it. Not a single Congregational church in England can trace a link with it, though there are two promising points of enquiry; Barbon's group of 1640, known in 1654, and the chance that between 1671 and 1674 any Pædobaptist members who may have survived so long, left the church when Fitten altered its constitution for the last time. But no exploration has yet linked up any subsequent Congregational church with either of these. At Stoke Newington are reunited two or three strands from the frayed cable, while Commercial Street and the old Cripplegate Meeting represent two other Baptist developments.

We are fortunate in having so many early documents relating to this one church. They reveal a most complex story, but there is no reason to think it unusually exceptional. The fermenting period of 1635-1653 may well have thrown up other changing bubbles, only they have burst and left hardly a trace. For as early as 1631, the bishop of Exeter wrote in grief to Laud that he had heard of eleven congregations of Separatists, with

pastors, meeting regularly every Sunday in brewhouses and similar places. Some of these fell into the hands of the High Commission, but only from this church and Hubbard's do we have their own story, thanks to Stinton.

## MEMBERS KNOWN, WITH DATES AND REFERENCES.

- B. Broadmead Records, published by the Hanserd Knollys Society; correspondence &c. 1669-1678.  
 C. Camden Society, Cases tried by the High Commission, 1634.  
 D. Debate between Knowles, Jessey, and Kiffin, 1643.  
 H. Hexham Records, published by the Hanserd Knollys Society with the "Fenstanton Records"; correspondence 1653.  
 J. Jessey Records, 1616-1641.  
 K. "Kiffin Manuscript," 1633-1644.  
 S. State Papers; Domestic, unless Irish or Colonial are specified.

Dates are abbreviated by omitting the 16 which marks the century; thus 32 means 1632.

- John Abbot, 70; B. Ejected from Fishborne.  
 John Allen, 16; J. 36 May 5, of Southwark, a Brownist, sent to the Gatehouse; S. Thomas Allen, 33; J.  
 Mrs. Allen, 32, join Spilsbury by 38, die 39; J.  
 Andrew Almey, 16; J.  
 Eliza Alport; 44; D. Edmund or Edward Alport was before the High Commission on 23 April 1640; S.  
 Brother Arnold, 32, left 33; J.  
 Thomas Arundel of St. Olave's, 32; S.  
 Mary Atkin, 33; J.  
 Phillis Atkinson, 44; D.  
 William Attwood, 32; S.  
 George Baggott, 53; H.  
 Praise-god Barbon, 32; J. On 31 December paid over the shipmoney for New Romney on behalf of Mayor Daniel Duke; S. 40; K. 44; D.  
 Sarah Barbon, 32; S.  
 George Barrett, Teacher, 53; H. Sarah Barrett, formerly servant to Thomas Patient at Dublin, came to England 1653. Rippon appendix to volume 4.  
 Mrs. Barnett or Bernet, 32; J.  
 Mr. Bates, 32; S. Gone to Amsterdam.  
 William Batty, 12 June 34 to the Gatehouse; C. 38 had joined Spilsbury; J. By 46 had broken the church to pieces, Benjamin Cox disputing against him (Lamb on Predestination). 68, a mask-maker, on roll of Devonshire Square.  
 Sister Bayh, 44; D.  
 Humphrey Bernard, brewer's clerk in Blackfriars. 32; SJ. Joined church while it was in prison.  
 Mrs. Bernet, see Barnett.  
 Brother Berry, 44; D.  
 Mrs. Berry, 41 died; J.  
 Samuel Blaicklock, Teacher, 41-2; K. He was in the councils of the New-Model Army, as the Clarke Papers show. Lawrence Blaicklock was a prominent printer in the Puritan interest. Luke Blaicklock in 1656 was transporting horses to Barbadoes, where the Puritan Richard Basse wanted them.  
 Richard Blunt, after 33; J. 40; K. 41? D. 41-2; K. 44; D.  
 Christopher Booth, 78; B.