

## The Use of Parish Churches, 1641-1662.

**U**NDER normal circumstances a patron presents an incumbent to a living, and once the bishop and the presentee have fulfilled a few formalities, the incumbent and the churchwardens control the premises. Parishioners have certain rights, and if the tithes have been alienated, the lay-rector has certain duties, such as keeping the chancel in repair. But the incumbent has sole control of the pulpit.

In the early days of the Reformation, few ministers were capable of preaching. The king and the bishops licensed certain men, of whom Latimer is a good instance, to use any pulpit within their jurisdiction—of course when the incumbent was not conducting service. The Puritans tried to extend the system, and endow Lectureships, whose holders had no right to christen, bury, or perform any parochial duties, but were simply to preach. Such a system still survives in the well-known Hulsean and Bampton lectureships and in other kindred foundations. But in early Stuart days it seemed such a formidable engine for the Puritans, that it was frowned upon by the court.

When, therefore, the Puritans seized power in the early days of the Long Parliament, it was promptly revived and put into wide operation. A Committee for Preaching Ministers was appointed on 19 December 1640, and on 14 June 1641, the Commons bade all deans and chapters of cathedrals permit the inhabitants to have sermons on Sunday afternoons. On 8 September, after a petition from Stepney, the crucial step was taken of making it lawful for the parishioners of any parish to set up a lecture and maintain an orthodox minister at their own expense, to preach every Sunday when there was no other preaching, and once more in the week when there was no weekly lecture. This is an important recognition that parishioners had some rights in the buildings they maintained, and may explain the further steps they took in many places, of challenging utterances from the pulpit and initiating debates. But to this we shall not attend.

So far the rights of patrons to present, of bishops to institute, of incumbents to officiate and collect tithes and fees, were untouched. But the outbreak of civil war brought about a revolutionary change, when the rights of all Royalists were set aside, and were assumed generally by the Parliament or some one of its committees. If a Royalist incumbent fled, or preached against the Parliament, or holding two livings neglected one, or refused the Solemn League and Covenant, or if his life was scandalous, the case was examined, and on proof the living was sequestered. The delinquent was pensioned off, generally on one-fifth the former income, and Parliament appointed a successor. If an incumbent died, and the patron was a Royalist, the Parliament appointed a successor.

Under the Lecture system, parishioners were free to arrange for themselves, but as many incumbents resisted, 114 cases were brought to Parliament for confirmation, the last being on 11 July, 1643. Up to this date we may be sure that all Lectures approved by Parliament would be ordinary Pedobaptist Puritans. We may note, therefore, some who later on figure as Baptists: Timothy Batt, John Simpson, John Tombes, Samuel Fisher.

Between 1 December 1642 and 9 December 1648-9, there were about 952 cases of sequestration with subsequent nomination of Puritan ministers to actual livings, recorded in the Parliamentary Journals. Down to 6 December, 1648, this was the full Puritan Parliament deserted by many of its Royalist members, but not yet purged by Colonel Pride; the Parliament which in June 1646, adopted the Presbyterian system and issued a final ordinance on the point on 29 August, 1648. Therefore, again, any man nominated was a Pedobaptist clergyman, and presumably ordained by a bishop; if any exception be claimed, it must be proved, for the presumption is this way.

Dr. W. A. Shaw has compiled complete lists which are invaluable for the story of the Established Presbyterian Church of England, and all that relates to it. They contain very much curious information, which we scan now only to note Puritans who were not yet Baptists. There is but a single case, Thomas Horrocks; in 1647 he was trying for the living of Stapleford Tawney in Essex; on page 43 of volume I. we have mentioned that the evidence for his ever becoming a Baptist is very scanty and ambiguous. Him apart, we see that not a single Baptist evolved from any Puritan minister who found grace in the eyes of the Long Parliament or its Assembly of Divines.

We can hardly insist too much on the importance of distinguishing between Puritans and Baptists. They were not

Free Church men, but wished to have an Established Church: their strength lay in the ordained ministry and in the class of squires, who returned members to Parliament. Down to Pride's Purge, Baptists had no representatives at all, either in parish livings or in Parliament, with the possible exception of John Fiennes, M.P., son of Lord Say. Moreover down to that same date, the end of 1648, Richard Deane testifies that they were very meagrely represented in the Army. But both Parliament and Army were re-modelled, and the people as distinct from the aristocracy now made themselves felt, so that Baptists soon appeared in the Army. The new "Parliament" was elected by the Council of Officers out of nominations by the Baptist and Congregational churches, and, therefore, the position of Baptists from 1653 onwards was radically different. After the Fifth-Monarchy effervescence, they settled down to quiet but rapid development under the Protectorate Parliaments, holding high positions therein and in the Councils of State, while not only the highest military commands but also high ecclesiastical posts on the various Commissions fell to their lot; till the Presbyterians regained control on 26 February 1660-1, only to lose it to the Episcopalians on 8 May, 1661.

The varying usages of the parish churches during all the twenty years may be well illustrated by the curious career of John Simpson in London, to be traced in the Parliament Journals, the Council-book, and other Domestic State Papers.

He emerges on 22 March 1641-2, when the Commons appointed him Lecturer at St. Dunstan's in the East. He was, therefore, a Pedobaptist at this time, and a clergyman ordained by a bishop. On 29 April, 1642, he was further appointed Lecturer at St. Botolph's without Aldgate: there was no difficulty in lecturing at two buildings, as every Methodist minister knows well. But Swadlin, the incumbent of St. Botolph's since 1628, was a Royalist, and he deserted his cure, so that Simpson, without any further appointment, stepped quietly into his place, to the satisfaction of many parishioners. Doubtless when Parliament appointed a new rector of St. Dunstan's on 29 August 1645, the former rector having died, Simpson dropped lecturing there, for that parish was very small.

Ten days earlier, London was districted out for Presbyterian purposes into twelve "Classical Eldershops." Simpson found St. Botolph's grouped with nine other churches to be governed by three Tryers of whom Spurstow is best known. But he somehow got a footing at Great Allhallows, and if the Tryers of the Third Classis tried to exercise their powers, he was

likely to be asked by what authority he was preaching there; they were, however, three weak men. It is not at all surprising that when the London Synod called for reports, the moderator of this classis replied on 29 April 1652, there was a minister at Great Allhallows, but no elders. The Presbyterian system was working badly; no return from the Botolph's classis remains; and from the First Classis it was reported that Peter's or Paul's Wharf could not be induced to choose elders, nor to have a minister that would act in the government. There was no king in England, and clergymen did what was right in their own eyes, provided the parishioners did not interfere.

Even the Rump could not tolerate such chaos in church affairs now that the Scotch invasion was defeated and the Scotch king was a fugitive. On 18 February 1651-2, a Committee was appointed for the Propagation of the Gospel, and Owen drafted a scheme to govern the churches, while for two years past a Commission with full powers to eject and install had been reorganizing the four northern counties, and for a year past a second had been remodelling Wales, sitting generally at Wrexham under General Harrison, and acting chiefly through Vavasor Powell.

Powell came to London at the end of March, 1653, and soon joined with Simpson at Allhallows, after preaching at the Charterhouse and at Whitehall. For the next few months Simpson, Powell, and Feake were at the height of their glory in Blackfriars, where a fellow-member, Anna Trapnel, fell into trances, and even uttered prophecies at Whitehall. On the dissolution of the Nominated Parliament, they inveighed against Cromwell's treachery, and naturally got into trouble; though Powell escaped to Wales, Simpson and Feake were in January 1653-4 committed close prisoners to Windsor. Their places at Allhallows were filled by a new set of Fifth-Monarchy men, of a milder type; Justice Samuel Highland, Captain John Spencer, and Henry Jessey.

On 20 March 1653-4 Cromwell extended Owen's plan, tested already in Wales and the North, by appointing a general Commission of Tryers for the whole of England and Wales, consisting of ministers and laymen. When a living fell vacant, the regular legal patron nominated, the Tryers verified that he was pious, good, and able to preach; then he was installed. Charges against incumbents were heard by separate and independent county commissions, who had power to deprive and pension off.

Among the twelve laymen was William Packer, who appears

to be the well-known Baptist colonel: among the thirty ministers were John Tombes, Henry Jessey and Daniel Dike. If then Harrison and Powell, not Baptists as yet, lost their authority in Wales, Baptists now had a very fair share in the general testing of the qualifications of ministers—not in the nomination, which remained with the patrons.

Under these new conditions the case of St. Botolph's came up, for Simpson had kept on there all this while, besides his voluntary work at Allhallows. He was in prison, and the parish needed attention; so when it was known that he was indeed set free, but only on order to keep ten miles from London, a new minister was appointed on 12 October, Zachary Crofton, with Royalist and Presbyterian leanings. By February 1656-7, Simpson was allowed to come back, and he at once claimed Botolph's, and got an order from the Council that he might use it on Sunday afternoon and one week-day. Crofton defied this as unconstitutional, so in September the Surveyor was told to seek out some convenient place which Simpson might have. By February 1657-8 a sitting of Council when three of the ten were Baptists, Lawrence, Disbrowe and Jones, allotted to him the square ground of the old Convocation House, adjoining the cathedral on the south west, covered with ruins; and this was put in trust with Major Strange, Captain Edward Palmer, Mr. Barratt, Mr. Swann and three others. He did not relinquish his claim on Botolph's, and continued urging it till January 1658-9.

Meantime a fresh opportunity opened. The two parishes of Dunstan's and Peter's on Paul's wharf were so small and adjacent, that there was a proposal to unite them. The parishioners of Peter's objected, and as Dunstan's had long had a Puritan rector, they proposed on 11 May 1658 that Simpson, former lecturer at Dunstan's, should now be their incumbent. It does not appear how this was settled, and for two years Simpson drops out of notice.

After the Restoration, the ejected Royalist incumbents began to assert themselves by degrees, and Crofton the Puritan at Botolph's found his tenure cut short, Swadlin obtaining possession. Crofton was thrown into the Tower on 14 February 1659-60, for writing in favour of the Covenant, although he had furthered the Restoration. It seems very remarkable that Simpson, a far more dangerous person to the Royalists, was not molested. On 22 October 1660 he was preaching in Bishopsgate church, and openly justifying the judges of Charles I., who had just been executed for treason. Yet no action was taken, a sign that

Charles II. did not yet feel very secure. Even on 24 August 1661, the familiar trio, Knowles, Jessey and Simpson, were again in possession at Great Allhallows, and were maintaining regular services every Monday and Thursday; they had the occasional assistance of Mr. James, in whom we may probably recognize the Seventh-Day Baptist John James, executed on 26 November for seditious preaching; the report of 29 November implies that our trio deserved as much.

With August 1662, the Fourth Act of Uniformity came into force, and then at latest in London all such use of the parish churches came to an end. Pepys tells how great efforts were made to get Royalists who might fill all the London churches, and prevent any being empty, swept, and garnished, ready for re-occupation.

## Notes.

### The Ejection of 1662.

A popular volume in commemoration of the 2,000 ministers who left their livings, or rather were ejected from them, on St. Bartholomew's Day, 1662, has been written by Rev. John Stanley, F.R.Hist.S. Appearing in the month which marks the 250th anniversary of the event, it is appropriately entitled, "Lest we Forget" (one shilling, A. H. Stockwell). Though, as already intimated, a popular work, it is the outcome of independent research; hence the pages contain many a quotation from State Papers, State Secretaries' Journals, and other contemporaneous records. Moreover, the work of others, including the important volumes of Professor G. Lyon Turner, has been placed under tribute, with the result that the Movement is described in a singularly vivacious and readable manner. After the Movement, come the Men; and just here the book before us is distinctive, for it presents the Roll of Honour, or the names of the men, who resigned their living, rather than "make a nick in their consciences," together with details as to the places they left, the scene of their after-lives and labours, also their denominational relations, date of death, etc. Here, of course, we are on the track of Calamy and Palmer's "Nonconformist's Memorial"; but it is right to say that Mr. Stanley gives us more—he supplements the familiar list with many newly-ascertained facts. There is a cordial Foreword by Dr. Meyer, and tributes are given from the pens of ten other admirers of Puritan heroism and consistency.

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