

CHRONICLES

OF THE

OLD

CONGREGATIONAL

CHURCH

AT

GREAT YARMOUTH,

1642—1858.





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*W. Storrer sculpt*

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# CHRONICLES OF THE OLD CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH AT GREAT YARMOUTH.

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## CHAPTER I.

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### THE RECORDS.

**T**HE old Congregational Church of Great Yarmouth is dowered with a past of most exceptional interest, and it is more than strange that amongst the books and papers in her possession, there exists no complete or continuous record of her eventful story.

The most valuable document that has survived the flight of years is a small manuscript book purporting to be "Some account of the first settlement of the Congregational Church in Yarmouth extracted from the Ch Book." The title page of this little volume is a fine piece of penmanship, and is embellished with some extraordinary "flourishes" in the style so dear to our forefathers, in days when there was no particular hurry about anything, and when calligraphy was still a fine art. In the corners of the border we may trace "J," "7," "7," "5," probably indicating that the extracts were made in the year 1775. These extracts are not numerous. They extend over the period 1642 to 1670.

Next in importance comes another manuscript book of much later date, in which we recognise what Charles John Palmer in his "Perlustration" describes as "an original MS. Church Book of the Independents remaining in the possession of Mrs. G. D. Palmer,"\* from which he gives many quotations. C. J. Palmer

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\*This lady was the eldest daughter of the Rev. J. M. Beynon, pastor of the Unitarian Church from 1800 to 1830. She presented an organ (presumably the present one) to the Unitarian Church.

was evidently wrong in considering this a "Church Book" in the ordinary acceptation of the term. It consists of a few meagre extracts from the original Church Book, followed by "A Chronological List of the Ministers belonging to the Congregational Church at Yarmouth in Norfolk, from the year 1643 to the present time." The date represented by "the present time" is not mentioned, but the last minister named "was chosen in 1798 and left in 179—," although the record goes on to state that this worthy published a book in 1809. The ministers included in this list, subsequent to the year 1732, are those who presided over that section of the Church which afterwards became Unitarian. Mrs. G. D. Palmer's book bears the autograph of her grandson, Mr. F. D. Palmer\* by whose kindness it appears to have come into our possession comparatively recently.

A few fragments are all that we have in addition to the foregoing, and it is to that rich mine of Nonconformist lore, Dr. Williams' Library, that we must turn for full and detailed information. Here we find, (1) a complete copy of the original Church Book (or probably books) made with minute care, in 1846, by Joseph Davey, most diligently annotated, and containing a wealth of information bearing not only on the history of the Church, but also upon that of the times contemporary; (2) a history of the Congregational Church at Great Yarmouth, from 1642 until the recognition of the Rev. Alexander Creak, embodying and including all the above mentioned, and much more; the whole written in a style of high literary merit, and representing an enormous amount of labour and painstaking research.

Mr. Davey's daughter is still living, and by the kindness of her friend, Miss Russell, the writer is able to give the following details as to the author to whom we owe so much.

Mr. Davey was an accountant by profession, a man of culture and literary tastes. Beside those already named he left behind a great many manuscripts, which after his death were in some way lost, with the exception of one dealing with the history

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\*Since deceased.

of the Yarmouth Church. This manuscript continued in his daughter's possession for some years, and from it Dr. Stoughton (who had from early youth been a great friend of Mr. Davey's—both coming from the neighbourhood of Fakenham), obtained a great deal of the material for his book "Spiritual Heroes." The title is "History of Congregationalism in Great Yarmouth and its neighbourhood, a narrative embodying the minutes contained in the Church Book of the venerable Wm. Bridge. Part I., 1642-1670, Congregationalism in the Establishment." The manuscript was afterwards purchased by Dr. Stoughton, and was by him presented to New College, London, where it is still treasured. Apparently none of Mr. Davey's works were ever published. He was resident in Yarmouth for many years.

Shortly after this, in 1850, the Rev. J. S. Russell (afterwards Dr. Russell), issued, in connection with the proposed building of King Street Church, a pamphlet entitled, "A Leaf from the early History of the antient Congregational Church in Great Yarmouth, 1642—1670," in which he sketched, all too briefly, but with singular charm and felicity, the early history of our Church. He based his work on records which "have happily been preserved."

Now, what has become of the book or books which Mr. Davey so laboriously copied in 1846, and of which Dr. Russell speaks as "preserved" in 1850?

Seeing that in 1732 a division of the Church took place, and that ours was the section which sought "pastures new," it is not surprising that the original Church Book (registering events from 1642 to the time of the division), is not in our possession. It is quite reasonable to surmise that it would be retained by the section remaining in the older sanctuary; a supposition which receives some degree of confirmation in that some worthy elder, with a pretty taste in penmanship, should in 1775 (when any little soreness connected with the rupture would have had time to heal), send across the street to borrow the Church Book, and set himself diligently to make the book of "Extracts" before named. It is however curious that records from 1732 are not in our hands.

The writer has made enquiries in various directions; of the Unitarian Church, at Dr. Williams' Library, at Memorial Hall,

at the British Museum, and of numerous private persons who might be able to give some clue, but all in vain; and he has come to the conclusion that if in existence, the book or books must be hidden away in some private library, a conclusion confirmed quite voluntarily and unwittingly by the Keeper of Manuscripts at the British Museum, who ended his reply to the query with the words, "probably in private hands."

In view of the apparent loss of these invaluable MSS., with how much deep gratitude must we crown the memory of Joseph Davey, who at such infinite pains has preserved for us every word of the precious originals, and thrown so much light on their subject matter.

As to printed histories. We have already named Dr. Stoughton's "Spiritual Heroes," a charming little book, in which the story of the early martyrs and confessors is told in a popular and remarkably pictorial style, and in which East Anglian Non-conformity comes well to the front. Mention has also been made of Dr. Russell's pamphlet.

It was in 1874 that John Palmer, F.S.A., published "The Perustration of Great Yarmouth," a very elaborate work, brought out in parts, and now usually met with in three closely printed volumes, in which appears an excellent and detailed (and on the whole not unsympathetic), account of matters connected with our Church, quite up to date of publication.

Shortly after this followed (in 1877), a "History of Congregationalism in Norfolk and Suffolk, by John Browne, B.A., Congregational Minister at Wrentham," which will probably for many years to come be regarded as the highest authority on the subject.

The value of these two works is beyond estimation. Each writer was eminently qualified for the writing of such a history. Each devoted to his task the most painstaking care and assiduity, the most thorough and exhaustive research. Yet the two men stood at opposite poles. To those who (like the writer), cherish distinct reminiscences of both, the contrast is most marked, but for those who did not know them it must suffice to say that the

former was a polished man of the world, a pronounced Conservative and Churchman; the latter, the Pastor of an historic Congregational Church, a sturdy Puritan, who whilst living to the full the life of his day, would not have been out of place in those troublous times whose history he loved to recall. Could the interests of Truth be better served than by the telling of the same story from such widely different standpoints?

All these books are now out of print. Dr. Stoughton's was purposely popular in character, and anything like detailed or intimate history would obviously have been quite beside the intention. Dr. Russell's was avowedly only a "leaf." In each of the others the story of the Yarmouth Church is buried in the midst of a mass of matter extraneous thereto. There may, therefore, be some justification for the presentation (for the first time), of a book concerning itself solely with the history of our beloved Church from its foundation up to comparatively recent times.

What follows was not originally intended for such modest publicity even as is involved in the printing of a few copies for private distribution, the editor having in the first instance undertaken his task simply to fill the hiatus in the Church archives occasioned by the loss of the original books. As it progressed, the work of compiling and editing opened up in many unexpected directions, and the difficulty of selection and rejection has been considerable. So far as possible, original documents are left to speak for themselves, although all other available sources of information are freely drawn upon, and in some instances the results of personal investigation are given. The hand of the amateur will be sufficiently evident throughout. It has not been the intention of the writer to attempt any review of external events contemporary with those here recorded, but in order to accurate appreciation the reader will find it very helpful to refresh his memory by a perusal of some reliable history of the period. No discussion is indulged in concerning religious or doctrinal, (still less concerning sectarian or political), questions, the object being simply to provide a fair statement of facts.

Indebtedness is gratefully acknowledged to friends who have assisted with items of information, or by loan of books, and for facilities most courteously afforded at the British Museum, Dr. Williams' Library, and elsewhere.

## CHAPTER II.

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### INTRODUCTORY.

By way of introduction to these chronicles, and in order to place them in their due perspective, we cannot do better than quote *in extenso* the following passages from Dr. Russell's pamphlet, so remarkable alike for lucidity and condensation.

“The counties of Norfolk and Suffolk were, in the beginning of the seventeenth century, the strongholds of Puritanism. The town of Yarmouth, standing on the point where these counties meet on the sea-coast, and affording peculiar facilities for the escape of persecuted Nonconformists to the opposite shores of Holland, naturally became a place of resort for these sufferers for conscience sake, and this circumstance greatly favoured the development of Puritan principles in the town. One of the earliest authentic notices of Nonconformity in Yarmouth occurs soon after the accession of James the First, and illustrates the terrible operation of the Book of Canons, which had just been sanctioned by the King and was rigidly enforced by the Bishops. Mr. Richard Maunsell, a minister, and Thomas Lad, a merchant of Yarmouth, had met after public worship on the Lord's day, with another friend, for religious conversation on the sermons which they had heard in the church. For this offence they were cited before the chancellor of the diocese of Norwich, and subsequently were summoned before the Court of High Commission at Lambeth. After suffering a year's imprisonment they again appeared at the bar on a writ of *habeas corpus*. They were ably defended by Nicholas Fuller, a learned bencher of Gray's Inn, who argued that the High Commissioners had no legal right to imprison the subjects of the realm. Instead of delivering his clients, this eminent lawyer brought upon himself the vengeance of Archbishop Bancroft, and the displeasure of the King, and was cast into prison, where, after many ineffectual appeals to the royal clemency, he languished and died.

“A still more distinguished name appears about this time in the annals of Nonconformity in Yarmouth. Among those who fervently desired the reformation of the Church, and whose hopes were crushed by the arbitrary proceedings of the dominant party, was a young clergyman named ROBINSON, who held a benefice in the neighbourhood of Yarmouth. His well-known leaning to Puritan principles soon drew upon him the jealous surveillance of his ecclesiastical superiors; he was cited before the Church courts, harassed by vexatious proceedings, and subjected to constant interference and annoyance, till at length, after having seen his friends and himself almost ruined by a series of ecclesiastical prosecutions, he was forced to abandon the scene of his pastoral labours and to seek safety in flight. He retired into Lincolnshire, where he became the pastor of a little flock of persecuted Nonconformists, with whom, in the year 1607, after suffering incredible hardships, he succeeded in effecting his escape to Holland. To that expatriated and despised company was reserved the glory of one of the greatest enterprises recorded in the world’s history. They are the PILGRIM FATHERS of New England; and to their venerated pastor, JOHN ROBINSON (if to any man), belongs the title of *Father of the English Independents!*

“Meantime, darker clouds gathered over those who endeavoured to stand their ground, and maintain their principles at home. The accession of Charles the First, the appointment of Laud to the primacy, the re-publication of the Book of Sports, and the increased terrors of the Courts of Star-chamber and High Commission, filled up the measure of oppression. In no part of England was the persecution of the Nonconformists fiercer than in the diocese of Norwich. The bigotry of Laud found a willing instrument in Matthew Wren, who applied himself with the zeal of an inquisitor to detect and destroy every vestige of Nonconformity in his diocese. A list of *nine hundred* questions was framed for the testing of any Puritan who might fall under suspicion of the Bishop; and so vigilantly was every conventicle tracked out, that the spirit of Nonconformity appeared to be effectually crushed. Upwards of three thousand persons are said to have been driven into exile by the severity of this intolerant prelate.

“Among those who fell under the ban of the Bishop was one destined to act a conspicuous part in the future history of his time. *William Bridge*, Fellow of Emmanuel College, Cambridge, and minister of the parish of St. George, Tombland in Norwich, was silenced for Nonconformity in the year 1637, and excommunicated. A writ being issued for his apprehension, he effected his escape to Holland, where he preached to a congregation of English refugees, who had settled in Rotterdam and had formed themselves into a Church on the Congregational model. The flight of Bridge was reported by Laud to the King, who wrote against his name, ‘We are well rid of him!’ Within a brief space, however, Bridge was to return from exile, to become the first pastor of the Congregational Church in Yarmouth, and the Apostle of Independency in East Anglia.”

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### CHAPTER III.

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THE CHRONICLES, FROM 1642 TO 1670.

THE first entry in the records is as follows:—

“The urging of Popish ceremonies and divers innovated injunctions in the worship and service of God by Bishop Wren and his instruments; the suspending and silencing of divers godly ministers; and the persecuting of godly men and women, caused divers of the godly in Norwich, Yarmouth, and other places to remove, and to pass over into Holland, to enjoy the liberty of their conscience in God’s worship, and to free themselves from human inventions.

“After they came into Holland, divers joined themselves to the Church in Rotterdam, and abode members of that Church five or six years; among whom were Mr. William Bridge and Mr. John Ward, who also were chosen officers of the Church there. But after the glad tidings of a hopeful Parliament called and convened in England, was reported to the Church aforesaid in Rotterdam, divers of the Church, (whose hearts God stirred up to further the light they now saw, by all lawful means, in their own country,—not without hope of enjoying liberty there, after much advising with the Church and seeking God for direction), returned with the assent, approbation, and prayers of the Church into England, with resolution to gather into a Church with all convenient speed, where God should please to direct them; the Church also promising to give their assent, under handwriting, for their in-churching, whensoever notice should be given of the present probability of the same to the Church.

“Upon the return of divers at several times, and sitting down in divers places among their former acquaintances, where some of them had formerly inhabited, as at Norwich, Yarmouth, &c., they found many lets and impediments which hindered their present gathering. In the meantime, Mr. John Ward being called to Colchester, did there with others gather into church fellowship, and there continued.

“After very many meetings of the brethren to seek God, and advise together about in-churching themselves (though they were not yet dwelling in one place), at last seeing some hope of effecting it, divers that they might be in readiness for it, and more comfortably to do it, sent over to the Church at Rotterdam for their assent, and in answer thereunto, the Church sent over this answer following with the names thereunder specified, viz:—

“ ‘Whereas, several members of our English Church in Rotterdam, whose names are hereunder written, have desired dismission, that they may incorporate themselves into a Church in Norwich or elsewhere. These are to certify whom it may concern, that in a Church meeting there is granted liberty and leave unto them to join together into a body in church-fellowship, trusting upon their faithfulness that they will join and walk according to the order which Jesus Christ hath left to be observed in the churches; wherein likewise they have walked in their fellowship with us. Commending them to the sweet guidance of the Spirit of Christ, with earnest desires and prayers that truth and peace may be their portion. Amen.

“ ‘(Signed) By me,

“ ‘ROBERT PARKE (in the name of the Church.)’ ”

Thirty other names are appended hereto.

Robert Parke afterwards returned to England, and in 1644, became minister of Bolton, Lancashire. He was ejected in 1662.

There was at first much difficulty in deciding whether the Church’s headquarters should be at Yarmouth or Norwich, but it was fully agreed that “where most liberty for the Church and hope of increase should appear, there the Church should settle.” In the meantime they resolved to “gather into a body.”

On November 23rd, 1642, a meeting was held at Norwich, and “after seeking God, they considered of the manner of beginning the work of in-churching, and concluded that some of the brethren, whose hearts God stirred up to that work, should begin; and they judged ten or twelve to be a competent number.’”

“Hereupon, having first jointly offered themselves, CHRISTOPHER STYGOLD freely offered himself to the work of the Lord in building a house to His name, and made a motion to JOHN EYRE to agree and to join with him in that service, who gladly embraced it, and agreed with him. And they two moved (eight other brethren) who all agreed in the same matter. Then it was moved to the rest of the brethren present by Mr. BRIDGE, whether they were all satisfied in what had been done; and they answered, they were satisfied. Then it was further moved to the sisters to come in and help in the work, who all agreed to do so; and after blessing God for success, they concluded the meeting for that time.”

A note under date, February 27th, 1642-3, states that “some of the brethren scrupled the gathering into a body unless Mr. BRIDGE (upon whom there eyes were for an officer), did also join with them.” The assent of the Church in Rotterdam was therefore requested and dutifully awaited. This assent was received “about mid-April,” but “other scruples arose about the safety of the place”\* (Norwich). Finally, “Yarmouth was accounted a more safe place in those dangerous times,” and it was agreed that “Ye Church should reside there.”

On 28th June, 1643, Mr. BRIDGE, “with those other ten that had formerly freely given up themselves to the work of building God a house, solemnly, after seeking God for direction,” entered into the following covenant:—

#### THE COVENANT.

“First: That we will for ever acknowledge and avouch God to be our God in Jesus Christ.

“Secondly: That we will always endeavour, through the grace of God assisting us, to walk in his ways and ordinances according to His written word, which is the only sufficient rule of good life for every man.

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\*It is not surprising that there were “scruples about the safety of the place.” The Civil War was just breaking out; both Norwich and Yarmouth were divided into factions; each party was anxious to anticipate the other in rendering the place of their abode a stronghold for their friends. The Parliamentarians had the ascendancy in both places, but they found it somewhat difficult to keep the Royalists in check. Watches were set, scouts were sent out, and troops levied by the stronger party; they planted their artillery in convenient places, laid up provisions in case of siege, stopped the flight of the King’s partizans, and seized their horses on which to mount their own cavalry, and “a great iron chain was lent to Yarmouth, to lay across the mouth of its harbour.”—*See Bloomfield.*

“Thirdly : Neither will we suffer ourselves to be polluted by any sinful ways, either public or private, but will abstain from the very appearance of evil, giving no offence to the Jew, or to the Gentile, or to the churches of Christ.

“Fourthly : That we will, in all love, improve our communion as brethren, by watching over one another, and as need shall be, to counsel, admonish, reprove, comfort, relieve, assist, and bear with one another, humbly submitting ourselves to the Government of Christ in His churches.

“Lastly : We do not promise these things in our own, but Christ His strength, neither do we confine ourselves to the word of this Covenant ; but shall account it our duty at all times to embrace any further light or truth that shall be revealed to us out of God’s word.”

Dr. Russell states that a very similar covenant was adopted by the Church in Salem, Massachusetts, in 1629.

On September 9th, 1643, “The Church met in Norwich, ye brethren having divers times expressed their affections formerly of calling Mr. Bridge to be their officer, only there was a little difference in their desires, some would call him to the pastor’s office and some to the teacher’s office. But after they had lovingly discussed their reasons on both sides and advised together, they jointly with one consent, called Mr. Bridge to the pastor’s office in the Church of Christ, who did accordingly assent thereof, and the next day he was by the Church ordained into the pastor’s office.

On October 22nd, “The Church now being part of yt members at Yarmouth part at Norwich divers moneths, and ye pastor being called up to London to ye synod, whereof he was a member, it pleased God in ye mean time to order Mr. John Oxenbridge to come to Yarmouth, who did expresse his desire of joyning to ye church. After a few days, being well approved of by ye brethren, ye pastor having recommended him unto ye church by letter, they were willing to receive him.” Accordingly, Mr. Oxenbridge “was admitted into church fellowship November 5th, 1643, and was assistant thereunto, improveing his gifts and abilityes, for ye edification of ye same.”

In Palmer's "Continuation of Manship's History," we read that "a request was made to the Corporation to allow Mr. Oxenbridge, a minister then residing in Yarmouth, to preach voluntarily every Sunday morning before the ordinary time of service. This was permitted providing he made his 'exercise' by half-past eight o'clock in the morning. And in this manner he preached for six months, without receiving any reward, except a present of £15 from the Corporation at his departure."

We may here note that whilst Mr. Oxenbridge and afterwards Mr. Cocke were chosen as "helps," or "assistants," to Mr. Bridge, the officer immediately under the pastor is later on called "a Teaching Elder," as in the cases of Mr. Tillinghast and Mr. Tookie. Deacons were first appointed in 1644-5, and although their duties seem to have been confined to the temporal side of church work, their appointment was a matter of considerable solemnity, as is proved by the following extract:—

"November 26th, 1646, John Cartwright, Christopher Stygold, and Richard Garrit, by imposition of hands and prayer, were set apart and sanctified for to wayt upon ye worke of ye deacons' office.\* In 1650, "Deaconesses" or "Widows" were appointed, for in June 11th, in that year, the Church chose "our sister Alice Burgesse, and for a second, sister Jhoanne Ames." We read that on March 12th previously, Mr. Bridge "did abundantly prove their helpfulness and needfulness from I Tim. v., and Rom. xvi." On January 21st, 1651-2, four Ruling Elders were appointed, but the office seems to have fallen into disuse, as no election of the kind is recorded after November, 1655.

John Oxenbridge, M.A., born 1608, at Daventry, was descended from an old Puritan Sussex family. It is said that he studied both at Oxford and Cambridge. He was at one time tutor at Magdalen College, Oxford, and also became a Fellow of Eton College. He appears to have remained in Yarmouth until August 23rd, 1644, when "John Oxenbridge and Jean Oxenbridge were dismissed to ye furtherance of ye worke of God in Yorkshire." In 1648, he was preaching in St. Mary's Church.

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\*The imposition of hands in the appointment of Deacons obtained until 1709, when, being considered "a thing of little value" the custom was discontinued.

Beverly, where he probably remained until his ejection thence (and from Eton College) in 1660. We next find him at Berwick-upon-Tweed, but having been silenced by the Bartholomew Act, he migrated to Surinam, and thence in 1667 to Barbadoes. His final settlement was at Boston, New England, in 1669, where he “continued till his last remove, which was to the City of God,”\* having been seized with an attack of apoplexy whilst preaching, which ended fatally December 28th, 1674.

His object at Surinam was to explore the country, and his stay there resulted in the publication of “A Proposition of Propagating the Gospel by Christian Colonies in the Continent of Guiana.”

His first wife, Jane, was a woman of remarkable gifts, few divines equalling her skill in textual divinity, and it is said that “whilst her husband was preaching abroad she preacht at home among her gossips”†

We are told of Mr. Oxenbridge that he “was composed of a hotch-potch of opinions, not easy to be described; that he removed from place to place; and that though he was a great pretender to saintship, and had vowed an eternal love to his first wife, Jane Butler, yet, after her death he married, before the year was out, the only daughter of Hezekiah Woodward, the schismatical Vicar of Bray, who dying also in the first year of her marriage, in the 25th year of her age, he took soon after a third wife, according to the custom of the saints in those days.”‡

Mr. Bridge was in London from October, 1643, to April, 1644, attending the assembly of Divines, and it was during his absence that:—

“Divers godly in Norwich expressed their earnest desires of joyning in church fellowship with ye members of ye Church living in Norwich; onely they judged it convenient, and much desired yt a Church might be settled in Norwich yt so they might enjoy Church meetings every Lord’s day together, and did further give in many reasons to move ye said members in Norwich to advise with ye Church about some way for ye com-

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\* Mather quoted by Palmer. † Wood quoted by Browne. ‡ Wood quoted by Browne.

comfortable effecting thereof, manifesting wth-all their earnest desires of injoying such of ye members in Yarmouth as could remove to Norwich. Upon their importunity ye brethren of Norwich wrote to their Pastor for his advise (hee being at ye Synode), and also they wrote unto ye Church at Yarmouth to consider their afflictive condition in not injoying their Church meetings upon ye Lord's dayes; and, being in expectation of their Pastor visiting them, they resolved more fully to discusse and advise about ye effecting thereof at his being among them."

On Mr. Bridge's return, April 23rd, 1644, there was "a full debate whether Norwich or Yarmouth did hold forth most liberty and opportunity yt so ye place for ye Church's settling might be fully determined." Naturally, there was much difference of opinion, the brethren residing in each place claiming for their own the greater advantages. At an adjourned debate, however, it was finally settled.

"Yt it was ye duty of the Brethren at Norwich to gather into church fellowshipp, seeing it would make much for ye honour of Christ, ye increase of ye church, and procure a comfortable opportunitie of church meetings every Lord's day—weh advise they tooke."

#### LETTERS OF SEPARATION BETWEEN THE NORWICH AND YARMOUTH CHURCHES.

"The brethren of Norwich considering the importance of the work, and for their more clear and comfortable proceeding therein, craved the presence and assistance of Mr. Oxenbridge, and some of the brethren of Yarmouth, who willingly promised the same, and thereupon they directed this letter following to the brethren at Yarmouth:—

"Dear Brethren, and companions in suffering, both in our own and a strange land (for especially to you is our speech directed, though with all tender care and respect and without the least prejudice to any brother), you cannot we suppose but have in your eye, those sweet embraces which our souls enjoyed in the bosoms of one another, whereof strangers could not partake. You cannot forget our travels, and many thoughtful

meetings and advisings from time to time, what to do, and where to settle, and how joyfully we did embrace a conclusion of settling the Church as a sojourner with you, upon a joint agreement of after resolving, by librating and poizing where the most liberty and opportunity should be tendered by God, for a more full settling of the church, that we might (if possible), be altogether in one place (and in the meantime we were to enjoy equal means of trial to find out the mind of God therein, and ourselves to abide in our several stations for that end. We suppose it will easily be granted that as yet we had not had church meetings together here, nor enjoyment of ordinances equal with you, so as there might be an equal experience of place, which because we could no ways obtain, after daily expectation of an issue, longed to be eased of our present condition of living without ordinances in church fellowship (and thirsting after communion) with you, whether by our coming to you, or your coming to us, (as God shall please to direct us), we obtained a meeting at Yarmouth with you, by sending some of our brethren in the name of the rest, for a full resolution what to do. You the brethren there having in this tract of time enlarged yourselves by a comfortable addition of many godly saints, whereof many not acquainted with all our loving days, living together in our prosperity and adversity, nor as they supposed so engaged in this equilibrium and poizing of liberty and opportunity, as should appear most for the conclusion, declared that you conceived the church so settled by God's providence, ordering the increase of it by residing at Yarmouth, as you and they could not admit of any thoughts of removing, neither could see enough to cause you to remove to us (though liberty and opportunity should appear most with us :) and we on the other side, being all engaged in the former agreement, of weighing liberty and opportunity, before we resolved where to be and finding God's providence to give, and so long time to keep open for us a greater liberty and opportunity here than could then be made to appear to be at Yarmouth, declared it to be our duty to proceed according to our former agreement to a resolution, and therefore could not remove to Yarmouth, until you the brethren at Yarmouth could satisfy our consciences therein, and while the case standeth thus

we apprehend these two things to appear considerable. You (our brethren of Yarmouth), conceive yourselves cast into a settled condition by God's providence, and we the brethren of Norwich are stayed here by the liberty and opportunity presented to us by God's providence, and concurring with our former engagements, and principles mutually laid by yourselves, and us. From which two, ariseth a necessitated (yet most afflictive) condition of separating us from you, whose presence and communion, under God, was even the comfort of our lives; and what throbbings of heart such a separation maketh with us, we leave to yourselves to judge, who (it may be) have as deep, if not a deeper affectionate share in it than ourselves. But we desire to learn to submit to the will of God with you. And now, brethren, seeing you (by the brethren on your behalf) at another meeting here at Norwich, have so lovingly afforded us both your advice to, and full liberty of embodying here, that so an improvement of the apprehended liberty and opportunity may be made, the way of God may be holden forth to the world, and the borders of the Church may be enlarged; our humble and brotherly request unto you is, (with your earnest prayers for our direction), you would confirm the same unto us, under your hands, giving your consent and permission in writing to us, to gather into a church.

Signed by nine brethren.

May 24th, 1644."

#### YARMOUTH REPLY.

"The Church at Yarmouth, having received this letter, returned this letter following by way of answer to the brethren at Norwich, viz. :—

"Dear Brethren, in the Lord; we have here declared our willingness to fall down at the dispose of the God whom we serve, that He may be glorified and His will obeyed, though it be very hard to part with you, after so many sweet embraces in the way of God enjoyed together. Had providence struck in with us for our co-habitation, we should have counted ourselves happy in the enjoyment of your communion. We confess the many engagements to you, both in respect of the enjoyments we have had, and the diverse conditions we have been in together.

We cannot count it a small affliction after so long while communion, now to be severed one from another. We could lament over the loss we have, when we consider the parting with your actual communion, for it was sweet unto us. But yet we dare not so much respect ourselves as to forget the glory of God. But, seeing the Lord hath need of you to do His work in this respect, we give you up that Jesus Christ may have the more of you. We desire with you to learn to submit to the will of God, and to say with the disciples, when Paul had his revelation to go up to Jerusalem, 'The will of the Lord be done.' Dear brethren, we further testify that our judgments and hearts are with you in the work, and we shall account ourselves engaged to further you (so far as lieth in our powers) and we hope we may expect the same from you, and though we give you up in regard of our near relation, yet we are confident we shall still enjoy you in regard of mutual affection and soul conjunction. We cannot part with you therein, but shall remain yours both in life and death. Our dear brethren, encourage yourselves in the Lord, knowing that your 'labour shall not be in vain in the Lord.' We trust that God which hath begun, and stirred you up, will assist and prosper you, in that great and weighty work you are about. We hope we shall not need to incite you to carefulness, knowing your own faithfulness herein. We say no more, but only in the words of the Lord, by the prophet Haggai, II., 4.—'Be ye strong, all you our brethren,' &c., 'For I am with you, saith the Lord of Hosts.' God's work bringeth strength and wages with it, and a blessing upon it. Thus desiring to strive with God for you, and to join with you in your strong cries unto heaven, that the God of blessing would shower down the abundance of the 'blessing of the gospel of peace,' and truth, to whom be glory in the Churches for ever! We rest.

"Your dear brethren for ever, in the order of the Gospel.

"May 29th, 1644."

Soon after the departure of the Norwich brethren, Mr. Oxenbridge left Yarmouth, and, Mr. Bridge being again called to the assembly, "some brethren were appointed to prepare

things before they came to ye Church, *protempore* in ye want of elders." Mr. Robert Cocke, having been admitted to the Church, was on June 17th, called "unto office" as assistant minister. He continued to serve the Church until (as recorded in the Church book) "July 22nd, 1650, Mr. Robert Cocke fel asleep."

In August, 1645, Mr. Bridge received a "call to Norwich from ye Maiestrate" to become a Lecturer to the City. The matter having been laid before the brethren, "the Church waived (it) as being none of ye ordinance of God, and drew up an answer to that purpose."

The Presbyterians were now in the ascendant, and becoming alarmed at the growing influence of the Church under Mr. Bridge's ministry, took drastic measures to check its progress.

In Palmer's continuation of *Manship*, we read:—

"The Corporation would permit of no public exercise of religion in private houses, nor of any 'particular churches,' and the bailiffs and justices were required to suppress the same; and when a petition to Parliament was carried about the town for signatures—which prayed for the admission of 'Congregational Assemblies in a church way,' although not yet established by law,—the Corporation would not suffer it 'to go abroad, but had it called in.'"

The first intimation of this persecution to be gathered from the Church book is dated February 2nd, 1645-6.

"Mr. Owner and Mr. Whitfield came to Mr. Bridge, being grieved and sore displeased that he should gather a church here in Yarmouth, and they appointed a meeting for Mr. Bridge to confer with them concerning that particular, on Wednesday next, being the fourth day; and on that day forenoon the brethren met together for to commit themselves and the issue of that day's conference unto God. And having met with the town, it was agreed upon that for a time we should forbear to receive any into church fellowship, until we gave notice to the town that we could forbear no longer. Now this restraint was a burden to us and others who were to be admitted."

Independency was rapidly gaining strength, both in the kingdom and in the town, and it was on April 16th that

“The Church gave the town notice that they would no longer forbear the duty of admitting into fellowship; and that they looked upon that injunction as a burden.”

C. J. Palmer states that “they now began to admit to Church fellowship all who would come to them. For this purpose persons travelled as many as fourteen miles; and being put to great distress for want of a lodging, such brethren as were able agreed to receive them into their houses.”

After this, nothing of much interest or importance appears in the records until November 19th, 1649, on which date “a letter was read in the Church from the Counsel (*sic*) of State to this effect, that the ‘Counsel’ of State in their vote had unanimously chosen Mr. Bridge for to preach among them. . . his wages £200 per annum, his work to preach once a week upon the Lord’s day, and that he should return a speedy answer, which was propounded for to be considered on.”

The Church met three times to discuss the letter. “Some of the brethren were for, and some against his going, “but it can hardly be supposed that they were otherwise than proud of the honour put upon their pastor. On November 26th, “Mr. Bridge read a letter which he had drawn up to send by the post to this effect, that he would wait upon them the next week, and that if his deferring did anyways offend them, they might proceed into a new thought (*i.e.* choice) and that he was engaged unto a congregation. At last the brethren yielded that Mr. Bridge would be pleased to go himself in person, which accordingly he did.”

We hear nothing more of the matter except that on 25th December Mr. Bridge “reported to the Church his answer to the Council of State,” which would appear to have been a refusal of their offer.

Mr. Cocke died July 22nd, 1650.

On September 26th, “a case was propounded concerning ye hearing of Mr. Cushin preach, not being a member of any church as yet, but (who) desires to come and to propound himself unto this our church in order unto admission.”

Mr. Cushing had formerly been a minister of the Established Church, from which he had voluntarily seceded, and it would appear that he had been asked to assist Mr. Bridge, somewhat to the offence of the less liberally minded members of the church."

"Our Pastor, in answer hereunto, said, that it was strange that any should scruple it, seeing the ways of God are in his heart, and he intends to join with us. Secondly (he shewed that) it would give occasion of rent in the church if any should absent from church meetings upon this account. Thirdly (he observed) that we hear men at a church meeting make confession of their faith, &c., before they be members, in order thereto; and why not him? Further, seeing he hath left off from others, and renounced his false unction, and hath preached twice in the Church at Norwich, (he asked) whether they would not be grieved if we refuse him? Yea, whether we should not stumble him? These things being weighed, the Church was willing to hear such."

Mr. Peter Cushing was admitted December 13th, but was not accepted as assistant Pastor. On October 31st "the Church sought the Lord, by fasting and prayer for a man to be a meet help with Mr. Bridge in the ministry." Then follows a prolonged and tedious series of negotiations\* with Mr. Habbergham and Mr. Tillinghast, which ended in the latter coming to Yarmouth. He does not appear, however, to have really settled here, and on February 6th, 1652, the Church "pitched upon Mr. Tookie to give him a call, and accordingly a letter was sent to Mr. Bridge, who was then in London."

On March 22nd, it was resolved that he should be "called to come over to us, we having had some taste of his gifts and abilities, which is to be done with all convenient speed." With characteristic caution, he was only called "as an help," but on April 13th, 1654, he "was unanimously called by the Church to

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\* From these negotiations and from other indications we learn that it was not considered sufficient merely to invite a minister from the service of one church to that of another. It was customary to consult the wishes of the Church to which he was ministering, and a deputation would sometimes be sent to the inviting Church to show cause why he should not remove, or a deputation from the inviting Church to show cause why he should. In this particular case the arguments were somewhat prolonged. The ties between Church member and Church, and still more those between Church and Pastor, appear to have been much more binding than in these days, and not lightly to be put aside.

the office of teacher." For reasons not explained, he did not fully accept the call till November 6th, 1655, and on the 13th, he "was ordained to the office of teaching elder," which he held until his death.

Mr. Job Tookie, of Emmanuel College, Cambridge, was born at St. Ives, Hunts.) where his father was minister. He was first chaplain to Lady Westmoreland and tutor to her two sons, Lord Townshend and Sir Horatio Townshend by whom he was highly respected. Later he preached at St. Martin's Vintry, London, afterwards at St. Alban's, Herts. When driven from Yarmouth by severe persecution, in 1665, he removed to London, taking up his abode in Bunhill Fields, where great numbers about him died of the plague, but he and his family were preserved.

In this year (1655) Quaker doctrines were adopted by some members of the Church, and we read that "The Messenger appointed to visit Mary Rouse, brought in an account of her disowning and despising the Church, as such as she would not come at, unless she had a message from the spirit moving her." Eventually she came, and "gave in these two reasons why she forsook the Church:—

- 1.—Because the doctrine of the Gospel of faith was not holden forth.
- 2.—Because there wanted the right administration of Baptism."

C. J. Palmer informs us that in this same year, "Thomas Bond, a member of the Society of Friends, went into the Independent meeting house in Great Yarmouth, and after their teacher had done, spake to the people, till one of their elders, called a deacon, violently thrust him down over a high seat to the endangering of his life, and then haled him out into the yard, where he would have spoken to the people, but was then taken and sent to prison, where he lay among felons; and the gaoler would seldom suffer any friend to visit or relieve him."

The attention of the Church was now engaged in the forming of new churches and in matters arising therefrom. In many instances newly formed churches referred the settlement of

difficult or perplexing questions to the Yarmouth Church. On numerous occasions, seasons of fasting, prayer, humiliation or intercession were appointed.

The death of Cromwell, an event of deepest moment to Congregationalism is thus recorded:—

“September 7th, 1658.—The Lord having caused a great change of providence to pass upon this nation in taking away the late Lord Protector, the Church appointed the 9th instant, in the afternoon to be spent in seeking the Lord for the settlement of the nation, and for humbling our souls before the Lord for our sins, as they had a hand in the same, to begin at two of the clock.” Mr. Bridge was appointed “messenger to that general meeting of the churches at London, the 29th of this instant, 1658.”

On September 28th, it was resolved, “Both in regard of the great meeting of the messengers of the churches at London, as also in consideration of the hand of God by sickness in this nation and also among us, that Thursday, the 30th instant, in the afternoon, be improved in seeking the Lord and humbling ourselves for the nation.”

The following is a list of instances in which the Church met to seek the Lord on special occasions:—

1651, April 22nd—“For the army in Scotland.”

1652, Dec. 7th—“For the navy at sea,” (after the victory of Van Tromp).

1653, July 27th—“For the public.”

„ Oct. 2nd—“On account of the plague.”

„ Nov. 13th—“For the nation, the town and Church.”

1656, June 15th—“On account of divisions in Churches and dangers of the seas.”

„ Oct. 14th—“For the Church, and safety of the nation and town.”

1656-7, March 3rd—“On account of changes in the nation.”

- 1657-8, Feb. 3rd—"For assistance from God in carrying on the work of God in the nation."
- 1658, Sept. 7th—"On Cromwell's death."
- „ Sept. 30th—"For the assembly at the Savoy."
- 1658, Nov. 10th—To praise God "both for the increase and alsoe for the union of the Churches" (at the Savoy conference).
- 1658-9, Feb. 22nd—"For the Parliament, that they may be as instruments for the settling of the nation."
- 1659, May 11th—To give "thanks for delivering mercy."
- „ July 13th—"For direction and assistance for the carrying on the Lord's work in the nation."
- „ Dec. 22nd—"For the sad state of the nation."
- 1660, Jan. 24th—"For the nation."
- „ April 24th—"For the settling of the nation and the preservation of this people."
- 1611, Aug. 26th—"For humiliation before the Lord for the sins of the nation, and alsoe for our own sins."

February 1st, 1659-60—"This day the Church in Yarmouth, called the old Separatists, made a motion of uniting themselves unto us, which the Church took time to consider of and ordered the officers of the Church, with what brethren would, to take an opportunity to speak more fully with them."

February 8th.—The officers this day made report of their being with them and did find they were all satisfy'd with us in the matter and manner of our worship, and so the Church order'd that with the first conveniency we should return an answer of our acceptance or non-acceptance of them." On the 15th it was ordered "that at the next meeting, or when they did see it most convenient, they might come and tender themselves and should be accepted."

This old church had been founded by Thomas Cayme, some time previous to 1624. What its exact doctrines were does not appear. In the vague parlance of the historians of the time its members would be described as "Anabaptists." That they were not Baptists is evident from the fact that soon after their joining the Congregationalists, seven of their children were baptised "upon the account of their parents' faith." In the case of two of these, who were aged respectively 14 and 17, "It was this day (April 19th) ordered and resolved that they should be baptised," as before said, "yet with liberty to profess their faith in Christ."

After the accession of Richard Cromwell to the protectorate, formidable opposition to his Government arose from a large section of the Army. It was broken up into three factions; one was devoted to the Protector; another was in favour of a pure Republic; and the third, headed by Fleetwood and others (called after their place of meeting, the Wallingford House party), consisted of those who (while not pure Republicans, being dissatisfied with Richard, coalesced with the Republican section, and sought and accomplished the overthrow of the existing Government. There seems to have been a Congregational Church assembling in Wallingford House, and on June 7th, 1659, "The Church received a letter from the Church at Wallingford House, desiring advice from the Church what they apprehended was needful for the Commonwealth. The Church considering it, ordered the Elders to write to them, and also desiring to give the right hand of fellowship with them; but concerning civil business the Church, as a Church, desire not to meddle with."

December 28th.—The Church being met, Mr. Bridge made a report of what was done by the messengers of the Churches of London, and these four things offered of their own\* thoughts, viz. :—

- 1.—"We judge a Parliament to be the expedient for the preservation of the peace of these nations; and withal we do desire that all due care be taken

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\* *i.e.* the thoughts of the Yarmouth Church.

that the Parliament be such as may preserve the interest of Christ and His people in these nations.

2.—As touching the magistrate's power in matters of faith and worship, we have declared our judgments in our late confession;† and though we greatly prize our Christian liberties, yet we profess our utter dislike and abhorrence of a Universal Toleration, as being contrary to the mind of God in His word.

3.—We judge that the taking away of tithes for the maintenance of ministers, until as full a maintenance be equally secured and as legally settled, tends very much to the destruction of the ministry and the preaching of the gospel in these nations.

4.—It is our desire that countenance be not given unto, nor trust reposed in the hand of Quakers, they being persons of such principles as are destructive to the gospel, and inconsistent with the peace of civil societies.”

On May 29th, 1660, Charles II. ascended the throne, and on November 8th, or 18th, 1661, “The keys of the meeting house were sent for to the bailiffs, and delivered to the Dean and Sir Thomas Meadows, and the vestry door nailed up.”

As to the meeting place of the Church in its early days, the Chronicles are silent. When reasons for settling in Norwich were being discussed, one was “that they had the meeting place free, and therefore that trial should be made there.” The most probable inference is that in Yarmouth some hired house was used, and there can be no doubt that meetings were arranged as privately and quietly as possible. But as the Church grew stronger, and more favourable days dawned, services were held in the Parish Church and at the Priory. In 1650, it was proposed that the north aisle of the Church should be fitted up “for

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† The Savoy Confession of Faith.

another meeting place," but eventually, it was decided that the chancel should be "closed in with main walls where needful and fitted up for a church house" (at a cost of £900); and it was here that Mr. Bridge and his flock were "suitably accommodated," and worshipped God, until November 18th, 1661, when the keys were delivered up to the Dean and Sir Thomas Meadows.

Dr. Russell, writing in 1850, says, "It is only within the last three years that the walls which divided the ample area of St. Nicholas' into two distinct places of worship have been removed, and the edifice restored to its original form." It is characteristic of the times, that in order to make an entrance into the walled-up chancel, a door was made through the tomb of Robert Crowmer, in the north chancel aisle.

We have thus the edifying spectacle of our noble old Parish Church sheltering, at one and the same time, the Presbyterians, under Mr. Brinsley their minister, and the Congregationalists under Mr. Bridge. The situation was further accentuated by the appointment of both these worthies to the office of "Town Preacher," to which was attached a salary paid by the Corporation. In these more enlightened (?) days, Corporations do not commonly concern themselves with such antiquated and quite unnecessary things as preaching of the Gospel. The providing of popular amusements, and the arranging of Sunday concerts and bands of music are matters which command their most solicitous care.

In order that no suggestion of "Papistical" usage should remain when St. Nicholas' became the joint abode of Presbyterianism and Congregationalism, the royal arms were displaced to make way for those of the Commonwealth; a table in the aisle was substituted for the altar; the prayer-book and surplice were banished. Civic processions no longer attended at the great festivals; absolute simplicity reigned supreme. Mr. Brinsley preached in a plain Geneva gown, and in all probability Mr. Bridge did likewise.

Besides the Sunday services, week-day meetings were numerous. On Mondays an opportunity was given "for brethren to give a taste of their gifts." The business meetings

(corresponding to our "Church meetings") were held at "two of the clock" on the first Tuesday of the month. On other Tuesdays, at "three of the clock," gatherings were arranged "that brethren might exercise by propounding a question, and by opening a piece of scripture, or a particular text, so as other brethren might have time also to speak." There were also Thursday meetings, at "four of the clock," which were attended (sometimes in great numbers) by persons outside the Congregational body, and which were specially designed for the instruction of such.

In these early days, Church discipline was rigidly enforced, and we find from numerous entries, that in cases of serious misdemeanour the offender was called to appear before the Church and make his defence. If not satisfactory, he was solemnly "put away," as "a scandalous and evil person, and to be accounted as a publican and a heathen, which the eldership, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, did presently pronounce, leaving a solemn admonition upon him." It is, however, pleasing to note that in 1680, a member who had previously been convicted of a grievous sin, was restored to membership on giving evidence of an amended life (and solemnly convenanting with Christ and the Church to live thenceforward according to gospel rule.

After the last-named entry (November, 1661) nothing appears in the Church book until the next year, when we read the following brief but pregnant sentence, which for noble simplicity can scarcely find a parallel, unless it be in the inscriptions of the Catacombs:—

"1662. Miles Corbet suffered at London."

Corbet, who had been Recorder and Member for the Borough,\* was admitted into Church fellowship in 1649. In 1632, he was one of four magistrates who imprisoned the parish minister, Mr. Brooks, for his violent opposition to the before mentioned Mr. Brinsley, in the course of which Mr. Brooks served on Mr. Brinsley an inhibition to preach (from the Arch-

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\* He represented the Borough in each successive Parliament during the long period of 37 years.

bishop of Canterbury). As one of the judges of Charles I., he sat in the High Court of Justice, and his name appears last on the list of signatories to the warrant for that monarch's execution. In 1652 he became a member of the administration in Ireland, having as colleagues no less notable men than Cromwell and Fleetwood. After the restoration of Charles II., alarmed at the proceedings against Sir Harry Vane, he withdrew to the Continent, and settled at Hanau, where he was presented with the freedom of the city; but having imprudently removed to Delft, he was betrayed by the treachery of a pretended friend, Sir George Downing, who was at that time Ambassador at the Hague. Being conveyed to England, he was brought before the Court of King's Bench, on the charge of high treason and sentenced to death. The day before his execution, he declared that "he was so thoroughly convinced of the justice and necessity of that action for which he was to die, that if the thing had been yet entire, and to do, he could not refuse to act as he had done, without affronting his reason, and opposing himself to the dictates of his conscience." Colonels Okey and Barkstead were to be executed with Corbet, and on April 21st, 1662, the King sent an order to the Sheriffs of London that Okey's head and quarters should have Christian burial, he having shown signs of contrition; but Barkstead's head was to be placed "on the Traitors' Gate in the Tower, and Corbet's head on ye bridge (London Bridge), and their two quarters on ye citty gates, *ad libitum*."

C. J. Palmer, in his *Perlustration*, has the following note—"There was a popular belief, aided by statements in guide books, and mentioned in White's 'Eastern England,' that this house (the Star Hotel) had been the property and residence of Bradshaw, the President of the High Court of Justice, which sent King Charles I. to the scaffold. Such certainly was not the fact. There is no evidence that President Bradshaw was ever in Yarmouth; and, as we have seen, the house did not become the property of a family of that name until the latter part of the 18th century." This fallacy still survives, and has been further embellished by a statement connecting Bradshaw with the Congregational Church. Whilst making full allowance for the

sterner methods of sterner times, as exemplified in the case of Corbet, we cannot help regarding the inclusion of one regicide in our membership as a sufficiently doubtful distinction without seeking to add yet another from the realms of imagination.

Both Mr. Bridge and his assistant were now compelled to leave Yarmouth. It is said that the former removed to Stepney. The Church, however, still held together, as is proved by numerous entries of baptisms, with the exception of which nothing is recorded until 7th November, 1667, when a meeting was held at the house of Mr. Isaac Preston, a Bailiff, and a "Ruling Elder" of the Church ("ordained" November 27th, 1655) at which it was "resolved to call Mr. Bridge down to be amongst us." As to his coming the Church book is silent, and again nothing is recorded but baptisms until April 12th, 1669, on which date we learn that "after a long silence respecting Church meetings and acts, by reason of the sickness and want of our officers, and our restraints of liberty, it was now resolved by the Church that their acts and meetings should be recorded from this day, April 12th."

A meeting was held, and they "did all agree to desire Mr. Lawrence to come down and give us a taste of the gifts and grace of the Lord, given to him for the work of the Lord in this place, in order to his being amongst us."

On April 14th, "The brethren met at Mr. Albertson's\* and agreed that Mr. Bridge should go to London for six weeks to see if he might attain his liberty to be among us as our officer, and that a letter be sent to him for that end."

It seems that nothing came of this, for on December 29th "the brethren met and agreed that night to write Mr. Bridge and Mr. Tookie for their advice about a third person to help in the work of the ministry." Mr. Sheldrick was suggested as "a fit man for them," and they requested an early answer from their beloved Pastor and his assistant. The reply must have come early

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\* John Albertson was made Bailiff in 1655. He joined the Church in 1652, and was "ordained" Ruling Elder, November 27th, 1655. He died October 25th, 1693, aged 71, and was buried in Yarmouth Church.

in the new year, for on February 4th, 1669-70, they considered "the letter of advice respecting a third person, and at a meeting at Mr. Albertson's agreed to waive the calling of a third person for the present, and also that, in place of the calling several persons to help them, they would desire Mr. Sheldrick to give them his constant help for some time."

Two very sad events are now recorded—"1670, May 12th, Mr. William Bridge, our pastor, died at London, Mr. Job Tookie died there three months before."

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## CHAPTER IV.

### THE BOWER LETTERS.

Although, as we have seen, the Church book has very little to tell us during the years 1667 to 1670, considerable light is cast on the history of our Church during this obscure period, by a series of letters from Richard Bower, Government agent and spy in Yarmouth, to his friend, Joseph Williamson, secretary to Lord Arlington. This correspondence is preserved for us amongst State Papers Domestic, and is inadequately quoted by C. J. Palmer. The following rather copious extracts will speak for themselves, and help to elucidate some points hitherto wrapped in mystery. At the same time, it may be well to remember that it was Bower's business to make out as strong a case as he could against the dissenters, so that due allowance must be made for possible exaggeration and special pleading. Even then his account is so thoroughly circumstantial and full of local colour, that we cannot but think that in the main his statements are approximately correct.

It must here be noted that the Conventicle Act of 1664 prohibited more than four persons besides the household, attending any private religious meeting; the Five-Mile Act of 1665 made it unlawful for any nonconformist minister to come within that distance of the Borough.

Bower to Williamson, December 16th, 1667:—"Meetings are so frequent. . . . 200 or 300 met at the house of Thomas Raven, a common council-man and present Chamberlain."

The same, December 18th.—"There were 400 or 500 at the conventicle named in my last; they flocked together in other parts of the town. . . They expect Mr. Bridges, a grandee of the Independent faction, shortly, and several outed ministers are supplying his place—Mr. Ottee, once a bodice-maker, in the late times minister of Beccles, was one."

The same, December 23rd:—"The magistrates do not put the least check on the conventicles, and the numbers flocking thither increase daily, they are so full that people can scarcely get in."

Of about the same date is an undated paper, "A narrative of the Government of Great Yarmouth," from which the following is an extract:—"Conventicles suppressed from 1666, when (Edm.) Thaxter and Mr. Huntingdon being bailiffs, the conventicles were re-established, Mr. Bridges, the former preacher, brought back, and the other party admitted to the Corporation.

. . . . The Act of Uniformity is evaded in choosing officers of the town; so that of 12,000 estimated communicants, only 500 attend, and those chiefly the poor, who receive collection money."

From this and following extracts, it would appear that in spite of the silence of the Church book on this point, Bridge did return to Yarmouth, though possibly he may have paid only flying visits. There were excellent reasons why his presence should not be proclaimed from the house-tops.

On January 8th, 1668, Bower writes:—"The people are high for liberty of conscience; blown up by books scattered among them, one called "A Peace Offering," another, "A Discourse of the Religion of England," and others. Conscience is made a cloak for ignorance, wilfulness and treachery. One of these holders forth refused the Oath of Supremacy, but when it was read to him, thinking it was the Oath of Allegiance, he took it. These people are children in understanding, but men in malice."

Again, on March 11th:—"Mr. Bridges, formerly teacher to the Independent Congregation of Yarmouth, and one of the principal grandees of that party is come down and preaches; the people flock in such numbers that by 7 a.m. there is no room to be got. They also meet in other parts of the town in great numbers, being supplied with teachers out of the country, who now resort here from all parts."

June 19th:—"A conventicle meeting was held next door to me on Sunday, they met at 5 or 6 a.m., and broke up at 10; then at 11 and broke up at 3. At their breaking up I told out about 400 from one door, besides what went out at another. There were several other meetings in the north and south ends of the town at the same time."

October 9th:—"Since Mr. Bridge's coming the Independent faction is grown so high that the minister\* will be forced to lay aside the performing of his duty in the burial of the dead, their rudeness being such that they not only jeer and laugh at him, but make a noise that he may not be heard. Some have been so impudent as to lay their hands upon his book. Others more modest, have buried their dead by stealth. The prayers and the thanksgiving for his Majesty's restoration was torn out of the Common Prayer as it lay in Church. Their ringleader, Mr. Bridge, is grown so high that he threatens his members with excommunication if they go to hear our ministers. He has seduced several of late, and made them members of his congregation, and takes upon himself to baptize their children."

Letters of November 27th and December 9th refer to an information against Mr. Bridge, forwarded to the Government by Bower. Bridge, however, appears to have been warned by a friend at court and to have evaded his adversaries.

In a letter dated December 14th, Bower says:—"Bridge resides at Yarmouth, and is daily teaching, contrary to the Act, which forbids his residing within five miles of the town. The two sets† act as brethren in trying to subvert the Government." He then proceeds to give a lengthy history of Nonconformity in Yarmouth from the closing of the Parish Church against Bridge and his congregation.

December 18th:—"A deacon of Mr. Bridge's Church was buried this afternoon. When they had brought him to the grave, the minister‡ being there, they set down the corpse and fled, only one staying, which caused another to return, so that there were only those two and a friend of mine to put the corpse into the grave.

March 3rd, 1669:—"The Independents have fitted up a place for public meetings with seats for the people and a desk for the parson, where at least 1000 met. The fitting up was not taken notice of before they met, only by their own party, by which may be seen the secret intelligence they held with one another."

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\* The Episcopalian minister, the Rev. Mr. Spendlove.

† The Presbyterians and the Congregationalists.

‡ Episcopalian, Mr. Spendlove.

March 22nd:—"The new meeting place being found too little to contain the people that flock thither, they are erecting three fair galleries; their minister is Mr. Barker, † late minister of Eye."

April 14th:—"Captain Thomas Ravens, Mr. Bridge's son-in-law, and one of our present Chamberlains, who, until Mr. Bridges was required to leave the town, made his house a meeting place for Nonconformists, has now wholly deserted the Church, and goes to the Independents. . . . Their new meeting place has become too little to receive them, and a member informed me that if this toleration continues, they shall erect a fair church in our South end."

April 26th:—"Captain (Ravens) yet goes to the meetings, where they now sing Psalms, and may be heard at a great distance."

Between this and July 6th, 1670, it would appear that clouds had gathered, for in a letter of that date we read:—"The Nonconformists' meetings being prevented in the town, they go to Lovingland, an island, where they are entertained and kept up by Alderman Thomas Ravens, who has a house there. . . . Cobham Isle adjoining is said to be neither in Norfolk or Suffolk, and might be inserted in the commission, which would take away all the Nonconformists' opportunities of meeting. The Justices are at a loss how to levy the £20 for the meeting house in the town, belonging to Major Burton, he being in Holland."

However surprising it may seem that the "fitting up" of a meeting house should be undertaken in 1669, it is quite certain that in that year the Congregational Church was making what in these days we should call "a forward movement," as witness the entry in Church-book for April 12th of that year. Moreover, all that we can gather, points to considerable connivance on the part of the local authorities, and much daring on that of the

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† This is a gross mis-statement. Barker, who had been ejected from Eye, died in 1665. But it is difficult to imagine any reason for an intention to mislead on this point on Bower's part. Is it not more likely that at a time when it was a crime to conduct a conventicle, Bower had himself been intentionally misinformed as to the identity of the "minister," by some friend of the Congregationalists who quietly passed off on him the name of a man who had been dead four years.

Congregationalists, whilst it is well known that in Yarmouth, at that time, many of the most influential men were either Presbyterians or Congregationalists.

Bower himself says, "They" (the Nonconformists) "flock together in great numbers, and meet publicly in the face of authority; they say such things are winked at under the King's nose. All who oppose them suffer in trade or reputation for it. . . . John Woodruffe, the head bailiff, moved for omission from the bailiffs' oath of the words, 'That you shall keep secret the King's counsel,' and 'you shall govern by law and reason,' also that All Saints' Day, Twelfth Day, and the Coronation Day, be left off from being sacred days. He is the Grandee of the Presbyterian party, and has much influence, being the only one in the town that lets out money, not only of his own, but of others, so that he supplies all men's occasions, when they want, upon good security. I am threatened to be spoilt in my trade for giving a knowledge of these things; no interest can stand if the party complies not with them, so I must expect to suffer for what is done."

What was this meeting house? After their ejection from the chancel of the Parish Church, the Congregationalists were compelled to hold their meetings in as private a manner as possible, in the dwelling houses of various members, and at very unseasonable hours. With regard to this more public place, Bower speaks of its fitting up as having been kept secret and as coming somewhat as a surprise. Without putting too much emphasis on a mere turn of expression, the words "fitting up" seem to suggest the adaptation of a building already in existence, and it is hardly likely that the actual erection of a new structure of any importance could have been kept secret in a town of the dimensions of Yarmouth at that date. Further, the reference in the last quoted letter to the levying of £20 "for the meeting-house in the town belonging to Major Burton, he being in Holland," would imply that the premises were private property, lent or rented for the Church's use. The temporary nature of the arrangement is moreover indicated by the proposal to "build a fair Church" elsewhere. What kind of building this

meeting-house was, is not explained, but a good large granary, or a roomy warehouse (and there was plenty of accommodation of this kind in Yarmouth at that time), would, with a very little "fitting up," serve the purpose, and, from an æsthetic point of view (which probably was not much considered), would be quite equal to many a Nonconformist sanctuary of much later days. As to Bower's statement with regard to the accommodation of 1,000 worshippers, we may well be a trifle sceptical, and perhaps the large numbers said to attend meetings in private houses may be discounted, although it must be borne in mind that there were many fine mansions in Yarmouth at that time, some of whose owners were members of the congregation.\*

The mention of psalm singing in one of these letters suggests the question as to when our forefathers first introduced psalmody into their worship. Probably long ere the date of the letter in question. The Church book gives no indication whatever; a quotation from the Church book of a neighbouring Church (that at Beccles), may therefore be of interest in this connection. It is as follows:—"Att the monthly meeting of the Church upon the 25th day of the first month, called March (1657), it was agreed by the Church, that they doe put in practice the ordinance of singinge, in the publiq upon the forenoone and afternoone on the Lord's daies, and that it be betweene praier and sermon; and also it was agreed that the New England translation of the Psallmes be made use of by the Church, at their times of breaking of bread: and it was agreed that the next Lord's day seventh night be the day to enter upon the work of singinge in publiq."

This metrical version was published in 1640. Pilgrim Fathers, "though they blessed God for the religious endeavours of those who translated the Psalms into the metre usually annexed at the end of the Bible," yet observed in that translation so many variations, not only from the text, but from the very sense of the Psalmist, that "it was an offence unto them." Each of their divines took a portion to translate, and the whole

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\* Defoe, writing somewhat later, refers to the Yarmouth "merchants' houses, which look like little palaces rather than the dwelling houses of private men." (Tour through the Eastern Counties, by Daniel Defoe.)

was afterwards revised by Mr. Henry Dunster, President of Harvard College. "We have respected," said they, "rather a plain translation, than to smooth our verses with the sweetness of any paraphrase. We have attended conscience rather than elegance, fidelity rather than ingenuity; that so we may sing in Zion the Lord's songs of praise, according unto His own will, until He bid us enter into our Master's joy to sing eternal hallelujahs."

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## CHAPTER V.

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### WILLIAM BRIDGE AND SOME OF HIS CONTEMPORARIES.

It may be well to pause here awhile, in order to roughly sketch a broad outline of the life of William Bridge. He was born in or about 1600, in Cambridgeshire, and became a fellow of Emmanuel College in 1616, taking his M.A. degree in 1626. On April 16th, 1631, he was elected "general lecturer of the towne" of Colchester, but does not appear to have remained there long, for we find him in Norwich in 1633, where he was paid "for his Friday sermons at St. George's, of Tombland, for the halfe yeare ended at Or Lady, 1633, according to an order made in that behalfe at the assembly holden the First day of October, 1632, £6 13s. 4d." Similar payments were continued up to the year 1636. He became Rector of St. Peter's per Hungate (at a salary of £22 per annum) and Curate of St. George's, Tombland, but having refused to read the "Book of Sports," and his doctrine becoming inconsistent with that of the Church of England, he was silenced by Bishop Wren and excommunicated. A writ *de capiendo* having been obtained for his apprehension, he fled to Holland, and joined the Congregational Church at Rotterdam, where, together with Jeremiah Burroughes and John Ward, he was called to office in that Church, of which Hugh Peters had been pastor. "They all renounced their ordination in England, and ordained one another in Holland. When Master Ward was chosen pastor, and Master Bridge teacher at Rotterdam, first Mr. Bridge ordained Mr. Ward, and then immediately Mr. Ward again ordained Mr. Bridge." The Dictionary of National Biography confounds John Ward with Samuel Ward, B.D., of Ipswich. It was John Ward, ejected from Norwich, who accompanied Bridge to Holland.

On 16th May, 1640, Bridge preached a sermon "upon a prayer day for the Prince's\* good success in going forth to war," in which he urged his hearers to "pray for Holland, their hiding

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\* The Prince of Orange.

place." In 1641 he was in England, preaching "at Westminster before sundry of the Honourable House of Commons," a sermon entitled "Babylon's Downfall." From the trend of his remarks it is quite evident that he had no idea then of a permanent return, for he says, "I am now returning to that Church and people of God, which Jesus Christ hath committed to me and others. And if in this voyage the Lord shall put the winds and seas in commission for my death, my desire is that God would forgive our adversaries, if it be His will, that have put us to these extremities. We have great cause to forgive, seeing all their injuries are turned into our blessings. . . . Yet we know that public administration of justice is not contrary to personal forgiveness. We must confess that the leaving of our own dear country was and is most afflictive to us: a trouble to leave our good friends, convenient houses, precious liberties, and so many souls under the hazard of your extremities." He goes on to say—"Though the persecutions of the Churches be never so great, yet there shall always be some place free and open as a city of refuge for God's people to fly unto and hide themselves in, till Christ shall come by public deliverance for the Churches."

Contrary to his intention it was in the following year that he returned to England. The Yarmouth records for 1641 (as quoted by C. J. Palmer) state that he "was invited over, with an offer of being appointed preacher" (to the town), "and in the following year he settled in Yarmouth."

In 1642 Bridge was preaching in London, at St. Margaret's, Fish Street Hill,\* and in the same year the Church was formed, in whose history he was to play so important and worthy a part.

Assiduous in the discharge of his pastoral duties, Bridge was not forgetful of other and wider claims, for according to Swinden:—"The Corporation declared for the Parliament in August, 1642; the people brought in their plate to be coined into money, to be lent to the Parliament (rather given); and among them, Mr. Wm. Bridge brought in for himself; for Ann Bridge,

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\*The sermon has come down to us. It is entitled "The diseases that make a stoppage to England's mercies discovered, and attended with their remedies," printed by order of the Committee of the House of Commons.

his daughter; for John Bridge, his son; and for Rebecca Bridge, his daughter, articles to the value of £42 8s. 7d., spoons, rings, cups, &c.”†

In 1643, Bridge was appointed a member of the Assembly of Divines, known as the Westminster Assembly, at whose meetings he was frequently in attendance.‡ It was in 1643, that the “Dissenting Brethren” issued their “Apologetical Narration,”\* which bears the signature of Bridge and four others (Goodwyn, Nye, Simpson, and Burroughes), and again in 1648, his name appears amongst the signatories to “Reasons of the Dissenting Brethren against certain propositions concerning Presbyterial Government.” In 1649 he was unanimously chosen by the Council of State as one of their preachers, but he does not appear to have accepted the appointment.§ In 1658, he was one of the “messengers” of the Congregational Churches at the Savoy conference and a member of the Committee that drew up the famous Confession of Faith.

After Bridge’s enforced flight from Yarmouth in 1661, little is known of him, but it is certain that he was carefully watched

†Of this year (1642) are the following: “A sermon preached unto the Voluntiers of the City of Norwich and also to the Voluntiers of Great Yarmouth in Norfolk,” printed by order of the Committee of the House of Commons; “A sermon containing some comfortable directions for such has have been, or may be, driven from their Houses, Goods, or Country, preached by William Bridge at Great Yarmouth.”

‡Of this year (1643) is “The Truth of the Times vindicated, where by the lawfulness of Parliamentary proceedings in taking up arms is justified, Dr. Ferne’s reply answered and the case in question more fully resolved. Printed according to order.” It is dedicated to “The Knights and Gentlemen, Deputie-Lieutenants of Norfolk.” Also “Joab’s Counsel and King David’s reasonable hearing it, preached before the House of Commons and by them ordered to be printed.”

\*The Independents were but a handful in the Westminster Assembly and finding that they had not fair play against such a host of Presbyterian advocates, they addressed Parliament in this “Apologetical Narration.”

§In 1656 we have three sermons, “Scripture Light the most sure light;” another three, “Christ in Travail;” thirteen “A lifting up for the down-cast;” and “Four several sermons, concerning, (1) The Sin against the Holy Ghost. (2) Sins of infirmity. (3) The false Apostle, tried, and discovered. (4) The Good and Means of Establishment.” In the following year all these were reprinted with the addition of “The great things Faith can do” and “The great things Faith can suffer,” the whole forming the second volume of “Twenty-one several Books of Mr. William Bridge; sometime Fellow of Emmanuel Colledge in Cambridge; and now Pastor of the Church of Christ in Great Yarmouth in Norfolk.” The first volume contains: “The great Gospel Mystery of the Saints’ comfort and Holiness;” “Satan’s power to tempt;” “Thankfulness required in every condition;” “Grace for grace;” “The spiritual actings of Faith;” “Evangelical repentance;” “The spiritual life, and in-being of Christ in all Believers;” “The Woman of Canaan;” “The Saints’ hiding-place in time of God’s anger;” “Christ’s coming is at our midnight;” “A vindication of Gospel ordinances;” “Grace and love beyond gifts.” These sermons were preached on various occasions, at Stepney, Clapham, St. Margaret’s Fish Street, St. Dunstan’s in the East, the Charter House, at “The Abbey Church in Westminster before the Right Honourable House of Lords,” in “(St.) Margaret’s, Westminster, before the Honourable House of Commons,” before the “Lord Major of London,” &c. As before intimated, many of Bridge’s sermons were printed by order of Parliament.

and all his movements reported to the authorities. It is said that in conjunction with Jeremiah Burroughes, his old friend and companion in exile, he carried on "conventicles" at Clapham. From Bower's, letters, previously quoted, it is evident that Bridge paid visits of greater or less duration to his old Church at Yarmouth. A book of sermons, printed in 1668, is entitled, "Seasonable Truths in evil times, in several sermons lately preached in and about London by William Bridge, formerly of Yarmouth."

Bridge was twice married. By his first wife there were three children living in 1642, Ann, John, and Rebecca, whilst three children of William and Susannah Bridge are mentioned as having been baptized.

His second wife survived Bridge, and died November 1st, 1675. She was buried in Yarmouth Church, and her monument describes her as "Margaret, sometime wife of John Arnold, merchant, and once Bailiff of Gt. Yarmouth, and lately the wife of the Reverend and famous William Bridge, minister of the gospell, and Pastor to the Congregational Church in Yarmouth."

"One to whom he was well-known," gives the following account of Bridge:—

\*"He was no mean scholar, had a library well furnished with fathers, schoolmen, critics, and most authors of worth. He was a very hard student, rose at 4 o'clock in the mornings, winter and summer, and continued his study till eleven; and many souls heartily bless God for his labours. Though he was strictly congregational, he heartily respected his brethren that had other sentiments. There is good proof of this, in his carriage to his fellow minister at Yarmouth, worthy Mr. Brinsley, who was of another stamp and character. When the government was in the hands of those who openly befriended such as were of Mr. Bridge's persuasion, Mr. Brinsley had many enemies, and was much opposed; and there were strenuous endeavours used to get him removed, as an enemy to the powers that then were, but Mr. Bridge stood up for him, and used all his interest to

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\* Nonconformists' Memorial, quoted by Browne.

continue him peaceably in his place, and they lived and conversed together comfortably many years." Bridge's counsel and advice were frequently sought by the Churches in his neighbourhood, and, as is abundantly proved by entries in the Church book, his mature judgment and valuable experience were ever at the service of his brethren.

Bridge's lineaments have been preserved for us in an engraved portrait from the hand of William Sherwin. Sagacity and kindness are perhaps the characteristics with which the calm homely face most impresses us. A portrait in oil of passable merit still hangs in the vestry of the Unitarian Church, which bears the following inscription:—"This portrait of their first minister (from an original painting in his own possession) was presented to this Church by John Ives, F.R.S., and F.S.A., anno. 1774." The portrait measures  $15\frac{1}{2}$  ins. by  $12\frac{3}{4}$  ins. The "original picture" referred to is said to have hung for many years at Gunton Old Hall, and C. J. Palmer seems to have considered that Sherwin's engravings was copied from it. Sherwin was not only an engraver of some eminence, enjoying the unusual distinction of being appointed engraver to the King, but was also a draughtsman and designer of respectable ability, and in at least† one of his portraits claims to have played the double rôle of designer and engraver. The fact that on Bridge's portrait no painter's or designer's name appears, whilst proving nothing, renders it by no means impossible that Sherwin was responsible for the whole production. This engraving of Sherwin's, of which a specimen is preserved in the Print Room of the British Museum, measures but a few inches, and, according to a custom prevalent at the time, is surrounded by an engraved frame which is adorned with four skulls, two sets of cross-bones, and two open books, presumably Bibles. Its size and shape suggest that it was intended for insertion in some of the printed works of Bridge. There is another engraved portrait of Bridge copied from Sherwin's (signature included), bearing date 1845, which was probably used as a frontispiece to the

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†That of William Sermon, M.D., which is inscribed "W. Sherwin, ad vitam, del. et sculp., 1671."

reprint of his works issued in that year. It is from this print that the photographs now hanging in the vestry of our Middlegate Church have been taken, a matter for regret, as the 1845 print is in all respects very inferior to the original and gives quite a different impression of Bridge's physiognomy. From the same source comes the very unsatisfactory portrait in C. J. Palmer's "Perlustration," also that in Rix's "East Anglian Nonconformity."\* A still more atrocious misrepresentation of Bridge, engraved by J. Caldwell from an unknown source, appeared in "The Gospel Magazine," 1782. It is a mere caricature.

Original editions of Bridge's printed works are still to be picked up at second-hand book shops and auction sales. A collected edition was issued in 1845, in 5 vols. 8vo.† His writings abound in quotations from and allusions to the classics, ancient history, and the early Fathers of the Church. Their style is naturally not one that would commend itself to the reader of to-day, but through all prolixities and "quaint conceits," the simple piety and sincere devotion of this true Saint of God, shine forth undimmed by the passage of the years. Allusion has been made in foregoing notes to some of these printed sermons, under the dates of their publication. We may here mention:—"The righteous man's habitation in the time of plague and pestilence," 1665; "Seasonable truths in evil times," (nine sermons preached in and about London, 1668); "Bridge's Remains" (eight sermons), 1672. In all of these, Bridge is described as "late preacher of the Word of God at Yarmouth." The last-named bears this note, "The first seven sermons being from his own copy, the eighth being his last sermon was taken by *short hand*." The volumes before mentioned as printed in 1656 and 1657 are dedicated in the ceremonious style of the time, to various members of the Thompson family, and from the terms employed, it would appear that Bridge had made his home amongst them when staying in London. Curiously

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\* "East Anglian Nonconformity," by S. Wilton Rix, 1851. Although principally concerning itself with the history of the Beccles Church, this interesting volume contains many references to our own community.

† This edition of 1845 gives 59 separate titles of sermons.

enough, a copy in the possession of the writer bears the autograph of one "Edward Tompson."\* Bridge dates "Joab's Counsell," "from my study in Minchin Lane, Feb. 27th, 1642."

We must here mention a few persons of eminence who were connected with the Church during the period we have had under review.

Captain JOSEPH AMES, who became a member in 1646-7. He entered the naval service at an early age, and during the Civil War attracted the attention of the Lord Protector, who in 1653 made him Captain of the "Samuel," in which ship he joined the fleet under Blake, and took part in the engagement with the Dutch fleet, in which Von Tromp was slain. For his services on this occasion he received a gold medal. He died in Yarmouth in 1695.

THOMAS BENDISH, who was descended "from the very ancient family of Sir Thomas Bendish, of Essex, Bart., who was ambassador from King Charles I. to the Grand Seignior," took a very active part in local affairs. In 1644 he was admitted a member of the Congregational Church, and in the following year was appointed "to exercise his gift at the weekly meetings." The births of his children were recorded in the Church books. The Earl of Manchester, commanding the Parliamentary forces in the Eastern Counties, wrote in 1664, to his "loving friends" the Bailiffs of Yarmouth, authorising them to demand of Bendish a quantity of wool, which, by his Lordship's direction, had been shipped at Lynn, and was then laid up at Yarmouth; and if Bendish refused to deliver it, they were to break open the place where it lay and sell the same, and after repaying themselves £314 for ammunition sent for the use of the Parliamentary forces before Lynn, they were to send the surplus to the Earl. In 1649, Bendish, for his good offices done for the town, was made a free burgess. The "distractions of the times" having brought upon the town great poverty and distress,

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\* Spelling (especially of proper names) was in those days very erratic. The omission or addition of a letter counted for nothing. In the dedication referred to above, one of the names is spelt differently in the two editions. The name of Bridge is sometimes given as "Bridges."

Bendish was in 1650 sent to London for the purpose of consulting with Miles Corbet, then going to Ireland as chief justice, as to procuring "some help and ease for the town." One of the grievances complained of was a general assessment levied on the town by the sole authority of the Corporation "for the support of ministers." The legality of this was questioned, and Bendish, who was a leading member of Bridge's congregation, obtained a grant of £100 a year out of the impropriations. In 1654, Bendish was selected by the Corporation to journey to London, and inform "The Right Honourable the Lord Henry Cromwell," the Protector's second son, "that he had been elected to High Steward, and to invite him to the town." In 1656, Bendish served the office of Bailiff. He left one son, Thomas Bendish, of Gray's Inn, whom Browne appears to have confused in some way with his father. Browne makes Bendish the elder to marry, as his second wife, Bridget, daughter of Henry Ireton, and grand-daughter of the Lord Protector, and comments dubiously on her wonderful longevity implied by her living till 1726. It appears, however, that it was the younger Thomas Bendish who married this extraordinary woman, whose age was quite normal, she having been born about 1650, married 1670, and dying in 1726. Both generations of Bendish lived in a house on Southtown Road, on or near the site now occupied by Cromwell Terrace.

Bridget Bendish was not a member of our Church. She is said to have borne considerable personal resemblance to her illustrious grandfather, and was a woman of forcible character. Not a few curious and interesting stories of her eccentricities have come down to us. See Dictionary of National Biography and Palmer's "Perlustration."

WILLIAM BURTON, admitted July 1st, 1652, married a daughter of General Desborough, brother-in-law to the Lord Protector. At the Restoration it was ordered that his name should be erased from all records and public places.

JOHN CARTER, who took a leading part in political affairs, and was one of the bailiffs, when, in 1642 the town declared

in favour of the Parliament. In 1644 he was Commander-in-Chief of the Militia of the town, and promoted a subscription in "moneys and plate for the payment of soldiers and providence of horses, arms and ammunition." In 1648 he signed the Solemn League and Covenant, being then one of the elders of the Congregational Church. According to Clarendon, on the authority of officers who had been present, there were "many consults what to do with the King," previous to bringing him to trial; and if we may believe tradition, the final meeting for that purpose took place in a large chamber of Carter's house, now No. 4, South Quay. The story is told by Mr. Hewling Lusson of Gunton Hall (who was connected with the Cromwell family), in a communication addressed by him to Dr. Brooke of Norwich, in 1773. He says:—"When I was a boy, they used to show a large chamber in the house of Mr. Carter, in which, as the tradition went, the infamous murder of Charles I. on the scaffold was finally determined. A meeting of the principal officers of the Army was held in this chamber; they chose to be above stairs for the privacy of their conference; they strictly commanded that no person should come near the room, except a man appointed to attend; their dinner, which was ordered at four o'clock, was put off from time to time till past eleven at night; they then came down to a very short repast, and immediately all set off post, many for London, and some for the quarters of the army." John Carter died in 1667, aged 73, and was buried in the north aisle of St. Nicholas' Church.

NATHANIEL CARTER (son of the aforesaid John Carter), who married at Stoke Newington in 1678, Mary, daughter of General Ireton and grand-daughter of the Lord Protector. He was a member of the Congregational Church, and resided in the house formerly occupied by his father. With him the family became extinct, but said his epitaph, "the memory of their good deeds shall never be extinguished."

The compiler of these chronicles has a very distinct recollection of (when quite a lad) being allowed to see over the

beautiful old house of the Carters. Though much modernised externally, the interior was then in very fine preservation, and being at the time occupied by Charles John Palmer, the antiquarian, the furniture and decorations were to a great extent in good keeping with the place. The hall contained antique arms and armour, and the rich toned panelling of the various apartments, enhanced the effect of many choice pictures, attributed (perhaps not very justly) to masters of repute. Some idea of this magnificent specimen of Elizabethan domestic architecture may be gathered from a sumptuous volume of forty-three drawings, engraved by Shaw, issued by Mr. C. J. Palmer, in 1838 for private distribution.

THOMAS DUNNE. He was admitted October 15th, 1650, and became one of the Ruling Elders, January 23rd, 1651—2. He was Member of Parliament for the town in 1654.

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## CHAPTER VI.

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### THE CHRONICLES 1671 TO 1711.

The temporary arrangement with Mr. Sheldrick before alluded to, developed soon after Bridge's death into a more important appointment, for on June 13th, 1671, at a meeting at Mr. Albertson's, it was "ordered that Mr. Sheldrick should have liberty to join with us, and that in order to office. He became a member on August 30th, and in December was invited to the pastorate, which he accepted, and on January 24th, 1671-2, the Church "with joint consent did renew, or rather confirm, their covenant, and also did ordain, or set apart, Mr. William Sheldrick to the office of pastor over them." Mr. Sheldrick had been ejected from the rectory of Reepham in 1662, and filled up the interval between that event and his call to our Church by engaging in the wool trade. He appears to have been a very capable and sagacious man.

Upon the granting of the King's "Indulgence," in 1672, the meetings of the Church again became regular and frequent. According to the manuscript, which for lack of a better name we have called "Mrs. G. D. Palmer's book," it was in 1673 that the Old Meeting House was built, upon the site where the present Unitarian Church stands. This had been the artillery yard and had previously formed part of the precincts of the Grey Friars. Palmer states that it was a square building of intense ugliness. The present Unitarian Church is a modern gothic erection and was built in 1845. The Unitarians have of late years reverted to the term "Old Meeting" as a name for their Church.

An interesting entry appears in the Church book under date September 20th, 1676. "Agreed at a Church meeting at Mr. Albertson's:—

- I.—That at what Church meeting convicted, what should be paid for the house and minster, should be allowed by the Church and friends.

II.—Whatsoever charge should be spent for the benefit of the Church, should be allowed by the Church and friends.

III.—That whatever fine should be on any poor indeed, should be allowed.”

Here we have a reference to the Conventicle Act, and the resolution means that if at any of its meetings the Church were surprised by the officers of the law, the fines imposed on the master of the house and the officiating minister should be paid out of the Church funds; that any fines imposed on members for being present should be paid by them individually, except in the case of the very poor, whose fines should be paid out of the Church funds.

In January, 1678-9, the question of an assistant pastor was considered, and in October we note the admission to the Church of Mr. Hannot, who, it would appear, fulfilled the duties of this office. Mr. Sheldrick must have removed or died 1686 or 1687.

“1687, March 30th. Ordered by the Church that the meeting-house should be made clean, which was accordingly done by many of our maid-servants freely, on the 30th and 31st March, and 1st and 2nd April; also that ‘shutters for the upper windows’ should be supplied.”

With reference to this entry, Browne says:—“This was neither more nor less than the thorough cleansing, not of an old and neglected building, but of the new meeting-house which had been just erected.” He does not, however, vouchsafe any explanation of this theory, nor give any authority. The next entry would seem to give colour to Browne’s interpretation, although every word of it would be equally applicable to a re-opening after temporary closing. The anonymous writer in Mrs. G. D. Palmer’s book is in no doubt as to the date of the building and puts it somewhat emphatically. “N.B.—In 1673 the Old Meeting House was built.”

“On the 10th April,” the chapel was opened being the Lord’s day. “Mr. James Hannot preached both parts of the day, and there was a great auditory. We then were permitted (to meet) by the King (James II.) by a declaration from him dated April 4th, 1687.”

Mr. Hannot had already been invited to the pastorate, but seems to have shewn some indecision upon the matter, and on May 20th the Church agreed "to renew their call again," and if he should still refuse, they desired him and Mr. Albertson to proceed to London to seek a pastor there.

On the same date, we read:—"An address to his Majesty was read and approved on, and it was agreed it should be drawn out faire, and hands procured to it, and be carried up and presented to the King, by Mr. Albertson and Mr. Hannott, who went up withall the 6th of June. They presented it the 10th of June at Windsor, and (it was) well accepted."

Mr. Hannott still refusing to accept the pastorate, negotiations were opened with Mr. James Frazer, a Scotsman, but his Presbyterian principles not being acceptable, some correspondence took place with Mr. Lawrence, of Stepney. On March 31st, 1688, Mr. King came from London, as an assistant, and "On the 26th of April, at the public meeting place, Mr. Hannot was pleased to declare that he did accept of the Church's call to the pastoral office, and had the unanimous consent of the Church herein. Blessed be God for his mercy! And the same day the Church called Mr. King to assist Mr. Hannott, and he accepted the call."

On May 10th, at a Church meeting, when (according to a custom which prevailed on occasion for many years) "the brethren only" were present, arrangements were made for Mr. Hannot's ordination. This exclusion of the fair sex would receive scant toleration in these days of agitation for female suffrage and "women's rights."

Now follows an account of the ordination:—

"June 12th, 1688, Tuesday. At the church meeting, with many other friends, our elder, Mr. John Albertson, stood up and declared the cause of our meeting which was to set Mr. James Hannot in the pastoral office. He then desired Mr. Finch, who was pastor of the church at Norwich, to carry on the work, and then Mr. Finch went to prayer. After prayer, he desired the Church would declare their unanimous consent, which they did by holding up their hands; he then desired Mr. Hannot to

declare his acceptance, which he did in a few words. And then he, (*i.e.*, Mr. Hannot), spake at large out of that place, John xvii. 18, 'As thou has sent me into the world, so have I also sent them into the world.' Then Mr. Finch again confirmed Mr. Hannot's discourse by speaking from that text, Acts iv. 23, and after this he prayed again, and he with Mr. Bidbank, Mr. Say, and Mr. Albertson, laid their hands on Mr. Hannot's head. After this Mr. Finch went up into the pulpit and prayed, and preached out of these words, Jer. iii. 15, 'Yea, and I will give pastors according to my heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding;' and then concluded with prayer. After this, Mr. Bidbank, of Denton, prayed; then Mr. Say, who was pastor of the Church at Guestwick, prayed; then Mr. Lucas of Norwich, prayed: then Mr. Hannot made a short speech and prayed; and then (the assembly) sang the 23rd Psalm; and (Mr. Hannot) dismissed the congregation with a blessing. Thus was the day spent."

We are told that Mr. Hannot "had been educated at an academy at Newington Green, under the care of that polite and profound scholar, the Rev. Charles Morton, where he had great advantages for learning, and very agreeable society, among his school fellows were Mr. Timothy Cruso, Nathaniel Taylor, Mr. Owen, Samuel Wesley, and Daniel Defoe."

"March 19th, 1689-90. Our pastor, Mr. James Hannot, desired the Church would think of choosing a teacher, forasmuch as himself is weak and infirm."

At this time there were two "young men daily preaching among us, Mr. John King and Mr. Samuel Wright, but they were not named by him to be chosen, so the Church was left to consider of it."

"May 8th, 1690. The brethren met at Mr. Albertson's, some were for Mr. King and some for Mr. Wright, and some for neither of them, and nothing was concluded on."

"In July, Mr. King was discharged from preaching among us by consent of the brethren."

"Mr. Samuel Wright was desired to assist among us till God should direct him and the Church further on this matter."

On "October 23rd. Mr. Hannot propounded that if Mr. Milway, pastor of the Church at Bury, should be freely discharged from the Church there, whether or no we might not call him to be a teacher with us here in Yarmouth, but the brethren did not come to any conclusion about it."

On October 8th, 1691, correspondence was opened with Dr. Singleton, but without result, and Mr. Wright still continued to assist.

From an entry of this year we find that to a great extent the sexes were separated during public worship.

"May 17th, 1693. It was agreed to sing a psalm or a hymn after sermon, but which was not fully concluded."

Naturally the service of song had been abandoned during times of severe persecution.

February 7th, 1693-4. Mr. Hannot proposed to "baptize children whose parents were not of the Church, if their conversations were such as did become the gospel, although they were not joined to any Church. Little was replied to it, and he was left to his liberty, and after this he did baptize several children at their particular houses."

An appointment of Deacons is thus recorded:—

On September 9th, 1696, "The Church met at two o'clock in the afternoon, and after some time spent in prayer by Mr. Hannot and Mr. Wright, the Church unanimously renewed their call (of two brethren), and they declared their acceptance (of the office). Then Mr. Hannot spake from 1 Tim. iii. 10, after which he invested them by the laying on of hands, and then exhorted them and the Church to their respective duties, and concluded the meeting with prayer."

April 24th, 1700. "A letter was read from the Church at Stepney, inviting him (Mr. Hannot) to London to preach three or four sermons, in order to be called by that Church to leave us and seat among them, which this Church opposed and denied with full consent by standing up and speaking to our reverend pastor in a mild, respective (respectful) and positive way and manner."

“On the 8th May, our reverend pastor read a letter to the Church from eighteen brethren in the name of the Church of Stepney, desiring we might consent that our pastor, Mr. Hannot, might go to London to preach some sermons among them in order to be called to office there, which this Church unanimously opposed.”

“Our pastor then desired this Church to consent to his going to London, so as that he might discourse that people in order to settle them in peace, promising he would not do anything further than he should see his way clear, and the will of God with the consent of this Church.” But they, naturally fearing the result, “still denied his going to London at this time for several weighty reasons,” and the design was laid aside.

“On May 14th, 1704, being Lord’s day, Mr. Hannot, our reverend pastor, was taken very ill in the meeting about eleven o’clock, he was blooded in the vestry, and afterwards carried home in a cart; he continued till the 7th June, then departed this life about six in the evening, and was buried on the 10th. His funeral sermon was preached next day by Mr. Wright from 2 Peter i. 13, 14. The Lord help, preserve, and bless his poor flock now in sorrow and distress.”

On “July 6th, 1704, it was resolved that Mr. Samuel Say, who was at that time in Yarmouth, should remain on the spot till the Church’s further orders, if not to his prejudice, that our ministers should read and expound for half-an-hour every Lord’s day, and that they should seek a third person” (as their minister).

Subsequently, invitations were sent to Messrs. Goodchild, Thomas Bradbury, Hunt and Bennett, none of which was accepted.

On November 7th, 1705, a correspondence was opened with Rev. Eliezer Birch, at that time residing in Lancashire, and on June 24th, 1706, he was definitely invited to “the sole pastoral office if he thought good to come to us.” The Church to which Mr. Birch was then ministering sent “a full denial to us about their reverend pastor; they, finding what we had done to be to their great sorrow, did most christian like desire us to forbear

any further procedure in the matter." To which the Yarmouth Church replied "with all tenderness, love, and charity, endeavouring by all possible arguments to prevail with them to give up their reverend pastor to us here."

After hearing Mr. Birch preach the call was renewed, and ere long "to our great joy, he resolved to come, and a house was provided for him near the chapel." Some time however elapsed before his arrival, for it was not until April 30th, 1707, that the Church "sent from Yarmouth a coach and six horses, for Nottingham, to meet Mr. Birch and family, who arrived here May 8th in good health. Thanks be to God!"

On May 29th, Mr. Birch was admitted to the Church, and the call to the pastorate was renewed.

But, apparently, still further formality was considered necessary, and on June 18th, "we, the brethren, renewed our call again in writing, subscribing to it, the sisters consenting with silence as was desired. We presented this our call to the Rev. Mr. ELIEZER BIRCH to the full pastoral office and oversight of this Church, under God, we promising to submit to his care and government in the Lord; (the business) ended with his kind acceptance with affectionate words and the blessing."

The recognition of Mr. Birch as pastor of the church took place on June 25th, an account of which now follows:—

"After some time spent in the vestry with the elders and messengers, Mr. Wright went into the pulpit and prayed, then he opened the meeting with words concerning Mr. Birch, a brother with us called to the pastoral office, the call was read and owned by our holding up our hands; then applied the same to Mr. Birch (*i.e.*, he was asked to accept it). He then entered the pulpit with words suitable to the occasion, . . . and so accepted the call in the name of God, promising to spend his time and strength for God and this church; and then we sung an hymn, and then Mr. Green, elder of the church at Tunstead, entered the pulpit and preached from these words, 1 Peter v. 2, 'Feed the flock of Christ which is among you;' then Mr. Nokes entered into the pulpit and prayed, and after him Mr. Mills; then

we sung part of 132 psalm, the 13th verse to the end; then Mr. Birch prayed and dismissed the people with a blessing." Twelve ministers were present on the occasion.

"June 1st, 1709, Rev. Samuel Wright was dismissed from this church to that at Wrentham;" and on October 12th, "Reverend Mr. Daniel Smith was admitted by his dismissal from another Church" to take Mr. Wright's place as assistant minister.

Friction between Mr. Birch and Mr. Smith soon arose, and the former gave it to be understood that unless his assistant were removed he must resign.

The Church came to the conclusion that it "was beyond their power, and would greatly endanger the peace of the Church; so we were forced to deny his request, endeavouring to make him sensible of our danger of separation, and to persuade him to stay with us in love."

All attempts at a reconciliation failed, and the Church agreed that if Mr. Birch removed, Mr. Smith must also leave. On August 31st, 1710, Mr. Birch was dismissed, and Mr. Smith a few weeks later. According to Mrs. G. D. Palmer's book, "Mr. Smith died of a broken heart upon his journey homewards. Mr. Birch returned to Lancashire; some of his descendants have been eminent manufacturers at Manchester."

In January, 1710-1, correspondence was opened with the Rev. John Brook, a minister in Yorkshire.

Mr. Brook having paid the Church a visit, we read under date March 21st.

"We, the members of the Church in Great Yarmouth, in a church meeting this day, do in the presence of God, give a call to the pastoral office to our beloved brother, Mr. John Brook, to have the oversight of this Church, and to whose oversight we promise to submit ourselves in the Lord."

"To which call we the brethren do subscribe our names, and the sisters signify their concurrence by silence."

"On the 6th June, 1711, the coach went away for Mr. Brook and his family, and on the 14th they arrived safely at Mr. Cooper's house. Thanks be to God!"

“On the 22nd August, a fast was carried on, in order for our humiliation and preparation for our settlement, from ten till four, by the Rev. Mr. Brook, Mr. Tookie, and the four deacons.”

Mr. Brook was admitted to the Church on September 5th, and on October 3rd he “was settled in the pastoral office and charge over this Church of Christ in Yarmouth, with great solemnity.”

1711, October 19th. (The Church) “after prayer and exhortation, proceeded to the renewing of our covenant with God and one with another, as is incerted in the following wordes :”

“The covenant of this Church owned and agreed upon, and ordered to be transcribed for time to come.”

“We, who through the exceeding riches of the grace and patience of God continue to be a Church of Christ, being now assembled in the holy presence of God, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, after humble confession of our many breaches of our covenant before the Lord our God, and earnest supplication for pardoning mercy through the blood of Christ and deep acknowledgment of our great unworthiness to be owned as the Lord’s covenant people, and alsoe acknowledging our own inability to keep covenant with God, or to performe any spirituall dutie unless the Lord Jesus doe enable us thereto by His spirit dwelling in us, and being awfully sencable that it is a dreadful thing for sinfull dust and ashes personally to transact wth the Infinite Glorious Majestie of Heaven and Earth, we doe in humble confidence of his gracious assistance and acceptance through Christ, each one of us for ourselves, and jointly as a Church of the liveing God, and one with another in manner following :

“We doe give up ourselves to that God whose name alone is Jehovah, Ffather, Son, and Holy Ghost, the only true and liveing God, and to our blessed Lord Jesus Christ as our only blessed Sovereign, Prophet, Preast and King, over our soules, and only meadiator of the covenant of grace, promising by the help of His spirit and grace to cleave unto God as our chiefe good, and to the Lord Jesus Christ by faith and gosple obedience, as becometh his covenant people for ever. We doe alsoe give up our offspring

unto God in Jesus Christ, owning and avouching the Lord to be our God and the God of our children, and ourselves and our children to be His people, humbly adoring the grace of God, that we and our offspring with us may be looked upon to be the Lord's. We doe alsoe give up ourselves to one another in the Lord, and according to the will of God, freely covenanting and binding ourselves to walk together as a right ordered congregation and Church of Christ in all the ways of His worship, according to the holy rule of the Word of God, promising in brotherly love to watch over one another's soules faithfully, and to submit ourselves to the discipline and government of Christ in His Church and duly to attend all those ordinances which Christ hath instituted in His Church and commanded to be attended by His people, according to the order of the Gosple, and desirous of communion unto which we have attained, not resting in measures attained, but pressing after all and soe far as we, or any of us, have been guiltie of provokeing God by any sin herein discovered to us, we desire from our very hearts to bewaile it before the Lord, and humbly to intreat for pardoning mercie for the sake of the blood of the everlasting covenant, and as an expedient to the reformation of those evils, or whatever else have provoked the eyes of God's glory amongst us, we doe freely engage and promise as in the presence of God :

“First, that we will Christ helping us, endeavour every one of us to reforme our hearts and lives by seeking to mortifie all our sins, and labouring to walk more closely with God than ever yet we have done, and will continue to worship God in publick, private, and secrett, and this without formaltie or hypocrisie, and more fully and faithfully than heretofore to discharge all covenant duties one to another in Church communion, to walke before God in our houses with a perfect heart, and that we will uphold the worship of God therein continually, according as He in His word doe require, both in respect of prayer and reading the scriptures, that soe the Word of God may dwell richly in us.

“And we will doe what in us lie to bring up our children for Christ, that they may be such as have the Lord's name put upon them by a solemne dedication to God in Christ ought to be, and

will therefore as need shall be catechize, exhort, and charge them to fear the Lord, and endeavour to set holy examples before them, and be much in prayer for their conversion and salvation.

“Now, that we may observe and keep this sacred covenant and all the branches of it inviolable for ever, we desire to deny ourselves and to depend wholly upon the power of the eternal spirit of grace, and in the free mercy of God and mirrets of Christ Jesus, and where we shall faile therein to waite upon the Lord Jesus for pardon, acceptance and healing for His name’s sake. Amen.”

“November 14th, Reverend Mr. Tookie was unanimously called to assist our reverend pastor in the vineyard work amongst us, which he freely accepted, desiring our constant prayers.”

Mr. Thomas Tookie was a son of the Mr. Job Tookie, who had held the office of “teacher” during Bridge’s pastorate.

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## CHAPTER VII.

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### THE CHRONICLES, 1719 TO 1733.

#### THE SEPARATION.

According to Mrs. G. D. Palmer's book, Mr. Brook, "in 1719, removed to Norwich, and afterwards to York, where he died. . . . Mr. Tookie died in 1724. Mr. Peter Goodwin, from London, was chosen in 1719, removed to London in 1730. Assistant after Mr. Tookie's death, Mr. Oasland; who, being of a weak and sickly constitution, lived but a few years, and died of a consumption. Second assistant, Mr. Richard Frost, born at Norwich, studied at Leyden, and was left here by Mr. Goodwin."

The Rev. Richard Frost was born at Norwich, where his father, Richard Frost, "a man of great spirituality and heavenly conversation," was a manufacturer. The son was placed in the free school at Norwich, then under the mastership of the Rev. Mr. Pate, with the object of obtaining a classical education, but "the spirit of the times in the latter end of Queen Anne's reign being very unfavourable to religious liberty," he relinquished his studies and betook himself to trade. "Upon the accession of George I., and the fair prospect of returning liberty," he recommenced his studies under Dr. Ridgley, of London, and afterwards entered himself a student at Utrecht. Thence he removed to Leyden, where he completed his education, and first preached in 1726 to a congregation at Bradfield, and thence came to Yarmouth. By intense application he brought upon himself such an universal relaxation of the nerves, and such a consequent dejection of mind, that he was not only incapable of further public service, but even of enjoying the society of his friends. For nearly twenty years previous to his death he remained in this distressing state, and died January 3rd, 1778. Having resigned the pastorate shortly after his seizure the Church contributed £30 annually for his support. He was particularly intimate with Dr. Doddridge, and published a sermon on his death, entitled, "The Stars in Christ's Right

Hand." He published also "The Seaman's Manual, or Prayers adapted to a seafaring Life," and a discourse at the ordination of the Rev. Abraham Tozer, at Norwich.

Somewhere about the time of Goodwin's removal, the Rev. Ralph Milner became a minister of the Church. Ives, senior, in his journal states that "in 1728\* Mr. Ralph Milner came to be an assistant to Mr. Frost." Mrs. G. D. Palmer's book speaks of him as "pastor," and states that he was "born at Ravenstondale, in Westmoreland, in 1702, educated at Mr. Dixon's Academy, at Bolton, in Lancashire, was sometime chaplain and private tutor in the family of Lord Barrington, and settled first at Wantage, in Berkshire, from thence came and settled in Yarmouth about Michaelmas, 1731."

The arrival of Mr. Milner was soon followed by a crisis so grave as to result in the division of the Church into two sections; that which represented the majority of the congregation, but the minority of Church members remaining with Mr. Milner at the old sanctuary, whilst the majority of the Church and minority of the congregation seceded, and, having chosen Mr. Frost as their pastor, proceeded to erect a new meeting house.

Divers accounts of these events have come down to us, which we here reproduce.

According to Ives, Mr. Milner "was liked very well," but in less than a month his journal shows this entry—"Mr. Frost and Mr. Milner doe not agree together." Later on, "Mr. Frost would not consent that Mr. Milner should be upper pastor," he being the last comer, "which made great uneasiness among the congregation," and soon they became very much divided, some for Mr. Frost being head pastor, and others for Mr. Milner."

We now quote from the Church book:—"The Church haveing bin in an unsettled state upon our Rev'd Pastor, Mr. Goodwin's leaveing us, and accepting the call he had to London, and want of that harmony and agreement to procure our peasable settlement wch was earnestly desired and prayed for

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\* Obviously incorrect.

but could not be obtained, have bin ye ocation of not entering in our Church booke what have bin transacted. After an invitation of the Reverend Mr. Milner to come and accept of the pastorall office over us, upon account of the recommendation of him by the London Elders as a suitable person for us, but to our great concern, after he had bin some time with us, not being approved of by the majority of the Church, and severall of the auditory, notwithstanding, on the 16th February, 1731-2, nine of the members did, contrary to the consent of sixteen, did sett down Mr. Millner as pastor, to which we, Mr. William Luson and Robt. Jackson, the Deacons, in the name and by order of ye Church, did enter our protest against it."

Here follow lists of those who were for, and those who were against Mr. Milner. The former includes John Ives, and Thos. Emms, who appears to have been the prime mover in his faction. The latter list is headed by the aforesaid William Luson and Robt. Jackson.

1732, 9th May.—"The Church continuing in an unsettled state, and after long waiteing, finding it impracticable to come to any accomodation, and longing to have all ordinances administered to us, and to come into Church order, did unanimously agree to give ye Reverend Mr. Frost a call to ye pastorall office over them, wch he said he would consider of."

1732, June.—"The Church renewing their request to ye Reverend Mr. Richard Frost to take ye pastorall care over them, he accepted of it, and they agreed upon the 27th July for ye setting him apart to that office, and desired Mr. Frost and the Deacons to send to the Elders of other Churches to assist at ye solemnity. The under is a copy of the call:—

"We the Deacons and Members of the Protestant Congregational Church of Christ in Great Yarmouth, whose names are hereunto subscribed, haveing about tenn months since given ye Reverend Mr. Millner a call to ye exercise of the pastorall office amongst us, find ourselves obliged, to our great concerne, to retract yt invitation. We have long waited to heare ye scheme of preaching insisted upon, wch to us seems to be the Evangelick one, and which from the conversation we had once

and again wth the Reverend Mr. Millner we had reason to judge was agreeable to his own sentaments, but with regard to the necessity of the influences of the spirit of the Redeemer, the new birth, ye freenes and richness of divine grace in ye salvation of the Church of God, ye utter impotency of the fallen creature to be its own Saviour, and the like, wch in our apprehension are doctrines of great importance, tending to glorify God and humble man; some of which have either not bin at all insisted upon, or soe very slitley yt it could give us but little satisfaction; we, therefore, in justice to ourselves and those yt come after us, looke upon ourselvs obliged to defend the Truth as it is in Jesus, and for yt purpose doe by these presents unanimously desire and give the Revd. Mr. Richard Frost a call to take upon him ye Pastorall office amongst us according to ye constitution and dissipline of the Church in ye Rev. Mr. Peter Goodwin's time, whereby all debates and occurances relating to ye Church affairs to be determined by the votes of ye majority of the members in full communion, the Pastor to have a vote with ye members, and if it should happen to be an equality of votes in each side, yt that side wch the Pastor vote on shall determine it, and whereas, in order to discourage him from accepting that office, it hath bin industriously reported yt we were not hearty in ye invitation and only designed to serve ourselvs, without any regard to him, we declare ye said report to be without foundation. Of this kind also is what hath bin charged upon us as favorers of the lay preaching, we cannot but judge they have done a great disservis to the interest of ye Protestant dissenters, and promis, in our severall places yet we will give them noe incouragement, 'tis a concerne for ye glory of God and the good of souls, which we hope animates us in the present call, and if the Rever'd Mr. Frost thinke fitt to accept it, we will endeavour, the grace of God assisting us, to render ye discharge of his office as use full to ourselvs and familys, and as comfortable to him as may be. Signed by us."—(the sixteen before referred to.)

July 22nd. "The Reverd Mr. Richard Frost was sett apart to the Pastorall office over this Church (by reason Mr. Millner's frindes would not permitt us ye use of ye metting place in a peasable manner, and we considering ye distraction it might be

attended with) the solemnization was at Filbe meeting house.  
 . . . . . All was performed to ye satisfaction and comfort  
 of those present, with an earnest desire yt a blessing might  
 attend their pyous design and ye Church be built up and  
 edefyed."

Harmer's manuscript in Dr. Williams' Library, known as  
 Nonconformity in Norfolk," (Dated 1774), thus alludes to  
 "Filbe meeting house"—

"Filby was once a distinct congregation, but has been some  
 time and still is a Chapel-of-ease to the Presbyterian Congrega-  
 tion at Yarmouth."

The following is a copy of a quaint old memorandum pre-  
 served amongst the Church papers:—

"A true state of the difference between us, Mr. Milner and  
 his Frinds."

"When we had agreed to apply to the elders at London, we  
 represented to them that the constitution of our Church was and  
 always had bin Congregational yt thereby they might the better  
 know how to provide sutably for us, and upon their recommend-  
 ing the Rev. Mr. Milner to us he waited upon Mr. Godwin and  
 in conference with him assured Mr. Godwin he was noe  
 Arminian but a moderate Calvinist, and had always bin in yt  
 schem (e), which gave us incoragement to joyn in a invitation  
 upon approbation, weh he complied with, and preached three  
 sermons weh did not give us intire satisfaction, we then in con-  
 ference wth him told him the advice we had from Mr. Goodwin  
 and shew him Mr. Goodwin's letter, wherein he informed us yt  
 in discoursing with Mr. Milner in a visit he made him, Mr. Milner  
 gave him full assurance as above-mentioned, he confirmed wt  
 Mr. Goodwin had write and added he would give us full  
 satisfaction in the Doctrins we insisted upon, and had always bin  
 instructed in, weh considering he was recommended by the  
 Elders, and the character given by them, with the assurance we  
 had from himselfe, did influence our joyning in the call, weh he  
 accepting and comeing down amongst us, we found yt the whole  
 corse of his preaching was verry different to the assurance he gave  
 us and what he had declared to Mr. Goodwin, of weh we made

complaynt to him, and had his reiterated assurances from time to time yt he would give us satisfaction, but found noe performance, this continued for 3 or 4 months, when his frindes insisted upon setting him down as Pastor, and, without our concurence, proseeded therein, and in the vestry to prevent distraction before they went into the meeting place we gave ym in our protest against settling him as our Pastor, assigning ye reasons yt induced us thereto, signed by 16 of our dissenting brethren including ourselves, whereas they had but 9 of the Church yt concured therein, he then went on preaching in the same strain he had done before, we yn told them we were under a nessesity of seperation and should provide ourselves with a Pastor, notwithstanding if they would grant us ye same liberty in the place as we were willing to allow ym, ye auditory might stil remayn united, yr reply was they would only allow us the assistant to preach in the foornoon, but not to administer ye Lord's supper, which we could not comply with, however, we continued to pay Mr. Milner his allowance quarterly, till they went about and got all the subscriptions they could to pay Mr. Millner his allowance, and when the quarter came about sent Mr. Millner with two churchmen to demand his quarterly payment of us, we told him of his frindes having got subscriptions for him, and thereby intercepted ye contributions yt should have come into our hands for payment of his allowance, we could not comply with his demand and as we should otherwise have doon, they tretned\* he should sue us for it at common law, weh we told ym we were determined to stand ye tryal of, and that we should have continued to have paid Mr. Millner if they had not proseeded in yt irregular method, but they thought it convenient not to proseed, at least hitherto. When we had given the Revd. Mr. Frost a cal to ye Pastoral office, and the ministers were come to town in order to it, we desired the use of the place in order to ordaine him, but they absolutely refused it, and least we should have forsed it upon them by virtue of our Trustees haveing a power to break open the doors, they appoynted six persons to watch in ye place all night, and tretned yt if we offered to come

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\*Threatened. Some of this curious spelling represents certain queer twists of pronunciation still to be noticed amongst the uneducated in Yarmouth and the neighbourhood.

in next morning they would knock any person in the head yt should attempt it, upon wch we considered the fatal consequent and distraction it might occasion, and therefore determined to have Mr. Frost ordayned in a seperate meeting place 5 mile distant, when we had occasion to administer ye ordinance of the Lord's supper, we desired the liberty to doe it in ye place wch they again absolutely refused, though we could have don without their leve by continuing in the place when the afternoon sermon was ended, but finding they were resolute to oppose it, were unwilling to create soe much distraction as must have attended it, and therefore Mr. Luson got his house licensed and had it administered there and soe have done since.

“But before matters came to this confution, a meeting was proposed for an accomedation, they appoynted a committe to act for them and we did the like, at wch Mr. Emms did make a proposal to us and told us they would leave it to our option wch to take, either to give ym the place and we keep the stock, or to give ym ye stock and we to keep the place, and he declared that the Church plate should goe with ye stock, we replied yt we would take a week's time to consider of it, and ym should determine which to accept, in the meean time Mr. Emms went to London, however, ye rest of ye committe mett at the vestry at the time appoynted, when we declared that we would give ym the place and keep the stock, they told us they would take a week's time to consider of yt, in order to know the sentaments of their frinds, wch we agreed to, and accordingly at the time appoynted we mett again and asked ym if they came with full power to accept ye place, and give us the stock, they told us they had such power, and ym questioned what title we could give ym for the place, to which we replied that whereas we had elevin Trustees and they two, if yr 2 would comply, we would ingage yt our 11 should joyne with ym in conveying over the trust to whom they should appoint, yt being all yt lay in our power to doe, which they acquiesed in, then they objected yt there were some old houses that did belong to the place, we told ym that they were given by a member of the Church and as we had the majority of the members on our side, we thought we had the best rite to those

houses, wch they would not grant, upon wch we replyed that should be noe bar to conclude the agreement, consequently would give them the houses, then they insisted upon haveing all the plate, wch we told ym Mr. Emms had declared should goe along with the stock, they replyed Mr. Emms did not remember any such thing yt he had mentioned, to which we replyd if he would make oth yt he did not they should have all ye plate, wch if he refused to doe we would make oath that he did expresly mention it and yt in these words ye plate shall goe with the stock, upon wch they all withdrew, excepting Mr. Ives, with whome we argued the case, and came to agreement to devide ye plate between us, wch we concured in, we told him there was thirteen silver Bakers, two silver Tankers, one silver Flagon, we sett 6 Bakers and 2 Tankers on one side, 7 Bakers and ye Flagon on the other and asked him wch he would have, he replyed the 6 Bakers and 2 Tankers, we told him he should have ym, accordly he sent Mr. Clarke and we delivered him ye 6 Bakers and 2 Tankers, there was seven pewter plate, he had 4 and we kept 3, six Candlesticks, of wch he had 3, there was two Boordcloths and 2 napkins, he had one of each and caryed ym away the 29th Aprill, 1732, and doe still remaine in their custody, soe yt all they have to dispute is the other moyaty of the Churches plate, what they have to pretend is yt they only borrowed ym, which is all felatious. We are ready to performe our part in assigning over the place to there trustees, when named pursuant to the agreement, think it cannot be thought reasonable yt when they have taken absolute possession of the place yt we should be willing to submitt ye stock to arbitration, before we are satisfyed out of it for the cost for ye place we are building, since we parted from the last treaty, they have not made ye least motion towards any other, this is a true and just relation of our differences, we are verry free, if it be thought advisable, yt they have an abstract thereof, to convict us of any fals representation if they can in testimony hereof we have sett our hands ye 24th Novemb., 1732."

No signatures are appended, and the latter portion of the memorandum from the words, "We are ready to performe," to the end, has a cross through it, from which facts it would seem

that it was not "thought advisable" for an "abstract" to be handed to the other party, and the memorandum was probably thenceforward preserved merely as a record.

A settlement was eventually arrived at, by which the withdrawing party received £700, one flagon and seven beakers, a remaining sum of £500, two tankards and six beakers becoming the property of those who continued to worship, in the old meeting house.

Of the flagon, nothing has been seen or heard within the memory of living man; the pewter plates, the candlesticks, the napery have all vanished with the years. But the seven beakers are still with us. One of these, undoubtedly of earlier date than the remaining six, measures  $6\frac{3}{8}$  inches in height,  $3\frac{3}{4}$  inches across the top,  $3\frac{1}{2}$  inches across the base. The upper portion is finely engraved with "strap work," conventional roses and foliage, whilst the base is enriched with a very handsome and well executed ovolo moulding. Some of the marks are unfortunately obliterated, but the lion passant and the crowned lion's head are still discernible. A London firm of experts, who have seen this specimen, appear to consider it as of the time of Elizabeth or James I. It bears the initials "E.T.," in prick-marks, possibly of considerably later date than the beaker itself.

In volume I. of that very exclusive publication, "The Burlington Magazine," appear articles by Mr. Percy Macquoid (an eminent authority on such matters), entitled "The Evolution of Form and Decoration in English Silver Plate," and amongst the many beautiful illustrations there presented, is one representing a beaker, very similar to that now under consideration, which he thus describes:—"No. 3, now in possession of Mr. W. Minet, is one of a set that formerly belonged to the Dutch Huguenot Church at Norwich, it is of Norwich make, about 1580, and is a very representative form of *domestic* beaker of that time; for though it was once Church property it must be remembered that certain sects of Protestants would employ only secular shapes for their communion vessels."

About the year 1640 all ornament suddenly disappeared from English silver plate, in sympathy with the severe simplicity

of life affected by the Protector and his followers, and it is therefore not surprising that the remaining six beakers of our old communion service, all of which bear very distinctly the mark of the year 1654, are entirely without decoration of any kind. Each measures  $5\frac{1}{2}$  inches in height, 4 inches across the top, and  $3\frac{3}{4}$  inches across the base. The marks are:—The date letter, the lions head crowned, the lion passant, and the maker's mark **J. B.**\* Each of these six beakers bears engraved initials, viz. W.B., M.D., T.C., T.L.,  $\begin{matrix} C. \\ I.E., \end{matrix}$  D.S.

Later on, the size of beakers was greatly reduced, and they became a favourite form of presentation, for which purpose it was customary to prick-mark them with the initials of donor and recipient, and the date.

Nothing would be easier then to connect with the initials on our beakers, the names of persons known to have been living in Yarmouth about the date of their production, but up to the present no light has been thrown on the subject by history or tradition, nor is there ground even for reasonable conjecture.

A few years ago, in consequence of an increase in the number of Deacons, a modern beaker was added, formed on the model of the older one, and during the present year (1906) copies of the original seven have been made, but needless to say, the fine yet virile craftsmanship of the old work is not approached by these smooth and characterless imitations.

Modern sanitary ideas are leading to a very general adoption of the "individual" cup, but the refined simplicity, the noble dignity, the hallowed associations of these beautiful old beakers would be sorely missed by those who are familiar with them, should the new method be introduced in our Church.

The Secessionists lost no time in providing for themselves a place of worship, for we find them purchasing of Mr. Barry Love a fish-house and garden on the east side of Middlegate, some little to the north of the Old Meeting, upon which site soon arose a

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\*In monogram.

fresh tabernacle. The conveyance of this piece of land is dated April 22nd, 1732, and in a document bearing date June 2nd, 1733, the building is spoken of as completed.

In Harmer's manuscript, "Nonconformity in Norfolk," 1774, we read:—"The majority of the Church, receiving by compromise the Church stock, wherewith they built a very handsome meeting-house, and chose Mr. Frost for their pastor. The minority (with respect to the Church, not so with respect to the congregation) continued in the old place and chose Mr. Milner."

Until its demolition, to make room for the present "Middle-gate Church," the "New Meeting," as regards the main structure, remained approximately in its original condition. It was a square red brick building of unmitigated ugliness, standing slightly back from the street within an iron palisaded enclosure. Many of the writer's earliest reminiscences are connected with this gloomy old place. To make matters worse, it was then known as "Gaul Street Chapel,"\* (the original name "Middle-gate" has been revived only comparatively recently). The most striking feature of the interior was a pair of tall columns supporting the roof, and said (with great probability) to have formerly done duty as ships' masts. Certainly they reared their unwieldy height without the least suspicion of entasis. Round three sides heavy galleries projected, and on the fourth stood a rostrum surmounted by a debased pediment of the "broken" type, on either side of which was a round headed window. The pews, which had recently been put in, were high and uncomfortable, but not sufficiently so to prevent at least one old gentleman sleeping so soundly, that upon occasion a mouse was seen to ascend one arm and shoulder, carefully explore bald head, and retreat down other shoulder and arm, without disturbing dreams which were doubtless seraphic; the whole taking place in full view of a pewful of young people, who had much ado to hold themselves. The prevailing colour was a dull drab. A few monumental tablets on the walls recorded simple facts concerning departed worthies.

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\* In those days it was studiously drummed into us that "a Church is an assembly of devout persons," and the building in which they met (if of the Congregational faith and order) was described as a "Chapel."

A sanctuary less suggestive of "sweetness and light," or less calculated to impress the youthful mind with the winsomeness of the Gospel, and the delights of worship, could scarcely be imagined. It is but fair, however, to admit that this bare simplicity and severity imparted certain qualities of dignity and refinement, which are only too conspicuously absent from some Nonconformist Church buildings of later days, where meretricious and meaningless adornments (so called) are allowed to run into rampant vulgarity.

An excellent idea of the building may be obtained from a couple of lithographs, from drawings well and faithfully executed by Miss Gertrude Fellows. But the gloom no one can realise, except those who actually experienced it.

It may here be mentioned, that to this day, the banking account of our Church, which has for many years been in the hands of the old firm of "Gurneys," (now amalgamated with Messrs. Barclays), stands in the name of "The Deacons of the New Meeting."

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## CHAPTER VIII.

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### THE CHRONICLES, 1762 TO 1858.

As we have already seen, Mr. Frost was obliged to resign the pastorate in consequence of ill health. He had ministered to the Church for twenty-eight years.

Mr. Richard Amner, the next pastor, was ordained July 21st, 1762, but after being settled here some time, it was discovered that he held Arian views and he removed in March, 1764.

Soon after this, the Church sent "a unanimous invitation to the Rev. Samuel Andrews, at Dr. Conder's, Mile End; but disagreeing with the Church about the administration of baptism, and showing other symptoms of a want of harmony with the people, they determined to part, April 9th, 1767." In 1766, Church members numbered only 40.

In May, 1767, the Rev. Thomas Howe, of Walpole, was invited to, and accepted the pastorate.

"August 27th was the day set apart for the renewing of our call, and his acceptance, which was done in a solemn manner. The Rev. Mr. Palmer, of Woodbridge, began with prayer, and required the renewal of the call; the Rev. Mr. Edwards, of Ipswich, prayed; the Rev. Dr. Wood preached from 2 Tim. iv. 2, 'Preach the word;' the Rev. Mr. Harmer prayed, and the Rev. Mr. Towle, of London, concluded. All was conducted with great seriousness and solemnity, love and harmony."

From 1768 to 1798 the Church book is silent. The following note is said to have been inserted later on by the Rev. W. Walford:—

"Mr. Howe was succeeded by Mr. McNeely, in whose time a separation took place, not from difference in religious sentiment, but from the prevalence of dispositions contrary to the gospel of Christ, which gave birth to the church which met for a time at a house in the Market Place."

Amongst the papers belonging to our church, is a manuscript contained within the covers of what, in these days, our children would term an "exercise book." On the front cover is an engraving representing the meeting of Joseph and his brethren, in which Joseph attired in a kind of mayoral robe and rising from a chair of extraordinary design and proportions, addresses his brethren, who, clad in knee-breeches and stockings, strike stage attitudes of surprise and dismay, the scene being set in an apartment decorated in the classic style of the 18th century. The engraving is dated September 14th, 1787. We mention this because the manuscript begins by recording the illness of Mr. Howe, in 1783, and his death in 1784, and is then carried on in the style of a church book, whereas the date of the engraving proves it to be (at any rate in its earlier portions) a history written after the events, and not a contemporary record. The invitation and ordination of Mr. McNeely are duly entered, and there are lists of church members and notes of new admissions, &c. On October 30th, 1788, the secession is announced, and thenceforward the manuscript appears to become the church book of the separating party. They worshipped in what they described as "the new chapel at the back of the Charity School," and had for their first pastor the Rev. John Thomas, formerly of Clare. At the close of the year, 1797, Mr. Thomas resigned on account of ill health, and in January, 1799, the Rev. John Barton, who had been pastor of the Independent Church at Newmarket, succeeded him on probation. In an unctuous letter, dated October 31st of the same year, he accepts "an unanimous call" to become pastor, and declares "a determination to know nothing nor preach nothing amongst you but Christ, and Him crucified, and that *not for all men*, but only for the elect of God." This cheerful doctrine does not seem to have brought forth the fruits of good living, for the last entry in this little book reads as follows:—"Thursday evening, Feb. 2nd, (1804), Rev. Jno. Barton read a public declaration importing that the relative connection of Pastor and People was broken between us eternally and for ever. This extraordinary circumstance may excite the wonder and curiosity of any serious reader who may hereafter peruse this. To account for it we have to say that

tho' we ever considered the sum and substance of his preaching to be in general consistent with evangelical truth, yet we observed in him from time to time a spirit of Pride and Passion, and frequently venting private resentments from the Pulpit by the most pointed allusions, and likewise increasing in that temper, it became the indispensable duty of us, the Members and Deacons, to remonstrate with him. This he took as a heinous offence and caused him to proceed as above described."

Mr. Walford, in his autobiography, states that this congregation of Separatists spontaneously rejoined the mother Church, under his pastorate, and that the union "was very amicably and agreeably effected." Some of the members returned during Mr. Phéné's ministry.

Mr. McNeely was in the habit of delivering "an Annual Discourse on the commencement of the Herring Fishery, in which his flock and neighbours were very considerably engaged."

In 1794 the Rev. Phineas Phéné became pastor, and resigning in 1800, was followed for a brief season by Mr. Nash, whose health did not permit his remaining in Yarmouth.

Having preached on probation for some months, and receiving a unanimous invitation from the Church, the Rev. William Walford was ordained to the pastoral office June 19th, 1800. At this time the Church members numbered only 34. Mr. Walford was born at Bath, in 1773, of parents who were members of the Church of England, and when twelve years of age was, contrary to his own desire, taken from school at Nantwich and apprenticed to an engraver at Birmingham. At the expiration of a seven years' service he determined to relinquish all idea of business, and to pursue the studies necessary to qualify him for the Christian ministry. After some hesitation, he rejected an opportunity which presented itself, of becoming a clergyman, and soon afterwards attached himself to the Congregational Church. He obtained admission to Homerton College, of the defective course of instruction in which (at that time) he gives an account; and after remaining there four years, accepted an invitation to take charge of a small congregation at Stowmarket. Two years afterwards he came to Yarmouth as a probationer. The town he

says, "was then full of business and activity, occasioned by the presence of the large fleets that continued for some years to assemble in the roads. Many large fortunes were made during the war, and the general opulence of the inhabitants was greatly increased. The congregation to which I went shared in the prosperity that was diffused, and was by far the wealthiest in that part of England." On his being chosen pastor "the new relation was publicly solemnised by a religious service, at which the principal ministers of Norfolk and Suffolk attended, and gave the benefit of their counsel and prayers." Soon after taking up his abode in Yarmouth Mr. Walford married. He does not give us the name of his wife, but the union lasted, much to his comfort, for upwards of fifty years. A closer acquaintance with his congregation did not, he informs us, increase his esteem for them; and he complains that the "general character of the inhabitants was very little elevated by education; nearly all being immersed in the pursuit of wealth, or of what passed under the denomination of pleasure." He was not, however, unsuccessful in, nor altogether dissatisfied with his ministry. Induced by the severity of an insidious mental malady, and by the fact that the "liberality of the congregation did not equal their opulence," (he received £200 per annum), he relinquished his pastoral office in 1813, and was appointed classical tutor and Hebrew teacher at Homerton College, which office he filled for seventeen years, when the return with increased severity of the malady, which had hastened his departure from Yarmouth, aggravated by his grief at the loss of an only daughter compelled him to relinquish it. In his autobiography, Walford gives a minute and very painful account of his subsequent mental sufferings, upon his recovery from which he settled at Uxbridge, where for a time he had charge of a small congregation, and devoted himself to literary pursuits. He took an active part in promoting the building of New College, into which the separate establishments of Homerton and Highbury were consolidated; he became one of the Council of New College; and in 1838 was appointed one of the four trustees under Coward's trust. He died in 1850 and was buried in Hillingdon churchyard. Walford's autobiography, from which most of the foregoing is taken, was

published in 1851, being edited (with a continuation) by the Rev. John Stoughton. Other works by Walford are as follows:—

“The manner of Prayer, an enquiry relative to the best means of discharging the duties of public and social devotion.” A second edition contained a preface by the Rev. T. Binney.

“The Book of Psalms, a new translation with notes explanatory and critical.”

“*Curæ Romanæ*, a revised translation of the Epistle to the Romans; with notes explanatory and critical.”

“A Catechism of Christian Evidences, Truths and Duties.”

Before leaving Yarmouth, it was a matter of satisfaction to Walford that he had it in his power to secure, as his successor, his friend, the Rev. Alexander Creak, who a few years younger than himself, had been a student at Homerton, and subsequently pastor of the Congregational Church at Burnham, Norfolk. Mr. Creak was much esteemed as a man of piety, probity and devotedness; and his influence extended far beyond the scene of his own labours. He died in 1848.

We cannot close our notes on this period without a passing allusion to Sarah Martin, who became a member of the Church during Mr. Walford’s ministry, being admitted in September, 1811. She was born at Caister, in 1791, of humble parents, and from the early age of fourteen earned a livelihood as a dress-maker. In her autobiography, published in Yarmouth, 1844, she says:—“In my nineteenth year, I heard a sermon preached which powerfully met my attention, from 2 Cor. v. 11, ‘We persuade men.’ It was then that the spirit of God sent a ray of light upon my guilty soul, slave of Satan, ‘fast bound in misery and iron.’ Stranger as I was to my divine Teacher, this first lesson was distinctly impressed, that the religion of the Bible was a grand reality, and that I had been wrong. It was a fine summer Sunday! I had walked to the next town, Great Yarmouth, for mere pleasure, and entered the place of worship, where I heard the sermon, from common curiosity. In my walk home, reflecting on what I had heard, my mind was expanded with a sense of the divine majesty, and I spoke. . . . with

astonishment and admiration of what I had heard." The "place of worship," was the Congregational Chapel, and the preacher, Mr. Walford. Soon after this she began to devote her only day of rest, the Sabbath, to the task of teaching in a Sunday School; she likewise visited the inmates of the Workhouse, and read the scriptures to the aged and the sick. But the gaol was the scene of her greatest labours; in 1819, not without difficulty, she obtained admission thereto, and soon acquired an extraordinary influence over the minds of the prisoners. She then gave up one day of the week to instruct them in reading and writing. At length she attended the prison daily, and kept an exact record of her proceedings. As there was no chaplain, she read and preached to the inmates herself and devised means of procuring them employment. She continued in this good work until her death in 1843, in the 58th year of her age. She is buried in Caister Churchyard. Sarah Martin remained a member of our Church until after Mr. Creak's settlement, but having an impression that he did not preach the gospel, applied for her dismissal, and went over to the Lady Huntingdon's Connexion, and thence to the Church of England, in which communion she spent the remainder of her days. Captain John Williams, Inspector of Prisoners, shortly after her death, speaks thus of Miss Martin:—

"Her simple, unostentatious, yet energetic devotion, to the interests of the outcast and the destitute, her practical and useful benevolence, her gentle disposition, her temper never irritated by disappointment, nor her charity straitened by ingratitude, present a combination of qualities which imagination sometimes portrays, as the ideal of what is pure and beautiful, but which are rarely found embodied with humanity."

Mr. Creak was compelled to resign the pastorate on August 16th, 1842, in consequence of an apoplectic seizure, and in the following December Mr. Jas. Stuart Russell, M.A., of Cheshunt College, was introduced to the Church. Mr. Russell accepted the pastorate on May 18th, 1843, and was ordained October 9th, the Revs. A. Reed, W. Brock, and J. Alexander (all of Norwich) and the Rev. Dr. Leifchild, and others, taking part in the services. Mr. Russell remained here until 1857, when he re-

moved to the "Edmonton and Tottenham Congregational Church" (the only one there in those days). After about five years' ministry in Tottenham he passed on to Notting Hill, where it was desired to establish a new Congregational cause, and in 1866 a church was built in that rapidly increasing neighbourhood, where he continued to serve until his retirement from the ministry in 1888. In this year the degree of D.D. was conferred upon him by his own University of Aberdeen, in connection with his book "The Parousia," which has since become a classic in the theological world. The full title of the work is, "The Parousia, a critical inquiry into the New Testament Doctrine of Our Lord's Second Coming, by J. Stuart Russell." The first edition is dated 1878, and a second appeared in 1887. Dr. Russell's death took place in October, 1895, after several years of suffering and infirmity.

In few men probably has the ideal of the Christian Ministry been more fully realised than in Dr. Russell. He was a most impressive preacher, with a style remarkably simple, clear and direct, and a happy choice of words. No class of hearers was neglected by him, and his occasional addresses to the young were looked forward to with brightest interest. As a pastor he was a systematic and eagerly welcomed visitor in the homes of his people. Whilst indulging in no undue intimacies with a few, he sought to know each member of his flock and to interest himself in and share his or her individual joys and sorrows. With a happy knack of saying the right thing in the right place, he would aptly but briefly counsel, reprove or encourage as occasion might require. He was a man of rare tact and sound judgment, intensely sympathetic. Absolutely free from vanity or any assumption of superiority, he bore himself with simple dignity, and was the last with whom any one would take a liberty. In all relationships and under all circumstances his deportment was that of the true christian gentleman, and not only did he enjoy the love and unshakeable confidence of his own people, but also the respect, esteem and friendship of fellow-townsmen who held views widely differing from his own. It was no unusual thing to see members of the Church of England and other communions, men of note and position, listening with deep interest to his

preaching, and reverently joining in the simple but beautiful service. The chapel was frequently so crowded that it was impossible to find seats for all, and at times the congregation overflowed into the vestry.

Under Dr. Russell's care the Church enjoyed a season of great prosperity and success, and in due time a considerable forward movement was entered upon. Writing in 1850, Dr. Russell says :—"The increase of the existing Church and congregation has been such as to call for devout and grateful acknowledgment to the great Head of the Church; the point seems to have been almost reached, at which a Church is liable to become stationary, if not retrograde, and when the utmost that can be hoped is, the maintenance of the position already occupied. Were the Church to consult only their own feelings and ease, they might comfort themselves in the prosperity, unity, and peace which they enjoy; but they know that a solemn responsibility rests upon them to diffuse the Gospel which has been committed to their trust, and to propagate those principles of Scriptural Congregationalism, which they have inherited as a legacy from their venerated ancestors.

"To ascertain the path of duty in these circumstances, has been for some time the anxious desire of Pastor and Deacons. Two courses were open to the Church; either to enlarge their present place of worship, or to send forth a part of their number to form the nucleus of another Church in a suitable locality. The former alternative was soon found to be impracticable, and a variety of concurrent circumstances appeared to warrant the adoption of the latter. . . . In the midst of these deliberations a remarkable opportunity occurred, in the Spring of 1849, of securing a most eligible and commanding site\* for a place of worship, in the very centre of the town, and in the heart of the population; immediate action became necessary, and after much prayerful consultation, steps were taken for securing the ground provisionally, and a meeting of the Church was called to take the whole matter into consideration."

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\* A portion of the site upon which the famous Penrice mansion formerly stood.

As a result of "calm but deep interest, cordial unanimity and spontaneous liberality," the site was purchased and the building of King Street Chapel undertaken, the brethren congratulating themselves "that this ancient aloe, after the lapse of two centuries, again shows the promise of an opening blossom. It is not the least pleasing feature in this movement that it does not originate in any division or disaffection in the Church; but that in this instance, increase will be made, not by the planting of a branch rudely torn from the parent stem, but by a natural process of self-propagation."

King Street Church is a very plain building, making no pretension to architectural display or beauty. It was, however, fortunately free from any very atrocious violation of the canons of taste until the erection a few years back of an excessively ugly and gaudily bedizened organ. To make matters worse, this instrument (of torture) was placed where it must necessarily glare on all who enter the building, and in order to make room for it the pulpit was brought forward into such a position that from parts of the gallery the minister is invisible, and the possibility of hearing with comfort is much reduced. The present unsatisfactory arrangement of the choir results from the same cause.

In view of these extended operations it was necessary to seek a co-pastor, to share Dr. Russell's labours, and on May 17th, 1855, the Rev. Stephen St. N. Dobson, from York, was invited in that capacity. On June 28th of the same year, the "New Chapel," as it was then and for some time afterwards called, was opened. Dr. Harris preached in the morning, and the Hon. and Rev. Baptist W. Noel in the evening.

1858, Pastor and Co-pastor resigned, Dr. Russell removing, as we have seen, to Tottenham, and Mr. Dobson to Pendleton.

A quotation from Dr. Russell's pamphlet formed the introduction to his little work, and by way of summing up and conclusion nothing could be more appropriate than the following sentences from the same source.

"It might have seemed no unreasonable expectation, that in the course of two centuries\* the scriptural principles and earnest

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\* More than two-and-a-half now.

piety of such a community" (as our Church) "would exert a powerful influence in its neighbourhood, and that with a vastly increased population, there would be a proportionate increase in the strength and numbers of the Church. There are times, however, in which it is much for religious societies to maintain their ground, and to struggle successfully for existence. Our fathers seem to have directed their attention rather to the conservation of spiritual religion within, than to its propagation without. But . . . there have not been wanting 'fruits of righteousness unto the glory and praise of God.' It ought not to be forgotten, that a uniform testimony has been borne to gospel truth in times of general deadness and declension, by a succession of able and faithful pastors, and that not a few 'names that are written in heaven,' have been enrolled in the registers of the Church."

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NOTE.—*It was originally intended to carry these annals up to a period nearer to-day, but as most of the persons who have made the recent history of the Church are still living, the Editor feared lest by some accidental omission or misconception, he might unwittingly wound susceptibilities or give pain. The records of the Church have of late years been systematically and methodically kept, so that there really is no need for such a continuation as was at first contemplated.*

## SUPPLEMENTARY CHAPTER.

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### NOTES ON CHURCHES MORE OR LESS CLOSELY CONNECTED WITH THE YARMOUTH CHURCH.

The Yarmouth Congregational Church has (not inaptly) been described as "the mother of East Anglian Nonconformity." There is no need to unduly strain the metaphor, but this history would be incomplete without a few notes to indicate the far reaching influence which this venerable religious body has exerted upon other christian communities.

NORWICH.—The part played by the Yarmouth Church in the foundation of that in Norwich, has been sufficiently enlarged upon in the early pages of this work.

HAPTON (from Yarmouth Church Book).—May 24th, 1645. "Advice was desired by the Church at Hapton, whether this was a fit and seasonable opportunity for their pastor to administer the Supper in their public meeting place." After some delay, the Yarmouth friends came to the conclusion "That the business was of public concernment, and that therefore the Churches should be advised with."

On February 10th, 1647, the Hapton Church again consults with Yarmouth concerning the correct attitude towards certain who differed from them upon the question of infant baptism. Again on January 6th, 1651—2, Yarmouth is asked to send messengers to meet others at Hapton, to settle the matter of Mr. Woodall, who had been called by the Hapton Church to the Teachers' office, whilst he had also been invited to the Pastorate at Woodbridge. The members of the Hapton Church appear to have been scattered over a wide district, and further correspondence with Yarmouth took place in 1655 and the following year, from which we gather that they resolved to "sit down" at Fritton, and desired messengers to be sent to "take notice of their order," which was done.

WYMONDHAM.—On May 6th, 1646, “ye godly party” at Wymondham wrote to the Yarmouth Church for advice concerning their embodying as a Church, and propounded six carefully worded questions, which were replied to with equal care and with admirable prudence and good sense. Further counsel was sought from Yarmouth in March, 1649—50, and again in October, 1652.

WALPOLE (Cookley).—On 21st June, 1649, John and Samuel Manning wrote to the Yarmouth Church, “to this effect, yt upon ye 21st of this instant moneth ye saints in and about Couckley, did intend for to set down in gospel order.”

ALBY.—On February 4th, 1650—1, and April 8th of same year, letters were received by the Yarmouth Church, from “the Saints in and about Alby,” desiring help and advice as to the formation of a Church there. Mr. Bridge and Mr. Tillinghast both went on this mission, and later reported to the Church the result.

SYLEHAM (from Yarmouth Church Book).—February 25th, 1650—1. “The Church gave ye Church at Sylam ye right hand of fellowship, after (they) had heard their faith and seen their order.”

BECCLES (from Yarmouth Church Book).—Jan. 21st, 1651—2. “The motion of christians in Beccles concerning Mr. King and Mr. Ottee their joining with them in the foundation” (of a Church) “they were left free to themselves, and not to be put upon by us; only we rejoyce that the way of Christ goe up there; and that the Church shall be willing to contribute what help it can to the furthering that work; and a letter drawn up accordingly.” Robert Ottee was a native of Yarmouth and a member of Bridge’s congregation. On July 1st, 1652, the Church at Yarmouth “desired three brethren to goe as messengers from us to help on the work of God at Beckles.”

TUNSTEAD (from Yarmouth Church Book).—“July 1st, 1652. The Church desired Mr. Cushen and Mr. Shepherd to goe as messengers from us to help on the work of God at Tunstead.”

October 7th. It was "made known that on Wednesday come seven days, the christians in and about Tunstead intend to imbody, the Church according to their desire, ordered the messengers to be sent to them, viz., Mr. Cushen, Mr. Rayner, and Mr. Shepherd."

NORTH WALSHAM (from Yarmouth Church Book).—October 7th, 1652. "Report was made by the Church's messengers of the order of the Church at North Walsham, and their confession in their gathering, which the Church approved of, and gave the right hand of fellowship to them." On July 6th, 1656, the North Walsham Church, being in trouble, wrote to Yarmouth "to pity their case, and send over messengers to advise them what to do." Mr. Bridge, Mr. Tookie and others were duly sent.

STALHAM (from Yarmouth Church Book).—March 29th, 1653. "The Church desired Mr. Rayner and Mr. Waters to go as messengers to Stalham the next day, to advise with them about gathering a church there."

SANCROFT (ST. GEORGE), better known as SOUTH ELMHAM ST. CROSS (from Yarmouth Church Book).—"July 5th, 1653. Messengers are desired by the Christians at Sancroft the 19th of this instant; and that Major Clemment Keen and Mr. Robert Eaton are ordered to goe thither, and make report of what they have seen at the next meeting. On the 19th the messengers . . . gave in their report to the Church concerning their satisfaction at the gathering of those Christians, and the Church accordingly gave them the right hand of fellowship."

EDGEFIELD.—Yarmouth sent messengers to assist in the formation of a Church in this place on July 14th, 1653.

LOWESTOFT.—Gillingwater says:—"The congregation of Protestant Dissenters at Lowestoft might be considered also at this time" (previous to 1689) "as a kind of dependent assembly on the Dissenting congregation at Yarmouth; as it was customary for the members belonging to the former congregation to repair to that at Yarmouth at the usual

seasons of receiving the Holy Communion, and was in much the same state of dependence on that Society as a chapel of ease is on the Mother Church."

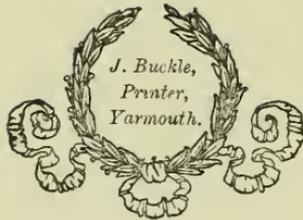
**GORLESTON.**—Browne says:—"In the year 1818 the Rev. A. Creak of Yarmouth, commenced preaching in a hired room on week evenings, and on October 26th, 1825, the foundation stone of a chapel was laid by W. D. Palmer, Esq." Until quite recent years a close connection with the parent Church at Yarmouth has been maintained.

**HEMSBY.**—Although not founded during the period we have had under review, it may here be noted that this Church has been from its inception, and still is materially assisted by and closely connected with the Yarmouth Church.

**CHURCHES IN KENT.**—From the Yarmouth Church Book we learn that on January 27th, 1656, "Severall Churches in Kent" wrote for advice concerning their affairs.

On referring to the Directory, it will be found that the greater proportion of the places mentioned in this chapter are little more than obscure hamlets, but it must be remembered that when our forefathers contemplated "inchurching" obscurity was rather a desideratum than otherwise, and the choice frequently fell upon the place that offered the most hope of security and liberty. Moreover it was no uncommon thing for the members of a congregation to be scattered over a wide area, and the Church was looked upon as ministering to a large district rather than to its immediate vicinity. In not a few instances this condition existed until comparatively recent days, and the writer (though scarcely a Methuselah), well remembers attending chapels in sparsely inhabited localities, the accommodation in which was quite out of proportion to the needs of their surroundings, but which were crowded to overflowing by an eager throng of worshippers who travelled thither on foot or in conveyances of various kinds, many, many weary miles, Sabbath by Sabbath.

Some of the before-mentioned Churches are extinct, whilst others are still carrying on the Lord's work with varying degrees of efficiency and success.



*J. Buckle,  
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Yarmouth.*

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