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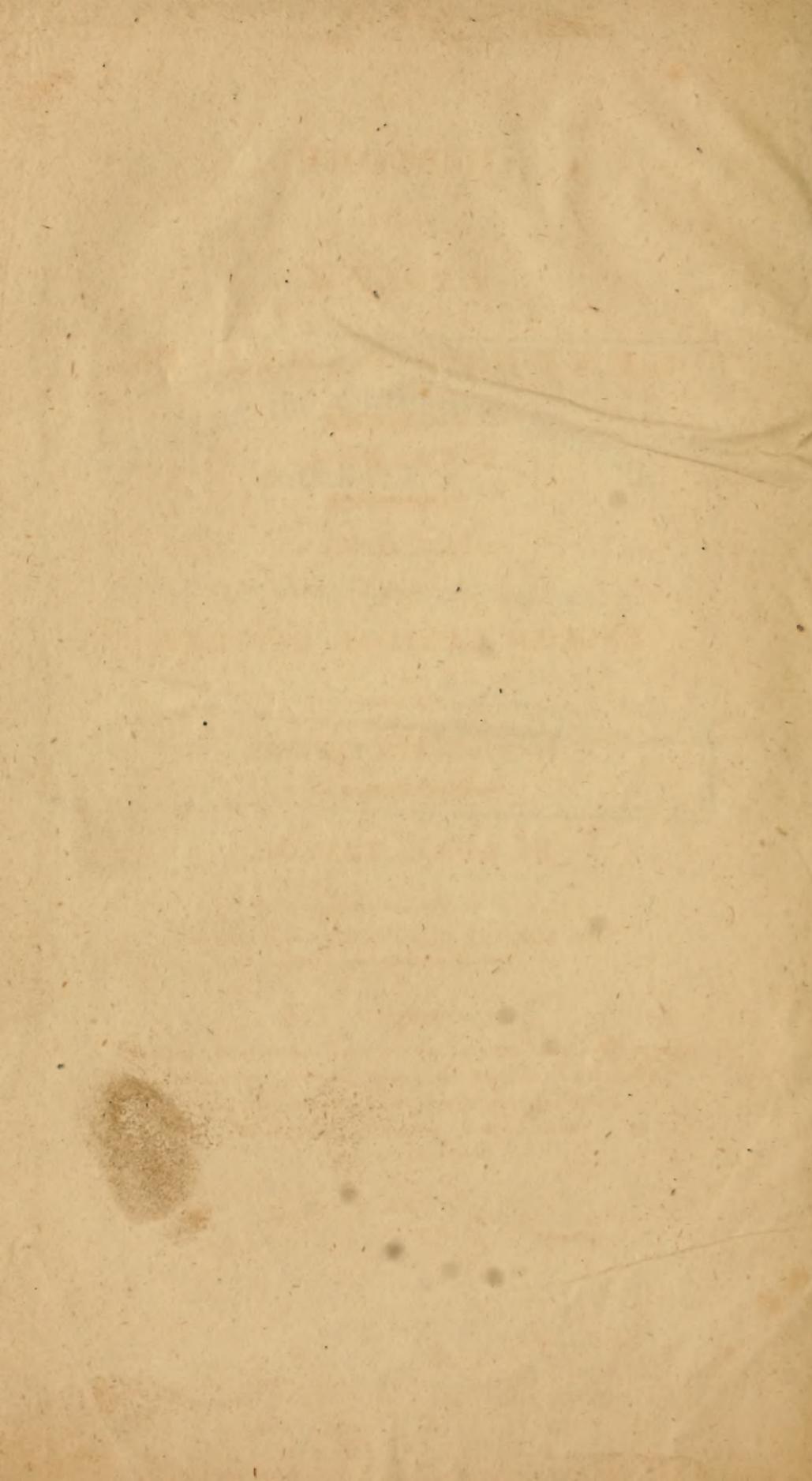
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THE  
HISTORY  
OF THE  
*ENGLISH*  
GENERAL BAPTISTS.

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In Two Parts.

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PART FIRST:

THE  
ENGLISH GENERAL BAPTISTS

OF THE  
*SEVENTEENTH CENTURY.*

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By ADAM TAYLOR.

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“ASK FOR THE OLD PATHS.”—*JEREMIAH.*

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London:

PRINTED FOR THE AUTHOR, BY T. BORE, RAVEN ROW, MILE-END  
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1818.

HISTORY

OF THE

ENGLISH

GENERAL BAPTISTS.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOLUME THE FIRST.

THE

ENGLISH GENERAL BAPTISTS

OF THE

SEVENTEENTH CENTURY.

BY ADAM TAYLOR.

LONDON: PRINTED BY J. JOHNSON, ST. PAULS CHURCH-YARD, 1785.

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Printed by J. Johnson, St. Pauls Church-yard, 1785.

TO THE  
MINISTERS AND MEMBERS

OF THE  
*CHURCHES*

COMPOSING

*The New Connection of General Baptists,*

**THIS HISTORY,**

Undertaken at their Request, and conducted under their Patronage, is respectfully inscribed, as a Token of sincere Gratitude and cordial Esteem, by their

*AFFECTIONATE BROTHER,*

*AND WILLING SERVANT,*

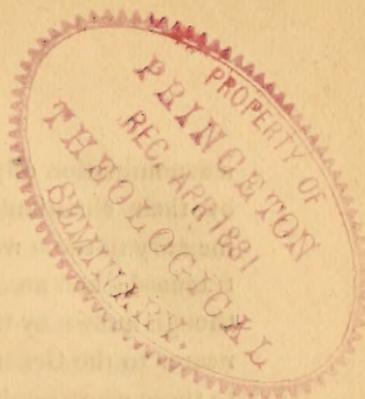
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SHAKESPEAR'S WALK,  
*March 3rd. 1818.*

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## PREFACE.

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A DENOMINATION of christians, once numerous, zealous, and respectable, was already involved in great obscurity and fast hastening to oblivion. The *English Baptists* have, till lately, excited but little attention; and seldom been the objects of historical research. Mr. Crosby, who wrote seventy years ago, was, for a long period, the only author who had expressly treated the subject. And, notwithstanding the inelegance of his style, the perplexity of his arrangement, and the inaccuracy of some of his statements, his volumes will always be valuable as a depository of facts and documents, which will continue to assist every succeeding writer. But he wrote the "*History of the English Baptists*;" and, esteeming the distinction between general and particular baptists, as undeserving his sanction, designedly avoided to mark it. Hence, though it is now confessed, that the General Baptists were the more ancient, and, for a long interval, the more numerous party, yet they have been usually overlooked, or confounded with their brethren of the other persuasion. To restore these professors to their proper station, and to assign to them their due share in the religious transactions of the seventeenth century, is one leading design of the present publication.

It is also a painful fact, that the successors of the men who are the subjects of this volume, have widely departed from the faith and doctrine of their predecessors. And, as those predecessors were very little known, even by the readers of religious history, the characters and principles of the General Baptists, as

a denomination of professors, have been greatly misunderstood, by their christian brethren of other persuasions. Thus the memory of those worthy men who first bore the name has been traduced; and an odium cast on some modern christians, who, though known by the common appellation, approximate much nearer to the General Baptists of the seventeenth century, than to those who, retaining their name and their situations, have little else in common with their predecessors. To enable the reader to distinguish things that differ, is, therefore, another object of the following sheets.

When the Author first undertook to write the History of the New Connection of General Baptists, he thought that a brief account of the ancient General Baptists, would form a proper introduction to that work, Not being then aware of the existence of many materials, except the obscure hints in Crosby, he concluded that this Introduction would occupy only a few sheets. But, no sooner was his design made known, and communications solicited, than materials flowed in from various quarters. The original Records of ancient churches, the Minutes of the General Assembly, and of various general and local Associations, the published works of the ministers of this denomination, and references to the notices of these professors in the civil and religious histories of that period, were communicated with great frankness. These documents furnished abundance of new information, and enabled the author to appropriate many facts in Crosby, of which he could not otherwise have safely availed himself. For some time, he hesitated as to the propriety of extending his plan; but, considering how desirable it was that the subject should be set in a proper light, and the improbability that the documents, if once scattered, would ever be again collected; he determined, at length, to endeavour to give as full and accurate an account of the English General Baptists of the seventeenth century, as his materials, ability and leisure would enable him.

With this view, he has taken considerable pains, and incurred

some expence in collecting information. His success has far exceeded his expectation; and the Introduction has swelled to a Volume. He gratefully acknowledges his great obligations to many kind friends, both of his own denomination and others, as well as to various churches and literary societies, for the facility with which they have furnished him with the use of manuscripts and scarce books. Among so many to whom he is indebted for favours of this nature, it may appear partial to distinguish particulars; but, it appears the part of justice to record his obligations—to the late Mr. Burgess, of Fleet, who spent much labour and time in tracing and arranging the facts connected with the churches in his neighbourhood—to W. Wilson, Esq. and the Rev. J. Ivimey, the authors of the “History and Antiquities of Dissenting Churches,” and of the “History of the English Baptists,” for the loan of whatever they had collected in print or manuscript that could assist his design—to the Trustees of Dr. Williams’s Library, and of the Library of the Friends in Devonshire-street, for the permission, promptly granted him, to consult the stores of information under their controul—to Mr. G. Birley, of St. Ives, for the perusal of some invaluable records of a very ancient date—to Mr. I. James, of Bristol, for various important communications—to Mr. J. Mann, of London, for the friendly loan of many valuable works of the ancient General Baptists which he has on sale—and to the various churches which have indulged him with the use of their records. Would room permit, it would yield the Author sincere pleasure to be more particular in his acknowledgements; but he hopes that none of his friends will suspect him of forgetting or slighting their favours.

In arranging the materials and detailing the facts, the writer has laboured after brevity and perspicuity. It is easy to conceive that, in a work which has been more than four years in a course of publication, and for which materials have been accumulating during the whole of that period, the regular disposition of the parts could not, in some instances, be preserved. And the nu-

merous and pressing avocations of the Author, with which some of his readers are not unacquainted, may sometimes have prevented him from giving that attention to the method and style which he ought to have done. But, throughout the whole work, he has conscientiously endeavoured to be faithful. He has carefully investigated the truth of every statement: and, though a regard to conciseness, has, in most cases, induced him to omit or only to glance at the evidence, he has never ventured to use the language of certainty, except when the proofs of the assertion appeared to him decisive. He dares not, however, presume that there are no errors which have escaped his vigilance; though he has been assiduous to avoid them. A few inaccuracies have been already noticed; which, it is thought most honourable to acknowledge and correct.\*

It has, indeed, been a work of unexpected labour and difficulty: and like all the other productions of man, is doubtless imperfect. Such as it is, the Author commits it to the candour of the public, and especially to the protection of those professors for whose benefit it is chiefly designed. Sincerely grateful for the generous patronage with which they have favoured him, during the long course of publication, he earnestly prays, that He who alone can give success, would render it, by His blessing, subservient to their real edification and His own glory.

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\* See the Notes at the close of the Volume.

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ERRATA.

- Page 19. line: 22 and 36, for *extirminating* read *exterminating*.
- 23. — 28, for 1025 read 1215.
- 23 and 28, the running title should have been, *Supplication to king James I*
- 137. — running title for A.D. 1665 read A.D. 1655.
- 170. Note †, for *Vol. II.* read *Vol. I.*
- 216 line 18, for *Thomas Maw* read *Stephen Maw*.
- 226. Note \*, line 5 and 6, read, “with *the publishers*.”
- 372. line 17, read “duke of Monmouth's,”
- 294. Note †, for *Vol. II.* read *Vol. III.*
- 356. line 14, read “parts of *doctrine*”
- 270. — 23, for *doubless* read *doubtless*.

# CONTRACTIONS

IN THE

## *REFERENCES, EXPLAINED.*

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- A. A. B. The Minutes of Aylesbury Association.  
A. C. B. Amersham Church Book, Vol. I. 96.\*  
B. C. B. Berkhamstead Church Book.  
B. G. C. B. Bessell's Green Church Book.  
Bid. C. B. Biddenden Church Book, Vol. I. 283.  
B. MSS. Burgess' Manuscripts.  
C. C. B. Coningsby Church Book, Vol. I. 137.  
Ch. C. B. Chesham Church Book, Vol. I. 230.  
C. L. C. B. Church Lane Church Book.  
F. S. R. Fenstanton Records, Vol. I. 140—147.  
G. & C. Grantham's dispute with Connould, Vol. I. 308.  
J. T. MSS. Josiah Thompson's Manuscripts, Vol. II. 29.  
L. A. B. Lincolnshire Association Book, Vol. I. 318.  
N. C. A. B. New Connection Association Book.  
P. I. Private Information, collected from various sources, by  
friends on the spot.  
S. T. C. B. Shad Thames Church Book, Vol. I. 263.  
W. A. C. B. White's Alley Church Book.  
W. C. B. Warboys' Church Book, Vol. I. 104.
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\* These references are to the places in the following Work in which some account of these Manuscripts will be found.

THE  
**HISTORY**  
OF THE  
*ENGLISH GENERAL BAPTISTS.*

PART I.

THE ENGLISH GENERAL BAPTISTS OF  
THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY.

BOOK I.

A SKETCH OF THE HISTORY OF THE BAPTISTS,  
FROM THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE CHRISTIAN  
ÆRA TO THE REFORMATION.

INTRODUCTION.

**A** GENERAL BAPTIST, who understands the true principles of his profession, does not esteem it necessary to trace his tenets through the several ages of the Church. He is persuaded, however early, and however generally, the contrary opinions may have prevailed, that those doctrines which distinguish him from other professors of christianity, are expressly taught and enjoined in the grand commission which the adorable Head of the church gave to his Apostles, immediately before his taking his seat at the right hand of God.—“Go ye,” said the ascending Saviour, “into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature. He who believes, and is baptized, shall be saved; and he that believeth

not shall be condemned.”—“Go ye forth, therefore, and *proselyte* all nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.”\* The New Testament, he is convinced, is full of evidence, that the Apostles and primitive christians understood this divine commission, and obeyed its sacred injunctions, in the same manner that he does. This has been proved at large by many of their writers: and it would evidently be improper for an historian to enter into the debate. (But he may be permitted to state a few facts, which will prove, that, in all ages of the church, there have been Baptists, who have heartily joined with the first baptist, John, in pointing sinners to “the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.”)

It is generally allowed by all, who have candidly examined the subject, that, for the two first centuries after Christ, all who professed to be his followers were baptists, both as to the mode and subjects of that ordinance. They baptized none but such as made a credible profession of faith; and these they always immersed in water.—Towards the end of the second century, it became a question, whether infants ought to be baptized. The reason appears to have been that, about that time, they began to ascribe some mysterious efficacy to the ordinance; and to imagine that none who died unbaptized could be saved. This naturally engaged the humane passion of parents and guardians to the eternal welfare of their children who died in infancy; and led them to desire that they might be partakers of a rite so essential, and so powerful. By

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\* Mark xvi, 15, 16—Matt. xxviii. 19. See Doddridge in loc.

Whitfield, to rouse our countrymen to an attention to the most important of all concerns, the salvation of their immortal souls. These useful men encountered violent opposition; but were blest with astonishing success: and were soon joined by many respectable characters. Amongst others, the pious Lady Huntingdon entered warmly into their views; and exerted all the influence which her rank and fortune gave her, to promote their success. David Taylor, one of her servants, residing with her at Donington Park, in Leicestershire, having himself tasted that the Lord was gracious, was occasionally employed, under the sanction of her ladyship, in preaching in the neighbourhood. In these benevolent excursions, he visited, in 1741, Glenfield and Ratby, two villages near Leicester. Curiosity led many to hear the strange preacher, and his new doctrines: and, among the rest, Mr. Samuel Deacon of Ratby, afterwards for many years pastor of the general baptist church at Barton. Being informed, when at work in the field, that a person had been preaching in the street, at Glenfield, and was going to preach again at Ratby, he immediately laid down his scythe, and went to hear him. The sermon made a lasting impression on his mind, and induced him to search the scriptures. The dissoluteness and ignorance of the clergyman now struck him in a new light: and he began to reflect on his own danger, as part of the flock of so careless a shepherd. After much reading, reasoning, and perplexity, he was enabled to rely on Christ alone for salvation: and immediately found peace and joy in believing.\*

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\* Gen. Bap. Repository, Vol. VII. pp. 50—52.

About this time, the Countess of Huntingdon, judging that David Taylor would be more useful as a preacher, if set at liberty from other engagements, dismissed him from her service. His visits to Ratby and Glenfield then became more frequent: and several were awakened to a sense of divine things. In the following year, he was accompanied by Stephen Dixon, a fellow-labourer; and their united exertions were blest with increasing success. Several of their followers soon attempted to teach, as well as they were able, the way of salvation to others. Two schoolmasters from Markfield, John Taylor and C. Clapham, were frequently employed in this good work at Ratby: to which village one of them removed, and formed a society on the plan of the Methodists.\*

At the same time that these transactions took place at Ratby, Joseph Donisthorpe, a respectable blacksmith at Normanton, a place some miles distant, was brought to feel a concern for the salvation of his soul. He had read the scriptures, and saw that the law of God required perfect and continued obedience; which, he was conscious, he had not rendered to it. His mind was, therefore, filled with most gloomy apprehensions respecting the account which he knew he must give. Anxious to escape from the wrath to come, he applied to a neighbouring clergyman, for advice: but that poor man, totally unacquainted with the gospel plan of salvation, could only encourage Mr. Donisthorpe to depend on the honesty of his dealings in his transactions with men, and the goodness of his moral character: adding, "Take my advice; make yourself easy; continue to at-

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\* Gen. Bap. Magazine, Vol. I. pp. 181, 182.

tend your church : and, if all be not right at last, I will bear the blame." This assurance did not satisfy the enquirer : his uneasiness continued to increase, and he was driven to the brink of despair. At length, as he was returning, one evening, from a neighbouring town, his mind deeply affected with his lost condition, and wondering how Providence could suffer such a wretch to live, he suddenly recollected the assertion of the apostle, " This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief." His astonished mind was at once filled with the grandeur and importance of the truths which then first presented themselves to his contemplation. Redemption for a lost world, thro' the blood of Christ, filled his whole soul with the highest admiration, and the warmest gratitude ; and changed his fears into joy. Supposing that he was the only person on earth to whom this grand scheme was known, he instantly determined, from motives of the purest benevolence, to communicate the good news to his fellow-sinners. He assured himself, that the intelligence would be received with rapture, by all mankind ; but especially by the clergymen ; who, though it was their business to teach men the way to heaven, were, he was persuaded, totally ignorant of it themselves. He went home, and immediately began to execute his philanthropic design, by imparting to his wife the grand discovery which he had made : when, to his great disappointment, instead of hearing it with grateful joy, she burst into tears, fearing that his intellects were deranged. The regularity of his general conduct, however, soon undeceived her : she listened

with more attention ; and appears to have been his first convert.

Full of the heart-felt subject, he discoursed on "justification by faith" to all who visited his house, to the customers whom business brought to his shop, and almost to every one whom he met in the street. Some heard with attention ; others reviled and persecuted him : yet the Normanton blacksmith, and his new doctrine, soon became the chief subject of conversation in the neighbourhood. Numbers flocked to his house, in the evening, after the toils of the day were finished, to examine these strange discoveries. Not a few disputed, rather than embraced the doctrine : and this obliged Mr. Donisthorpe to study the subject, and to furnish himself with arguments in its defence, both from reason and scripture. One evening, sitting on his own kitchen-table, which raised him above his neighbours, whom he had accommodated with all his chairs, he began to describe the lost state of man by nature—his utter inability to deliver himself from this dreadful situation—and the certainty and sufficiency of salvation by Christ. Full of his subject, and animated with a strong desire to make others as happy as himself, he undesignedly engrossed the whole conversation ; and held on, with a fluency and earnestness that prevented interruption, for nearly two hours. At the close of this harangue, he was startled at the idea that he had been preaching. This thought had never before occurred to him : for, though he was desirous to teach his fellow-creatures the love of God to sinners ; yet he designed to do it only by occasional conversation ; and never entertained the most distant wish to become a public minister. His benevolence produced his first sermon :

and, from the attention with which it was heard, he was encouraged to proceed.\*

Normanton and Ratby being only a few miles distant, David Taylor and Joseph Donisthorpe were soon informed of each other's proceedings: and mutually sought an acquaintance. This was readily obtained: and, uniting their efforts, they carried on the good work with greater activity. In 1743, a poor man of Osbaston, near Market Bosworth, Leicestershire, invited these preachers to his house, where many attended their labours. Attracted by the novelty, John Whyatt, a carpenter, of Barton Fabis, in the same county, went to Osbaston; and was much affected under the first discourse. At the next opportunity, he persuaded his neighbour, Mr. John Aldridge, a respectable farmer, to accompany him. He also was convinced of the importance of religion; and joined with his friend, in soliciting the ministers to visit Barton. As they were zealous to spread the glad tidings of the gospel, they cheerfully accepted the invitation — John Taylor went, and preached the first sermon in Mr. Whyatt's house.

For a few weeks, Mr. Taylor repeated his visits without interruption; and one evening took an opportunity of reading to his auditors an account of the persecutions endured by the eminent John Cennick. His object, doubtless, was to give them exalted ideas of the power of divine grace, which inspired that minister with such zeal for the glory of God, and such love to immortal souls, as enabled him to support his sufferings: but it had a very different effect. The feelings of his hearers were unhappily more in unison with the persecuting rabble, than the persecuted saint:

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\* Gen. Bap. Repository, Vol. I. pp. 241—245.

and they determined not to be outdone in wickedness.

The next time, therefore, that John Taylor visited Barton, a number of persons from Nailstone, a village a mile distant, assembled; and endeavoured so disturb the worship. Some tied bells round their bodies, and danced about the place: others sung and swore: and all united in the most violent threats against the preacher and his abettors. Mr. Taylor, after repeated attempts, in which he received gross insult and abuse, finding it impossible to proceed with the service, was obliged to consult his own safety, and secretly withdrew. Having thus prevented the preaching, the mob retired. But a farmer, not pleased with the escape of the minister, caused it to be proclaimed, with sound of horn, through the neighbouring villages, that whoever would attend, and assist in taking the methodist parson, the next time he came, wheresoever he should be found, should be rewarded with a barrel of ale; and indemnified, should the house be pulled down where he was.

Finding things assume so threatening an aspect, Mr. J. Aldridge applied to Sir Wolston Dixie, a magistrate of Bosworth, for advice and protection; who informed him, that it would be lawful to resist such a mob; and even to fire upon them, if they proceeded to attack their dwelling-houses; but recommended more lenient measures, and promised to discountenance all future disturbers of their worship. Thus encouraged, Mr. Aldridge resolved to take the preacher under his own protection; as his rank and property gave him more influence than Mr. Whyatt possessed: and, when Mr. Taylor arrived, on the following Saturday, he conducted them to his own house.

Towards night, a numerous mob assembled, headed by the constable of Nailstone, and some of the principal farmers. They marched to Mr. Whyatt's house to seize the preacher; but not finding him, they proceeded to search every house in the village, till they arrived at Mr. Aldridge's. Here a few people had assembled to meet the minister; and were preparing to commence social worship; when they observed several hundreds of people rush tumultuously into the yard. The outward door was instantly locked, and almost as soon broken open. Mr. Aldridge's brother, seizing his gun, hastened to the passage, and threatened to shoot those who advanced: but, while he hesitated, the mob rushed violently upon him: and, wrenching the gun out of his hand, discharged it into the air. The inner door being fastened, they attempted to force it open, by thrusting their fingers between the door and door-posts. One of Mr. Aldridge's sisters, in order to induce the rabble to desist, thoughtlessly took a cleaver; and, drawing it down the side of the door, wounded the fingers that were endeavouring to force it open. This imprudent action roused the fury of the assailants to the utmost pitch. They burst the door in an instant: and, seizing Mr. Aldridge's father, an infirm old man, they dragged him into the yard, and insulted and bruised him in a cruel manner. His wife, though she had shut herself in a parlour, was treated with the same barbarity. The preacher, the chief object of their rage, had secured himself in a separate apartment: but his retreat was quickly discovered by his enraged pursuers. They haled him out, amidst shouts of triumph, and the most horrid oaths and imprecations. Having secured

several of the people, they conducted them and the minister, first to Nailstone, where they exhibited them, as trophies of victory, from house to house.\* From thence they returned to Osbaston, in hopes of receiving some reward for their exploits from a gentleman of that place; but he properly refused to countenance such disgraceful conduct.

The evening being now far advanced, they returned to Nailstone, treating their prisoners, on the way, in the most savage manner. They threw Mr. Aldridge into a fish-pond: and two of the mob, being accidentally pushed in with him, they endeavoured to force him beyond his depth: threatening to drown him if he would not recant. He bore their insults with christian meekness, till he perceived his life to be really in danger: when, being a strong young man, he easily plunged his persecutors in the water, and made his escape. Joseph Donisthorpe, of Normanton, who was one of the prisoners, was seized by the hair, dragged to a gate, his neck violently bent across it, and threatened with immediate death. Others had their clothes torn to pieces, were pelted with mud, and led through the most miry places that could be found. They arrived, late, at Nailstone: when they set at liberty all the prisoners, except J. Taylor, the minister, and J. Whyatt. The former, they confined in a chamber, at an inn; and permitted the latter to sit by

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\* During this wanton exhibition, from house to house, Mr. Taylor frequently repeated the following lines:

“ For me my Saviour thus was led,  
“ For me a gazing-stock was made:  
“ All praise be to his holy name,  
“ Who counts me worthy of his shame.”

the kitchen fire. After a time, they would have dismissed Mr. Whyatt; but he refused to leave his minister; and, through the night, experienced every indignity which the malice of his enraged persecutors could devise: all which he supported like a disciple of the lowly Jesus. In the morning, he visited his family: but, regardless of the fatigues of the night, returned to Nailstone church, in time for the forenoon service. Here he met Mr. Taylor: who, though a prisoner, would not omit what he thought his duty; but attended public worship, at the same place, under a guard. For these good men had not yet formed any system of their own, or entertained any design of deserting the established church.

The next morning, the constable, accompanied by the most active rioters, carried Mr. Taylor before Sir Wolston Dixie; and laid heavy charges against him and his followers, exhibiting the wounded fingers as proofs of their accusations. Sir William naturally inquired into the cause of these wounds; and the explanation afforded him great amusement. Yet he treated the preacher and his friends with contempt and harshness: and, notwithstanding his former promises, he shewed a disposition to excuse every measure that tended to suppress the methodists, as he tauntingly styled them. But, not choosing to commit himself by any decision, he bound the parties over to the next quarter sessions. On leaving the magistrate's, the mob, encouraged by the countenance which they had received, pursued the objects of their hatred for several miles, across the fields; and, overtaking J. Whyatt, plunged him into a ditch, and otherwise abused him. At Osbaston, a large bonfire was made, as a token of rejoicing for the defeat of the

methodists, whom they threatened with utter destruction.\*

It now became unsafe for these persecuted people to meet publicly; but they continued to assemble more privately, and to encourage each other in their attachment to the truth. They continued to attend public worship at the established church: though, as their views of the gospel became more extended and clear, they felt increasing dissatisfaction with the doctrines maintained by its ministers. Some of them ventured to remonstrate with two neighbouring clergymen, whom they thought most friendly to their tenets; but met with no redress. This increased their discontent; and prepared their minds to become regular dissenters. Meantime the malice of their enemies invented daily new methods of harassing them. Many of these poor people, who had large families, and depended solely on the labour of their hands for support, being dismissed by their employers, on account of attending the preaching, were reduced to great distress. Yet they bore all with christian fortitude; and even rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer in so good a cause.†

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\* Some ideas of the ignorance and impiety of these wretched men, may be formed from the fact, that, many of them, while dancing round the bonfire, exclaimed, with the most horrid imprecations, "We will burn the Holy Ghost with the methodists."—Gen Bap Mag. Vol. I. p 187.

† Of this, Mr. Joseph Donisthorpe was a signal instance. The farmers and tradesmen, on whom he depended for employment, took great offence at his frequent religious conversations. They were sorry that he should make such a fool of himself as they chose to term it; and were determined to oblige him to desist. They went, therefore, in a body, to his house; and, in a friendly manner, advised him to leave off exposing himself, and disturbing the village. Finding this mode of attack not likely to succeed, they threatened him, that, if he did not comply with their

In the beginning of 1744, the quarter sessions were held at Leicester: when, the cause of the Barton methodists being heard, they were cast. A decision, so evidently partial and contrary to the laws of the country, induced their attorney, Mr. Peck of Leicester, to advise them to carry their cause to a higher tribunal. A statement of their case being drawn up, was laid before an eminent counsellor, who gave an opinion decidedly opposed to the verdict of the jury, at the sessions. Mr. Peck was, therefore, directed to

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wishes, they would take all their work from his shop; and hinted, that they had procured another workman to serve them. Having now seven small children, and expecting the eighth, this was a trying occasion: yet he behaved with firmness and propriety. "Gentlemen," said he, "are you pleased with my work?" "Yes," they replied, "we find no fault with that." "And," resumed he, "are my wages reasonable?" "Yes," they replied, "we are satisfied in these respects: our complaints are of a different nature." "These, Gentlemen," continued Mr. Donisthorpe, "are the duties which I owe to you. What concerns God and my own conscience, you have no concern with: God forbid that I should obey you rather than him. The cause is his: and if, for the sake of his cause, you deprive me of the means of obtaining a livelihood, I have no doubt but he will support both me and it." Seeing him thus determined, his employers called for his books; discharged their bills; took away their work unfinished as it was; and left him without any visible resource.

Mr. D.'s confidence in the care of Providence was not disappointed. At first, he thought of travelling the country to do jobs. This scheme strongly recommended itself to him, by the opportunities which it would furnish him of making known the gospel. But, before he could put this design into execution, an unexpected order, from a London gentleman, a perfect stranger, prevented it. He executed the order, received payment for it; and a further order. But other work had then come in: and, before he could set about the goods for London, he accidentally observed the name of his employer in a list of bankrupts. This appeared to him another instance of the care of his heavenly Father; who had supplied his wants in the time of need, and prevented him from suffering by this unforeseen failure.

*G. B. Rep., Vol. I. pp. 247, 248.*

indict several of the principal offenders at the Crown office. But, though notices of this were sent to the parties, the persecution did not abate. They treated the letters with contempt: and, ostentatiously tearing them in pieces, trampled them under-foot in the streets. The people at Barton continued to be treated in the most outrageous manner: their persecutors, elated with the victory they had obtained, gave a loose to their passions, and deemed it a virtue to harass them by every means they could employ.

At length the Assizes approached, and regular citations were sent to the persons indicted. This roused them to reflection: and, perceiving the dangerous situation in which their excesses had placed them, they sunk into abject despondency.\* The most submissive applications were made, and the most moving intreaties used, to induce those, whom they had so cruelly abused, to stop the proceedings, and not suffer the cause to come to a trial. The Barton friends, wishing only to enjoy their native rights without interruption, consented, at last, to drop the prosecution, on condition that their persecutors would pay all the expences which had, from the

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\* When the attorney's clerk went to Nailstone to present the citations, most of the persons to whom they were addressed were gone to a fair at Bosworth. The clerk followed; and found them in the midst of their diversions. One young man, of whom he was in quest, was preparing to entertain the mob, with a burlesque imitation of a methodist sermon: and, having mounted a stool, was composing his countenance to the requisite gravity; when the clerk stepped up to him, and, presenting the citation, said, "Here, my lad, I'll furnish you with a text." But, alas! the mock parson could not read. He was, however, soon informed of the contents of the paper. This closed his frolic; he instantly descended, and sneaked away in silence: thus becoming himself an object of derision to the laughing spectators.

*Gen. Bap. Mag, Vol. I. p. 289.*

first, been occasioned by their violence. As many witnesses had been examined, and several eminent counsel retained, the costs amounted to a considerable sum; and fell heavy on seven or eight of the farmers. Yet the terms were considered as generous; and received by the parties concerned with gratitude: and all further violence was as effectually checked, as it could have been, had the cause proceeded, and large damages been awarded against the offenders.\*

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SECT. 2.—*Proceedings of the Barton Preachers, from the Nailstone Persecution to the time when they adopted the practice of Believers' Baptism: or, from A.D. 1743 to A.D. 1755.*

NOT long after this accommodation, John Taylor, the minister who had shared so largely in this persecution, left Barton, and removed to London: when David Taylor became again the regular preacher. Stephen Dixon, for some time, assisted him in the sacred work; but, forming an acquaintance with the Moravians at Pudsey in Yorkshire, he joined their society; and made some fruitless attempts to form the people at Barton into a Moravian church. In about a year, however, Dixon was excluded, for some cause never fully explained, from the fellowship of the Moravians: and one William Kendrick, his intimate friend, being dissatisfied with the proceedings against Dixon, withdrew from the society at Pudsey. They returned to the Barton

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\* Gen. Bap. Mag. Vol. I. pp. 183—190.

people: and, uniting their efforts to serve them, were received with exultation.

Though these professors had very imperfect ideas of the nature and importance of church-fellowship: yet a few of them were persuaded, by their ministers, to form themselves into a society, which they styled a church. This union was no sooner effected, than Messrs. Kendrick and Dixon were chosen elders; and Mrs. Dixon eldress. This first church was formed in 1745, and consisted, at its formation, of only seven members. But many waited to see the result of the attempt; and crowds attended their public labours: so that their numbers increased rapidly, and the cause flourished.

Thus far they had preached in the dwelling-houses of their friends; but the increasing number of hearers now induced them to wish for a meeting-house. With their usual zeal, they soon determined to build one at Barton, the centre of their exertions: which was as quickly executed. The dimensions of this edifice were thirty-six feet by twenty-two. It had a convenient vestry; and a spacious pulpit; in which eight or ten of their preachers sat, on public occasions. Over the whole building, chambers were constructed, designed as apartments for the single brethren and sisters, on the plan of the Moravians. This addition was probably made by Messrs. Dixon and Kendrick, in anticipation of introducing this practice among their new converts: but, if so, they were disappointed; as we find no traces of any such orders in their churches. Though the members of this congregation were, in general, in poor circumstances; yet they cheerfully exerted themselves, and defrayed all the expences of this erection. Mr. William Collins, a minister whom

commerce, distributed his goods amongst the poor, and devoted himself to the work of the ministry. He procured a translation of several parts of the Old Testament into the French language; and was indefatigable in publishing the sacred contents of the oracles of truth. His success was great. Numerous disciples flocked round him, and congregations were formed. The archbishop of Lyons forbade him to preach; but Waldo, for some time, disregarded his prohibition. He formed many distinct societies, and was instrumental in raising up many faithful ministers.\* At length, he found it necessary to remove into Dauphiny, accompanied by many of his followers. After spreading the gospel in this province, they went into Picardy; and there appear to have laboured with peculiar success. So numerous were his disciples in Picardy, that they attracted the notice of government. Troops were sent against them, and they were treated like public enemies. Their houses were overthrown, their villages consumed, and their towns destroyed. Six hundred of these innocent people were burnt in one day, by order of Philip Augustin, who began his reign in 1180.† Many, to avoid these cruelties, retired into Flanders.—Thither fire and sword followed them: and many suffered death there, in 1182, for opposing infant baptism. Waldo fled into Germany; and, at last, settled in Bohemia, where he died in peace,

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\* Fox's Acts and Monuments, Vol. I. p. 260. It is not intended to assert that Waldo was the founder of this sect — Dissenters from the catholics had existed, as we have seen, in every age; but this zealous minister appears to have been an instrument of reviving their cause, and increasing their numbers.

† Martin's Memoirs of French Protestants, p. 15.

A. D. 1179.\* In Germany, this sect was dreadfully persecuted. Eighty were burnt at Strasburgh: and, at Cologn, Arnold, an eminent Waldensian, and ten of his associates, who opposed the commission of Christ against infant baptism, suffered the same punishment, Aug. 2, 1163: besides numbers in other parts.†

In the middle of this century, a very numerous and powerful branch of Waldenses attracted public attention. They were called ALBIGENSES, from the town of Alby, in the province of Languedoc, where they first appeared. Peter Auterius, an eminent minister among them, was condemned, by the inquisition, for saying, among other things, that “water baptism, performed by the church, is of no use to children; because they do not consent: nay, they weep.”‡

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SECT. 4.—*The sufferings of the Albigenes, &c. from A. D. 1200 to A. D. 1400.*

IN the thirteenth century, the Waldenses and Albigenes had vastly increased in numbers; and spread their doctrines through the southern part of Europe. In 1260, the Waldenses alone were computed at eight hundred thousand.§ Their principal residence continued to be at the foot of the Pyrenees, in the provinces of Languedoc, Dauphiny, Bearn, &c. Their numbers and prosperity alarmed the pope: and he determined to take the most effectual methods to put a stop to

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\* Sabine's History of Christ. Church, p. 235.

† Abp. Usher, Suc. p. 292.

‡ Limborch's History of the Inquisition, Book I. Ch. VIII.

§ Perrin's Hist. of Old Waldenses, Book II. Chap. II.

their progress. He wrote epistles to them, exhorting them to return to the church, and lay aside their errors. To these succeeded numbers of friars and monks, whom he sent to preach in the country, and to dispute with the people.—The preachers were reinforced by legates, who had special commissions to compel them to reform. The legates called to their aid inquisitors, who then first began to exercise more than savage cruelties, in the name of the merciful Jesus. All these efforts, however, proved ineffectual. The heretics met tortures and deaths, in the most frightful forms, with a constancy that did honor to their cause; and, not unfrequently, gained them proselytes from among their persecutors. Every harsh and unchristian method, used to induce them to conform, furnished them with an additional reason for persisting in their nonconformity. The pope, thus baffled, resolved to pursue more decisive measures. He declared these heretics not worthy of a place in society, and inculcated on all good catholics the duty and merit of extirminating such insolent enemies of God and the church. To animate them to engage in this pious work, agents were sent to all parts of Europe, with authority from the pope, to promise a pardon of all sins, and the certain possession of paradise, to all who would undertake a pilgrimage of forty days, to fight against the heretics.

Impious and ridiculous as these proposals appear to us, in the darkness in which the world was, at that time, involved, they had the desired effect. Multitudes flocked to the standard of the pope, and proceeded, under the banner of the cross, to merit heaven by extirminating their fellow-men, their fellow-subjects, and, in many

instances, their near relatives. It is computed, that, at the command of the pope, there marched against the peaceable Waldenses, more than five hundred thousand fanatics : of whom more than three hundred thousand lost their lives in the conflict. The results were dreadful beyond description. Murder, devastation, and cruelty, for more than two centuries, disfigured the fairest parts of Europe. The numbers that perished by the sword, famine, tortures, and ill usage, were immense. In France alone, above five hundred thousand are supposed to have been slain ; and the victims of papal cruelty and policy, in other places, are thought to have at least doubled the bloody amount. This is a moderate computation. Some writers make the numbers destroyed in France to exceed one million. Their sufferings were great. They were attacked, in their peaceful villages, and driven, in the most inclement weather, to the inhospitable mountains. The inhabitants of the valley of Pragela were thus assaulted, on a Christmas-day, when the ground was covered with snow ; and were driven, at the point of the sword, from their habitations, which were instantly set on fire by their pursuers. They took their infants in their cradles, and the fathers carried such as could not walk. Many were killed before they reached the mountains, over which they must pass, to reach an asylum. The night overtook them : and they were obliged to spend it without shelter. In the morning eighty young infants were found frozen to death in their cradles ; and the greatest part of their mothers expiring at their sides. On another occasion, being pursued by the king's lieutenant in Picardy, they took shelter in the rocks and caverns. The rocks and caverns were scoured by the

troops ; and all they could seize were put to the sword. Heaps of wood were piled, in the entrances of such caverns, as were impenetrable to their pursuers, and set on fire. Many of the Waldenses, driven to desperation, rushed out ;—threw themselves headlong down the rocks, and were dashed to pieces. When the caverns were examined, more than four hundred infants were found smothered to death in their cradles, or clasped in the arms of their dead mothers.\*

While these public measures were pursuing to ruin these innocent people, the bishops and inquisitors omitted no opportunity to harass them more privately. They were excommunicated and anathematized ; their goods were confiscated ; their bodies were imprisoned, tortured, insulted, and spit upon ; their ears cut off ; their flesh plucked off with pincers ; they were torn asunder by horses ; dragged up and down ; broiled, roasted, burnt, drowned, and beheaded. But it would be too affecting to enter into the horrid detail of the various secret and overt acts of cruelty and oppression, exercised against these devoted people. The result was, to adopt the words of Thuanus, “ They were slain, put to flight, spoiled every where of their goods and dignities, and dispersed here and there, rather, than that convinced of their error they repented.— They fled into Provence, and the neighbouring Alps, and found a shelter for their lives and doctrines in those places. Part withdrew into Calabria, and continued there a long time, even to the middle of the sixteenth century : part passed into Germany, and fixed their abode among the Bohemians, and in Poland and Lithuania ; and

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\* Perrin's Hist. of the Waldenses, Book II. Chap. 3.

others obtained a refuge in Britain." It is very probable that thousands of their descendants retained their principles till the reformation; when, by degrees, they mixed with the protestants, and were no longer known as a distinct people.

The Waldenses and Albigenses were very numerous, and scattered in distant countries. They appear to have existed, under a great variety of names, throughout the dark ages: though they became more conspicuous in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. It cannot be supposed, that, among so numerous a succession of men, who claimed the right of private judgment, and laid down their lives in defence of their claims, there was an uniformity of sentiment and practice. In different ages and countries, and frequently at the same time and place, there existed a diversity of opinions, which did not interrupt their harmony. They placed religion in piety and virtue: and left speculation unconfined and free. That many of them rejected infant baptism has been abundantly proved, by several baptist writers: we can only glance at the principal evidence.

*Many eminent men among them were baptists.*— Bruno and Berengarius, Peter de Bruys, and his colleague Henry, Arnold, and several others, have been mentioned, in the course of this sketch: and respecting most of them, sufficient evidence produced, that they opposed infant baptism, or defended believers' baptism in such a manner as to overthrow the contrary practice. If then the leading men were baptists, it is very natural to conclude that their followers held the same sentiments.

From several *ancient confessions* of their faith it appears, that they admitted only two sacraments:

and in one, of a very ancient date, they say, "By baptism we are received into the holy congregation of the people of God; there *protesting and declaring openly our faith and amendment of life.*"\* This certainly is inconsistent with infant baptism; but applies exactly to the baptism of believers, on a profession of faith and obedience. In an ancient treatise, written about 1120, perhaps by Peter de Bruys, they say, that "Anti-christ attributes the regeneration of the Holy Spirit unto the dead outward work; baptizing children into that faith, and teaching, that thereby baptism and regeneration must be had: grounding therein all his christianity; which is against the Holy Spirit."† And, in all their confessions, they totally disallow all human inventions or traditions: and appeal to the scriptures, as the only standard of faith and doctrine.‡

The popes and councils, who issued out their decrees, &c. against the different sects of the Waldenses, *enforced the baptism of infants*;—a strong proof that it was opposed by these sectaries. Thus, pope Leo IX. in his decretal epistle, in 1050, addressed to the bishop of Aquitain, a province in which the Waldenses abounded, commands that "young children should be baptized, on account of original sin."§ Pope Innocent III. in 1025, decrees, "That baptism is profitable to adult persons, and *also to infants*:" and the same pope, in his decretals, in answer to a letter from the bishop of Arles, in Provence, a country noted as the nursery of these sects, A.D. 1199, says, that "It had been represented to him that

\* Perrin's Hist. Wald. Book I. Chap. XIII.

† Ibid. Book V. Chap. VIII.

‡ Ibid. Books I. and V.

§ Danvers, 248, from Usher.

some heretics, in those parts, had taught, that it was to no purpose to baptize children, since they could have no forgiveness of sins thereby; as having no faith, charity, &c.\* He therefore decrees, that, "Since baptism is come in the room of circumcision, therefore, not alone the elder, but also the younger children, which of themselves neither believe nor understand, shall be baptized; and in their baptism original sin shall be forgiven them."† In the year 1176, pope Alexander III. sent a cardinal and three bishops to extirpate the Albigenses. In order to discover them, they drew up a number of articles, to which they required the suspected to swear. Some of these were, "We believe that none are saved except they are baptized: and that children are saved by baptism."‡ In the same year, the Gallican council, speaking of these heretics, as they called them, in their third canon, say,— "They convince and judge them of heresy, for denying baptism to children; or that they are to be saved thereby."§

*Their adversaries charge them with this error.*— Bernard, who had many disputes with them, says "The Cathari, a sect of the Waldenses, laughed at the catholics, for baptizing of infants."¶ Eckbertus, a famous doctor, who wrote about 1160, accuses them of saying, "That baptism ought to be deferred till they come to years of discretion: and that then only, when they can, with their own mouths, make a profession of faith, and desire it."|| Izam, a dominican persecutor of these heretics, complained, that, "although

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\* Wall, Part. II. p. 178. † Baronius in Ann.

‡ Danvers, 251, from Usher. § Ibid

¶ Wall, Part. II. p. 176. || Ibid. 168.

the prayers of the priest, and the sign of the cross absolved the child, when it came out of the water, from every sin; yet these heretics admitted another baptism."\* The same accusation is made by Estrardus, Ermengendus, Peter of Clugny, and many other cotemporaries.†

These reasons have induced many learned pædobaptists, both papists and protestants, to admit that there were some of the Waldenses who opposed infant baptism, on the same principles as the modern baptists do. We mention a few. Chassanion, a French writer of the History of the Albigenses, who collected his materials from original records, acknowledges, "I cannot deny, that, the Albigenses, *for the most part*, opposed infant baptism."‡ Mr. Wall, after an elaborate examination, concludes, though with evident reluctance, "These proofs do, I think, evince that there were some, about this time, that denied infant baptism, among those parties of men, that have been lately called Waldenses. § The cardinals, Baronius and Hosius, and those respectable writers, Limborch¶, Venema||, and Mosheim\*\*, who had paid peculiar attention to the subject, all agree in the same opinion.

With such a weight of evidence, and such important concessions from opponents so competent to judge, it is presumed, we may safely make the assertion, that many of the Waldenses were baptists.

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\* Robinson's Eccl. Res. p. 463.

† Danvers, ut supra.

‡ Stennett against Addington, Second Part, p. 155.

§ History of Infant Baptism. Part. II. page 179.

¶ Hist. Inquisit. Book II. Chap. VIII.

|| Hist. Eccl. Book VII. p. 443.

\*\* Eccles. Hist. Vol. IV. p. 443.

SECT. 5.—*From the destruction of the Albigenses to Jerome of Prague: or, from A.D. 1400 to A.D. 1600.*

WIHELMINA, a zealous Bohemian lady, who settled at Milan, taught and baptized in that city with great success. She died, in peace, in 1281; and the ignorant catholics, having known the holiness of her life, said their prayers at her grave.—Nineteen years afterwards, her bones were dug up and burnt, and her followers proceeded against as heretics.\*

The Lollards or Wickliffites, in the thirteenth century, had many baptists among them, and were greatly persecuted. Many were burnt, at Crema in Austria, in 1315, for opposing infant baptism; and, in 1373, a pious woman, named Peronne, underwent a similar punishment for a similiar crime, at Aubiton, in Flanders.† In 1308, Dulcinus, and Margaretha, his wife, were burnt at Novaria in Italy, for attachment to believers' baptism: and, in 1417, Catherine Suabe died at Montpellier, in the same manner, in defence of the same cause.‡

In the year 1411, a class of religious persons arose in Bohemia, known by the denomination of Pygherds, Picards, or Beghards; and not unfrequently referred to under the general term Waldenses. They were, for some time, favoured by the archbishop of Prague: but after they had renounced infant baptism, and begun to baptize their converts before they admitted them into church fellowship, he found it prudent, at first

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\* Robinson's Eccles. Researches, p. 413.

† Danvers, p. 234.

‡ Dr. Stennett against Addington, Part II. p. 255.

to keep them at a distance; and afterwards, being urged on by the pope's threatenings, to persecute them. These professors appear to have been of very different sentiments; but they agreed in baptizing all that joined them. When they were persecuted in Prague, they retired into Moravia, and made that country their chief settlement; though many went into other countries. The only attempt to disturb them, made during the reign of Maximilian, was providentially defeated. That emperor, though a friend to the liberty of conscience, was induced, by the efforts of the catholics of Prague, to grant an edict against them. The chancellor of Bohemia, who had been at court to prosecute the measure, set out for Prague with the edict; but, in passing the Danube, the bridge gave way, and he and his companions were drowned. His corpse was taken up by a fisherman; but the edict was never recovered.\*

In the year 1415, John Huss was burnt at the council of Constance; and, the year following, Jerome of Prague shared the same fate. These zealous Bohemian ministers had preached the gospel with great success, and very plainly exposed the wickedness of popery. Amongst other important principles, they insisted, in their public labours, on the following.—“The law of Jesus Christ is sufficient, of itself, for the government of the church.”—“All human traditions savour of folly.”—“No other law besides the rule of the scriptures ought to be prescribed.”—“The devil is the author of multiplying traditions in the church,” &c. Now, though we do not

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\* Robinson's *Eccl. Res.* pp. 499—521.

assert that these two martyrs were baptists, yet these principles, if followed to their legitimate consequences, would certainly have led them to renounce infant baptism. There is some reason to believe, that Jerome pursued them so far: and there is abundant proof, that multitudes of their followers practised believers' baptism.\*

A number of the descendants of the ancient Waldenses had, for centuries, inhabited the woods and forests, situated in Bohemia and Hungary, in the marquisate of Moravia. These inoffensive people baptized their converts, by immersion, on a confession of faith: which ordinance they considered as a public profession of Christianity. They lived in forty-five divisions, called colleges, or fraternities; and each of these communities consisted of many families, who had all things in common. Some of these houses carried on manufactories; others were factors or merchants; and others, employed in agriculture and the wine trade. All were busy, peaceable, and happy, under regulations of their own making. Their numbers cannot be easily determined; but the lowest computation makes it amount to upwards of twenty thousand. The patronage of the secular princes, and of the proprietors of the lands on which they had settled, who found their own interest in protecting such industrious tenants, for a long time, defended them against the rage of the ecclesiastics, and the thunder of the popes, which had, on several occasions, been levelled against them. At length, Ferdinand II. having conquered Bohemia, determined to extirpate heresy out of his dominions; and as the

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\* Robinson's *Eccl. Res.* pp. 481—514.

principles of the Moravian baptists would not allow them to make any resistance, he thought it most prudent to begin with them. He, accordingly, at the commencement of the sixteenth century, wrote to the general of the army in Moravia, and to the governor of the province, to inform them of his design, and require their concurrence, on pain of his displeasure. He then published an edict against the baptists, banishing them all, both natives and foreigners, from his hereditary and imperial dominions. Three weeks and three days only were allowed for their departure; and it was death to be found, even on the borders of the country, one hour after the expiration of the time. It was autumn; their fields were white for the harvest; and their vines weighed down with the ripening clusters. But, in silent submission to that Power who governs the universe, they packed up their effects, and departed. They conveyed their sick, their innocent infants sucking at the breasts of their mothers, and their decrepid parents, in several hundred carriages. At the borders they separated: some going to Transylvania; some, to Wallachia; and others to Poland. But though this decree scattered these people, it did not destroy them:—baptists of this class continue to the present day; and maintain, in a good degree, the same christian simplicity.\*

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SECT. 6.—*The Munster Anabaptists: from  
A. D. 1524 to A. D. 1535.*

HAVING thus brought our account of these

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\* Robinson's Eccl. Res. pp. 522—527.

foreign baptists to the Reformation, when all parties acknowledge that they were numerous, we might here close this chapter. But it would, perhaps, be thought partial to omit, even in this hasty sketch, those baptists who have, for nearly three centuries, been the darling theme of many pædobaptists, and whose excesses have furnished such favourite arguments against believers' baptism. The Munster anabaptists, as they are termed, will not be suffered to fall into oblivion; and therefore it may be necessary for us to notice them.

Prior to the Reformation, the inferior orders of the people in Germany had long been in the most abject state of degradation. They were divided into three classes: the slaves, the villains, and the freemen. The slaves, with their wives and children, and the produce of their industry, were the absolute property of their owner. He treated them with the greatest rigour; compelled them to labour to the utmost of their strength; inflicted corporeal punishment on them, at his pleasure; and, if he killed them, was liable only to a small fine.—The villains paid a fixed rent for their farms; but were confined to the soil, and transferred with the estate.—The freemen were, indeed, permitted to hold a little property; but their condition was rendered so wretched, by the oppression of their superiors, that they frequently renounced their privileges, and went, by choice, into the class of slaves. The whole nation, both clergy and laity, had sunk into the grossest ignorance; and tyranny, the most intolerable and provoking, had been exercised, under the mask of religion. Luther had recently broken the charm; and taught men to think for themselves. He had successfully set ecclesiastical

usurpation at defiance. All Europe observed the interesting event; and all were agitated. Men of the lowest rank began to feel their own importance, and to aspire after that liberty to which he had taught them, that they, in common with their fellow-men, were entitled. Encouraged by the success of Luther's bold measures, the oppressed people of Germany were induced to make a struggle for the recovery of some of their civil rights. They rose on their tyrants, expelled the monks and magistrates out of several cities, and formed a new police. The insurrection had spread over several provinces, forty-thousand men were in arms, and most of the nobility had fled, before Thomas Muncer, a baptist minister, espoused their cause.

Thomas Muncer had been a priest before he became a disciple of Luther. He was, for some time, highly esteemed by the leaders of the Reformation; but, when he adopted the practice of believers' baptism, he lost much of his credit among them. He laboured assiduously as an itinerant preacher, through the greatest part of Saxony. His deportment was grave and humble; and his discourses plain and easy. After having been driven from several places by persecution, he settled at Mulhausen, in Upper Saxony. Here he had preached for some time with great success, before the peasants took up arms; when, being convinced of the justice of their cause, he joined them, in the year 1514; and was esteemed their leader. He drew up for them a Memorial, which was presented to their lords, and dispersed throughout Germany. In this their grievances and demands are distinctly stated. It consisted of twelve articles, of which only the two first could be supposed to have any connection with

religion. In the first, they pray that they may be permitted to choose their own ministers; and, on proper occasions, to dismiss them. The second requires that they might be eased of all tythes, except that on corn; which, they request, may be applied in equal portions, to the support of the teachers, the relief of the poor, and the payment of those civil taxes which were levied on the poor. The other ten articles stipulate for personal freedom—the right of fishing, hunting, &c.—the privilege of cutting wood in the forests—an amelioration of the services of villainage—a restitution of the tenures of farms to their original grants—a reduction of the annual rents—a reformation of the mode of administering justice—a restoration of the commons to the peasantry—and the abolition of the claiming of heriots. The concluding article states, that this memorial contains their present grievances; but that they are willing to make any alterations, agreeable to truth and scripture, and tending to promote the glory of God, and the good of mankind.

It is evident, that these claims had no connection with the belief or practice of believers' baptism; nor, indeed, with the distinguishing principles of any sect. They were the demands of men, as members of civil society; and some of the best of statesmen have admitted both the moderation and justice of these claims. Persons of every denomination of christians might, and actually did, join in supporting them; and the pædobaptists appear to have been as hearty in the cause as the baptists. Nor need any party be ashamed to acknowledge these patriots as brethren. Had it pleased the Governor of the universe to have crowned their efforts with success,

Muncer and his associates would have been ranked with the assertors of the rights of man, and immortalized as the saviours of their country. —But they were unsuccessful. The Landgrave of Hesse marched against them; with a numerous army.—Seven thousand of them fell in the conflict: and Muncer, being taken some time afterwards, was beheaded, at Mulhausen, in 1525 \*

This defeat did not terminate the struggle. It continued for many years; and, in various parts of Germany, it was attended with circumstances much more criminal. The people, exasperated by their sufferings, appear to have been made the tools of enthusiastic and ill-designing men; who, taking advantage of the ferment of the public mind, joined the peasants, and led them into almost every kind of excess. In the spring of the year 1534, the populace, in the city of Munster, drove the citizens and clergy out of the town, and made themselves masters of it. The first mover of this tumult was one Bernard Rotman, at that time a Lutheran minister, though he afterwards opposed infant baptism. This man having, in his sermons, inveighed loudly against the errors of the church of Rome, the papists bought him off with a sum of money, and prevailed on him to leave the city. After some months, he returned, and threatened the principal inhabitants, that, if they would not open the churches to him, he would procure it to be done by force. The mob rose in his favour, and he executed his threat. He was soon after joined by several turbulent enthusiasts from the neighbouring cities, some of whom professed be-

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\* Robinson's Eccl. Res. pp. 535—554.

lievers' baptism. If we credit the reports of their enemies, they advanced many extravagant and impious opinions: and committed numerous acts of excess, cruelty, and violence. John Bockhold, better known by the appellation of John of Leydon, set himself up for ruler; and assumed the title of King of Sion. He appointed twelve judges to govern the new republic of Israel; and sent twenty apostles into the neighbouring countries, to spread his doctrines. They proceeded, in this wild manner, and bade defiance to all the forces that could be brought against them, for more than a year. The bishop of Munster, at length, by the assistance of an anabaptist that joined his army, took the town, May 28th. 1535: and the pretended king of Sion, being apprehended, was first dreadfully tortured, and then pierced through the heart with a dagger, in the beginning of the following year.\*

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SECT. 7.—*Remarks on these Insurrections, and their effects.*

THERE is reason to believe that, extravagant and wicked as these madmen certainly were, yet they have been painted in too horrid colours. All the accounts of their opinions and practices, which have reached us, have been preserved in the writings of their enemies; who, probably, found it necessary to render the characters of the anabaptists as odious as possible, that they might justify the horrid persecutions to which they were afterwards exposed. The insurgents, at

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\* Brandt's History of Refor. Vol. I. Book II.

Munster, have generally been identified with the adherents of Muncer; but the doctrines attributed to the former are directly opposed to the memorial published by the latter. One instance will sufficiently shew this. The insurgents, at Munster, are charged with holding, that dominion is founded in grace, that the saints have a right to overturn governments, depose magistrates, and rule all things themselves. Nothing, certainly, can be more destructive of the peace and even existence of society than these principles: yet they are frequently ascribed, with great confidence, to the anabaptists in general, by almost all the writers of those ages. But, in the third article of their memorial, Muncer and his followers declare, that they wished not to be free from the controul of magistrates, "whose office they honoured, as being of divine appointment, and whose just laws they would obey." It is plain, therefore, either that these men have been slandered; or that some of the zealots at Munster advanced opinions which the sober part even of the insurgents themselves abhorred. This is the more probable, as many, who were afterwards executed, as parties in these tumults, constantly persisted, under the most exquisite tortures, in denying, even with their latest breath, the extravagancies imputed to them.

Again, this insurrection at Munster was by no means the only instance, in those unsettled times, of popular tumults, under the pretence of religion. Almost every principal town in Germany and the Netherlands witnessed similar scenes. Nor were they confined to any party. Catholics rose against protestants, and protestants against catholics; the reformed, as they called themselves, against the Lutherans, and the Lutherans against

the reformed.\* The anabaptists, indeed, appear, in this confusion, to have been the common object of persecution with every party. Every man's hand was against them; and it is no wonder if their hand was against every man. Oppression maketh even wise men mad.

But, allowing that every thing reported of these men is true, what have the modern baptists to do with them? Were their vices and excesses the necessary effects of their opinions respecting the subject or mode of baptism?—If not, is it not equally ungenerous and irrational to introduce them into the controversy?—Besides, it is very impolitic in the pædobaptists to adopt this mode of argument; for if it be allowed to them, it must be to their opponents. And if the excesses and cruelties, committed by the various classes of pædobaptists, protestant and papist, not only in these times of confusion, but in every age of the church, should be urged as evidence against infant baptism, the baptists would easily make a dreadful reply to any argument drawn from the transactions at Munster!†—But they disdain such ungenerous and foreign topics: their cause needs no such support.

Lastly —It is very certain, that though some enthusiasts who denied infant baptism, disgraced themselves and their profession by their extravagant opinions and practices, yet there were thousands of baptists, at that time, and in those countries, who deserved and obtained a very different character. Not to mention the many

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\* Brandt. ut supra.

† When we said, in the beginning of the last section, that the Munster anabaptists would not be suffered to fall into oblivion; we did not expect soon to see them made the subject of a

instances of rational piety and holy conduct in individuals of that persuasion who were persecuted to death itself, which extorted the admiration even of their enemies, we shall transcribe the testimonies of several impartial and competent witnesses to their general character. One, who exerted his whole force in opposing them, observes, that they owed their great success to three things; the first was "that their teachers deafened their hearers with numberless passages of scripture: the second, that they affected a great appearance of sanctity: the third, that their followers discovered great constancy in their sufferings and deaths." Beza, who will not be suspected of favouring them, and who had good opportunities of knowing them, says—"Many of the anabaptists are good men, servants of God, and our dear brethren." Cas-sander, who, as well as Beza, lived in those times, and had many disputes with the anabaptists, declares, "They discovered an honest and a pious mind; and erred from the faith through a

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separate publication. But, it seems, we had formed too favourable an estimate of the dispositions and understandings of some of our cotemporaries.—An account of the tumults at Munster, extracted from Dr. Robertson's History of Charles V. has since been published, in a two-penny tract, under the deceptive title of "The History of the Baptists, by W. Robertson, D.D. &c. &c." This piece, which is adapted, and doubtless meant, to circulate widely among the uninformed and credulous, is obviously designed to lead them to conclude, that the tenets and practices that distinguish the baptists first originated in those times of confusion, and were till then unknown; and to induce them to identify the present adherents to those doctrines with the German insurgents. Such an insidious attempt to mislead the ignorant and traduce the innocent, certainly reflects a lustre on the boasted *candour* and *liberality* of this enlightened age; and will be duly appreciated by every intelligent observer.

mistaken zeal, rather than an evil disposition :— they condemned the outrageous conduct of their brethren at Munster, and taught that the kingdom of Christ was to be established only by the cross.”\*

The pædobaptists, however, contrived to throw the whole odium of this disgraceful business on the baptists, and a most violent persecution followed. Papists and protestants united in hunting down this slandered people ; and put to death many who had used all their influence to prevent the enormities that had been committed. In March, 1549, five men and three women were burnt at Amsterdam, because they had suffered themselves to be re-baptized. About the same time, two men and one woman were executed for the same crime at Leuwarden. In 1558, above forty baptists fell by the hand of the executioner ; and an equal number in the following year.† But to enumerate particulars would far exceed the limits of this sketch. We therefore sum up the whole in the words of an intelligent writer, who appears to have well examined the subject.—“ I have,” says he, “ carefully told over *five hundred and seventy odd* persons, all anabaptists, who were put to death, merely on account of religion, exclusive of, and in contradiction to, any who suffered as chargeable with treason, rebellion, sedition, &c. Nor have I reckoned into the number a whole assembly of those people who were betrayed at Rotterdam, in 1554, for I could not make an estimate of their number : but all that were caught of these were executed. Upon a fair computation, then, this

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\* Crosby, Vol. I. Pref. p. xxviii. &c.

† Brandt's Hist. Ref. under the respective years.

scantling of anabaptists, who suffered in and about the Low Countries, for their religious principles, amounts considerably to above the highest number of those, of whatsoever denomination, who were put to death in England on account of the Reformation. What I further observe, is, that in the judgment of charity there appeared in these, not only equal firmness of mind, and the traces of a good spirit; but they had such divine transports and solid assurances before their exits, as eminently attended our glorious British martyrs.\* In confirmation of this last remark, it may be proper to insert the testimony of Cardinal Hosius, their great persecutor.—“If the truth of a religion,” says the cardinal, “were to be judged of by the readiness and cheerfulness which a man of any sect shews in suffering, then the opinion and persuasion of no sect can be truer than that of the anabaptists; since there have been none for these twelve hundred years past, that have been more grievously punished, or that have more cheerfully and stedfastly undergone, and even offered themselves, unto the most cruel punishments than those people.”†

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SECT. 8.—*Baptists persecuted by Protestants.*

WHEN we consider that the baptists, in all ages, have attacked the main pillars of popery, by maintaining—that the holy scripture alone is the sole rule of faith and practice in re-

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\* Rees' Inf. Bap. no Inst. of Christ, p. 220.

† Stennett against Addington, Part II. p. 268.

ligious concerns—that Christ is the supreme and only Head of the church—and that whoever usurps authority in it rebels against him and becomes antichrist; we cannot be surprized that the papists should be highly exasperated against them. We sincerely wish that we could stop there, and leave the catholics loaded with the whole disgrace of persecuting the baptists: but justice requires us to state, that the protestants must share in the odious burthen.

Wickliff, Huss, Jerome, and others, had prepared the way for the reformation, by exposing the errors of the church of Rome: and Luther, in the beginning of the sixteenth century, favoured by a conjuncture of circumstances, carried it forward with unexpected rapidity. He appealed to the Bible, as the only standard of religion; and boldly maintained the right of every man to read and understand it for himself. His doctrines spread, and were soon embraced by many kingdoms and states; who *protested* against the errors and usurpations of Rome, and thence obtained the name of *protestants*.

Many of the most famous leaders of these dissenters, had expressed themselves with sufficient clearness on the distinguishing tenets of the baptists. They had acknowledged, that baptism signifies immersion, and that believers are the proper subjects. It might, therefore, have been expected, either that they would have declared themselves baptists; or, at least, that they would have cherished those who acted on their own principles. But, whether they found it more prudent to leave a subject so closely interwoven with the prejudices and passions of men untouched; or whether they changed their views respecting this ordinance; certain it is, that

many of the leading men among the reformers declared, at last, in favour of infant baptism.— Too certain it is, also, that no sooner had they gained the protection of the civil power, and an influence over civil governors, than they all, whatever mode of discipline they embraced, whether episcopal, presbyterian or independent, endeavoured to *impose* their opinions on those who differed from them either in principle or practice. It may excite surprise, that an inconsistency to their fundamental tenets, so glaring, should have been so universally prevalent. But religious liberty was then very imperfectly understood. The degrading fetters of papal tyranny had so benumbed the human mind, that it could not, except by slow degrees, expand itself to its proper dimensions, or act with its native energy. To this, and not to any thing hostile to truth or liberty in the systems or the hearts of these good men, do we ascribe the inconsistency to which we have alluded. Abundant evidence might be brought of the existence of this disgraceful inconsistency on the continent; but as we shall meet with too many painful examples of persecuting protestants in tracing the history of the English General Baptists, we shall only notice one remarkable instance of tyranny, in a country noted for the love of liberty.

In the protestant canton of Zurich, in Switzerland, an edict was published, in 1525, commanding all persons to baptize their children, and to forbear rebaptizing, on pain of fines and imprisonment: and, in 1526, Zuinglius, one of the reformers at that city, passed this sentence on Felix Mans—“He that rebaptizes, let him be drowned:” upon which, that worthy minister

was drowned.\* In 1530, a second edict was published at Zurich, by which adult baptism was made a capital offence; and, by authority of these edicts, ten baptists were put to death in that town, in less than four years. They then declined public executions; but cruelly starved seven of the same persuasion to death in prison; and confined five others, till death released them.†

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## CHAP. II.

### *THE PROGRESS OF THE GOSPEL, AND TRACES OF THE BAPTISTS IN ENGLAND, PREVIOUS TO THE REFORMATION.*

SECT. 1.—*From the Introduction of Christianity  
into England to Austin, A. D. 596.*

WHEN the gospel of Christ was first preached, in this favoured isle, is not easy to determine.—Many respectable writers place this important event in the apostolic age; and suppose, that some of the apostles either came in person, or sent their companions, into Britain. Be that as it may, there appears sufficient evidence, that, about A.D. 180, Lucius, who then reigned in Britain, sent to Eleutherius, the bishop of Rome, to request that he would assist him in propa-

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\* Brandt's Hist. of Ref. Vol. Book II.

† Danvers, pp. 264, 265.

gating the christian religion among his subjects. In compliance with this request, Eleutherius sent two holy men to instruct the Britons. The missionaries from Rome were zealous, active, and successful. They soon baptized the king; and the principal part of the nation followed his example: so that the country appears to have been in a great measure rescued from the worship of idols.\* There is good authority for saying that, in 182, there was a school of learning, to provide the British churches with proper teachers.†

This happy island afforded an asylum for the banished christians, during the first nine general persecutions; as none of them reached it. But the tenth, raised by Dioclesian, about the year 301, was felt severely by the British churches. In this dreadful persecution, Albanus, the first English martyr, Aaron, Amphibalus and Julius, all eminent British christians, sealed the truth with their blood, at Verolamium, since called St. Alban's, from Albanus. At this time, christianity was almost driven out of the whole island; the churches were subverted; the books of the scripture were burned; and many faithful christians, both men and women, slain.‡

After this persecution, the christians in Britain appear to have flourished in peace, during the government of the Romans. But the great numbers of troops drawn from this country to assist in the foreign expeditions of their conquerors, weakened both the church and state; and left England, when forsaken by the Romans, a prey to the idolatrous Picts and Scots. These bar-

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\* Fox's Acts and Mon. I. p. 118.

† Usher de Antiquitate Eccl. Brit. pp. 69, 70.

‡ Fox I. p. 98.

barous nations dreadfully harassed, and cruelly persecuted, the Britons. When these neighbouring enemies were driven out by the Saxons, whom the Britons had invited to their assistance, they only changed their oppressors. The Saxons were, at this time, bigotted heathens, and seized every opportunity of proving their hatred to christianity and its professors. The devastation made among the British churches was terrible. "From the east to the west," says Gildas, an eminent writer, who lived near those times, "nothing was to be seen but churches burnt or destroyed to their very foundations. The inhabitants were extirpated by the sword, and buried under the ruins of their own houses. The altars were daily profaned with the blood of those slain thereon."\* The professors of christianity, in general, either fell victims to the fury of their enemies, or were driven to seek shelter in neighbouring countries. Many of them retired into the mountains of Wales, and there maintained their religion. These cruel persecutions so completely oppressed christianity, that for forty-four years previous to the arrival of Austin, it was nearly extinct in all the island. The Saxons were established in the government, and the British christians either sealed the truth with their blood, or were driven into exile.

We the rather mention these particulars, as there is good reason to believe that these primitive British christians were baptists.—That they baptized by immersion is allowed by all parties: and, that they did not practise infant baptism will soon appear.

About the year 596, Ethelbert, the fifth mo-

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\* Crosby, II. pref. xvii.

narch of the Saxon kingdom of Kent, though himself a pagan, married Berda, a French christian. It was agreed, in the marriage articles, that the queen, and her bishops, who accompanied her, should be allowed the freedom of their religion. This opened the way for the revival of christianity in England. Gregory was then pope. Before his elevation, his compassion had been excited for this country, by observing some interesting English boys exposed for sale in the slave market at Rome. When he obtained the papal dignity, he sent Austin, attended by forty monks, to convert the Anglo-Saxons to christianity. They were courteously received by Ethelbert, who, on account of the virtue of his queen, was favourably disposed to her religion. In a short time he embraced christianity, and numbers of his subjects followed his example.— So great was the number of converts, that Austin is said to have baptized ten thousand in one day in the river Swale, in Yorkshire.† The new christians submitted to the authority of Rome; the churches were rebuilt; and Austin was made, by his patron the pope, the first archbishop of Canterbury.†

Austin had not laboured long in England, before he formed the design of bringing under his authority the native British churches. These appear to have increased in their retreat into Wales; and were now considerable, both for numbers and piety. But, as they had received their doctrines and practices from the first preachers of christianity, they differed, in many respects, from those of the church of Rome, which, at the close of the sixth century, was greatly corrupted.

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\* Fox I. p. 128, &c.

† Ibid. 132.

Austin, therefore, by means of Ethelbert, procured a conference with the ministers of the British churches, at a place on the borders of Wales, since called Austin's Oak. In this assembly, he exhorted them to reform certain rites and usages in their church, after the manner of the church of Rome. The Britons refused to comply, and the meeting terminated without any agreement.\*

Some time after this, Austin had another conference, which was attended by seven bishops of Britain; and the wisest men of the famous abbey of Bangor. These monks of Bangor, as they are usually, though improperly, called, were the descendants of those persecuted christians who had fled from England to avoid the fury of the Picts and Saxons; and had settled in this part of Wales. Here they formed a society; and, like the primitive christians, had every thing in common. They laboured with their hands for their support: and their piety and happiness induced numbers to join them. At this time, they are said to have amounted to upwards of two thousand. The leaders of this society, in compliance with Austin's invitation, attended the conference; but, on entering the assembly, observed that Austin kept his seat, and made not the least advance to receive them. This haughty behaviour rendered them less disposed to listen to his demand of a general conformity and obedience to the pope. To this the abbot of Bangor, by name Dino, boldly replied, "That the ancient christians of this island were obedient and subject to the church of God, and to the pope of Rome, and to every godly christian, to love every

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\* Fox, ut supra.

one in his degree in perfect charity, and to help every one, by word and deed, to be the children of God: and other obedience than this he knew not to be due to him whom he called the pope." Austin, finding he could not hope for a general submission, thought proper to lower his demands; and required their compliance in three things:— To keep Easter, according to the Romish ritual:—to *give christendom to their children*;—and to preach the word of God to the English.\* These old baptists, however, with a steadiness and decision that did honour to their cause, refused, peremptorily, to yield at all to the papal archbishop. His indignation was roused; and he told them, that, "If they would not take peace with their brethren, they should receive war of their enemies: and that if they disdained to preach with them the way of life to the English nation, they should suffer, by their hands, the revenge of death." Perhaps it was well for these Bangor nonconformists that Ethelbert had learnt that "the faith and practice of christianity is to be voluntary, not co-acted;" otherwise they might have been compelled to conform.†

It was not long, however, before these predictions were fatally accomplished. Whether the disappointed prelate had any concern in procuring or hastening the dreadful event, is not, at this distance of time, perhaps, easy to determine. Probably he had not: though many learned men have strongly suspected the contrary.—Not long after this conference, Ethelfride, a pagan king of Northumberland, laid siege to Chester: and was opposed by Brockmaile, a prince friendly

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\* Fabian's Chronicle, p. 90, &c.

† Fox, ut supra.

to the Britons. During the engagement, the monks of Chester, who with others formed the famous society at Bangor, came out of their monastery, to pray for the success of their ally and champion. They continued three days in fasting and prayer; till, at length, their proceedings being observed by Ethelfride, he was informed of their object. When, therefore, he had conquered their protector, he ordered his troops to fall on the unarmed monks: observing, that though they had no weapons, they fought against him by their prayers. The pagan soldiers executed with pleasure the cruel orders of their general: and eleven, or as some assert, twelve hundred, of these pious christians were slain on the spot.—Indeed, so complete was the destruction, as all authors agree, that scarce fifty escaped.\* The college they inhabited was demolished, and their library, more precious than gold, consumed with fire. “And thereupon,” says an ancient writer, “that faith which had endured in Britain, for near four hundred years, became nearly extinct throughout the land.”† This appears to have been the last stand made in these islands, and perhaps in Europe, against the usurpations of the Man of sin: the whole nation, in a short time, sunk under his influence.

We are well aware, that the pædobaptists have endeavoured to insinuate, that the dispute between Austin and these ancient Britons regarded the *manner*, not the *subjects* of baptism. But they can produce no evidence that, at the commencement of the seventh century, there existed any difference between the church of Rome and the

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\* Fox, ut supra.

† Fabian.

Britons, in the mode of administering this ordinance:—both, as they candidly confess, baptized by immersion. And had the ordinance been clogged with many of the ceremonies added afterwards, Austin could hardly have baptized ten thousand in one day. The instances of Constantine the great, and others, prove that believers' baptism was practised in England when the opposite custom had obtained considerable footing on the continent. And it is evident, that the question of baptizing infants was agitated here, at that time: as one of the difficult cases, sent by Austin for the pope's solution, was, "How long a child may be left unbaptized, if there is no present danger of death?"—A proof that the practice was in an unsettled state: and that some were willing to defer it as long as possible.

It is urged, on the contrary, that in some copies of Fabian, Austin's second proposition is stated thus—"That ye give christendom to the children, *in the manner that is used in the church of Rome*"\* This must be granted; but it does not affect the question. The natural sense would still be, that they should, like the Romanists, make their children members of the church of Christ by baptism. Had the dispute respected only the mode of baptism, the expression would, most probably, have been, "That ye give christendom according to the manner used in the church of Rome."—It is also objected, that, Pelagius, a native of Britain, asserted, two hundred

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\* In the first edition of Fabian's Chronicle, the sentence has this additional clause, which is omitted in the two succeeding editions. Perhaps it was found to be wanting in the original copy, and was therefore dropt.

years before the massacre of the Bangor monks, that he never had heard of any one, not even the most impious heretic, who denied baptism to infants: from which it is very reasonably concluded, that his countrymen practised infant baptism. If such an assertion was made by Pelagius, it could only have been an unguarded expression, which escaped him in the heat of controversy: for he could not be ignorant, that many, before his time, had opposed infant baptism. It does not, however, appear, that Pelagius ever made this assertion. His words are, that "Men do slander him, as if he denied the sacrament of baptism to infants, and did promise the kingdom of God to any without the redemption of Christ:" and it is most probable that Pelagius meant to say, he had never heard the most impious heretic say, that the kingdom of God could be obtained without the redemption of Christ.\*

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SECT. 2.—*From Austin to the death of Wickliff; or from A.D. 600 to A.D. 1400.*

There is little information respecting the state of religion in England, during the dark ages of popery. Very few traces of the baptists can be discovered in this country, prior to the time of Wickliff. But as we have already shewn that they existed on the continent, in every age, there can be little doubt but their doctrines and prac-

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\* See Dr. Gill's Argument from Apost. Trad. considered, pp. 19—25. Wall's Hist. of Inf. Bap. Part I. Cap. xix. Sec. 30.

tice had some adherents in these islands. One or two facts render this more than probable.

In the year 1070, Lanfranc was made archbishop of Canterbury, by William the Conqueror. He wrote against Berengarius; and, in particular, defends infant baptism against the attacks of that reformer. He declares, that, by denying infant baptism, Berengarius opposes the general doctrine and universal consent of the church.\* This is a presumption that there were some in this country who opposed that practice: else why should an archbishop beat the air!—It is likely, that among the number of foreigners, who either accompanied or followed the Conqueror, there were some who had imbibed the tenets of that reformer: especially as we have the authority of a very ancient historian, who says that the Berengarian heresy corrupted all Italy, France, and England; and of another, that not only the meaner sort in the country, but the nobility and gentry in the chief towns, were infected with it † This sect appears to have gained considerable ground in the three following reigns.

In 1158, Henry II. summoned a council at Oxford, to examine the doctrines of certain heretics, called Publicani, who, it appears, were then spreading their errors through the nation. Being interrogated on certain articles of their faith, they are stated to have said perverse things concerning the divine sacraments, detesting holy baptism, &c.: that is, they asserted, as credible writers affirm, that infants are not to be baptized till they come to the age of understanding. They

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\* Danvers, p. 243. † Ibid. p. 276

were all burnt in the foreheads, and, being driven out of the realm, were afterwards slain by the pope. The names of their leaders were Gerhardus and Dulcinus.\*

The reigns of Richard I. and John were times of great civil disorder. Richard's long absence from his dominions, and John's frequent quarrels with the pope and his own subjects, afforded greater facilities for spreading the truth than could have been enjoyed, in those times of tyranny and persecution, had the government been firmly settled. John, for political reasons, espoused the cause of the Waldenses; who, at that time, were grievously oppressed in France. It was, therefore, to be expected, that many of that persuasion would settle in England. This was the case. In 1235, the pope sent the friars Minorites into England to suppress the Waldensian heresy:—which shews that it had then many adherents in this country.

The two succeeding kings appear to have connived at the heretics, as all that opposed popery were then called. About the year 1315, Walter Lollard, a famous Waldensian minister, came over into England; and was so successful in making proselytes, that all who differed from the church of Rome were called after his name: and Lollards, for many ages, became the common appellation of dissenters.

In the reign of Edward III. A. D. 1371, the great John Wickliff began to oppose the errors of popery. He translated the scriptures into the English language; and asserted that they were the only rule of faith and practice: declar-

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\* Fox, Vol. I. p. 282.

ing that wise men leave that as impertinent which is not plainly expressed in scripture: and that Christ's law sufficeth by itself to govern Christ's church. He taught, that baptism doth not confer, but only signifies grace given: and that unless persons are baptized in the blood of Christ, their baptism in water profits nothing to the salvation of their soul. He was accused by the papists of asserting, that none were members of the church visible who were not members of the church invisible: and that none had a right to church-membership who did not make a public profession of faith in Christ. One papist writer says, that Wickliff' positively asserted that infants were not to be sacramentally baptized:— and another mentions him among a number of others who bore witness against infant baptism. Whether this venerable harbinger of the Reformation actually followed up his own principles so far as to lay aside the baptizing of infants, and to declare it unscriptural, is not easy to determine. Those that, forty-one years after his death, took up his bones and burnt them, did not neglect to destroy his more formidable remains, his writings. These were condemned by a general council; every body was forbidden to read or conceal them, under great penalties; and, in 1410, a strict search being made for them in England and Bohemia, above two hundred volumes of his works were committed to the flames.\* It is therefore, by no means certain that we are acquainted with all his sentiments. In one of his earlier works, which escaped the fate of the rest, he seems to favour infant baptism; but, as he

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\* Fox, Vol. I. p. 749. Robinson's Eccl. Res. p. 482.

pursued his enquiries, he might see reason to change his opinion. This, however, is plain, that if he maintained the sentiments already stated, and continued to practise infant baptism, his principles and his practice were inconsistent. But this supposition is, by no means, consistent with the decision of character, and integrity of conduct, which distinguished that great and good man.\*

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*SECT. 3.—From Wickliff to the death of Queen Elizabeth : or, from A.D. 1400 to A.D. 1600.*

THE followers of Wickliff in England were called Lollards, and for nearly two centuries were exposed to great persecution. In 1400, William Sawtre, the first that was burnt for heresy in England, suffered death in London. There is some reason to suppose that he was a baptist.† In the year 1422, William Taylor, whom Fox calls a constant witness-bearer of Christ's doctrine, was burnt at Smithfield, for Lollardism ; This sect, notwithstanding, spread rapidly, especially in the counties of Norfolk and Suffolk. In 1428, a commission was granted to suppress Lollardism ; in virtue of which upwards of one hundred and twenty persons were apprehended, in less than four years. Fox has preserved their names ; and the heresies of which they were accused.‡ One of these is, " that infants are

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\* Crosby, Vol. I. pp. 1—16.

† Hook's Apology, pref.

‡ Fox's Acts and Monuments, Vol. I. p. 749—758. This author supposes that the tenets of these Lollards were misrepresented ;

sufficiently baptized if their parents be baptized before them: and that if they died without baptism they might be saved.”—A decisive proof that these Lollards opposed infant baptism. Nor was this opinion confined to a few individuals. The whole sect were, in a remarkable manner, agreed in sentiment. “Whatsoever one did hold,” says the Martyrologist, “all the other did maintain and hold the same.” From this concord in opinion, he supposes they all received their instruction from the same minister, William White; who, having been a scholar and companion of Wickliff, retired into Norfolk; and there preached the gospel. He was burnt, at Norwich, September 1424. About the same time, Father Abraham, of Colchester, and John Wadden a priest, suffered martyrdom in a similar manner. Many of those that were apprehended were condemned to perform public penance; others were privately scourged; and the rest suffered various smaller punishments.

The public penance, enjoined on these heretics by the bishop of Norwich, was, to walk, before a solemn procession, on six successive Sundays, round the parish church, in their shirts and drawers, with their heads, necks, feet and legs uncovered, each carrying a lighted taper, weighing one pound, in his hand; and humbly and devoutly to receive from the hands of the priests, during each circuit, a disciplining, that is, a flogging: also on three market days to walk, in a similar manner, round the market-place: in each circuit to make

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but cotemporary writers confirm the fact, that the immediate followers of Wickliff held that the infants of believers are not to be sacramentally baptized. Crosby, Vol. I. pp. 23, 24.

four pauses; and, at each pause, to receive, with similar humility and devotion, from the same holy hands, a like correction: and, to crown the whole, when they had finished the last procession, to offer their tapers, in the midst of high mass, to the high altar in the parish church. This was the common penance prescribed to heretics; except that they frequently carried a faggot instead of a taper.\*

It appears from a manuscript register of Gray, bishop of Ely, that, in the year 1457, there was a congregation of baptists at Chesterton, near Cambridge, who assembled privately for divine worship, and had teachers of their own. Six of them were accused of heresy before the bishop; and condemned to abjure and do penance, half naked, with a faggot in their hands, in the public market places of Ely and Cambridge, and in the church-yard of Great Swaffham. Mr. Robinson has published a few extracts from the manuscript, which contain part of the articles of their accusation. In these they are charged with saying, “that the pope is antichrist—that the priests are his disciples, and that all persons in holy orders are devils incarnate;—that extreme unction is useless—and that children neither have need of baptism, nor ought they to be baptized †

Though these people were thus cruelly persecuted, and the full power of the civil and ecclesiastical authority was exerted against them, they continued to increase. Laws were passed against them, and they were specially

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\* See the bishop's Letter, Fox, Vol. I. p. 753, col. 2.

† Robinson's Pref. to Claude's Essay:

excepted in acts of grace : numbers abjured, and several were burnt, in almost every reign, till Henry VIII. Under him they were very numerous ; and appear to have been the peculiar object, both of that arbitrary monarch's vengeance, and of the jealousy of the friends of the Reformation. Some were burnt, as Lollards, and twenty-two were executed, as anabaptists, in 1535.\* In the reign of Edward VI. two anabaptists were committed to the flames. The tender-hearted young prince was very averse to the measure ; and when, at the earnest solicitations of archbishop Cranmer, he reluctantly signed the warrant for the execution of Joan of Kent, one of these sufferers, tears stood in his eyes : and he told the prelate, that if he did wrong, since it was in submission to his authority, he should answer for it to God.†

There can be no doubt but many baptists suffered severe persecution under the bloody queen Mary. As all inferior distinctions, however, were then lost in the greater ones of papist and protestant ; and, as the examinations and accusations generally respected doctrines, equally opposed by every sect of protestants, history does not furnish us with the means of distinguishing the adherents of one persuasion from another. That there were baptists among the sufferers, is evident, from a letter, written by that eminent martyr, John Philpot, to a brother prisoner, who, during their confinement, had

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\* Ivimey's Hist. of Eng. Bap. p. 83.

† Crosby, from Bishop Burnet, Vol. I. pp. 47—50. Tradition says that Joan of Kent was a General Baptist ; and member of a General Baptist church which, at this early period, existed at Canterbury.—Ivimey's Hist. Bap. p. 138.

applied to him for the solution of some difficulties respecting infant baptism. Mr. Philpot had a remarkable dream, on the night after he received these queries, which greatly encouraged him in answering the arguments urged by his correspondent against this practice. The letter is curious, and may be seen at large in Fox. He does not acquaint us with the success of Mr. Philpot's arguments, nor the name of his correspondent.\*

In the sixteenth year of the reign of her protestant successor, Elizabeth, a congregation of Dutch baptists was discovered in London: of which, twenty-seven were taken and imprisoned. The next month, one man, and ten women, were condemned. Of these, one recanted, eight were banished out of the land, and two were condemned to be burnt. Mr. John Fox, who has raised a monument to so many martyrs, here interfered; and wrote a most importunate and pathetic letter to the queen, to dissuade her from imitating the papists, in thus "roasting alive the bodies of poor wretches, that offend rather through blindness of judgment than perverseness of will, in fire and flame, raging with pitch and brimstone." But though Elizabeth used to call this venerable divine, her Father Fox, she gave him a positive denial: and the two baptists were burnt in Smithfield, July 22nd, 1575.†

But this severity did not crush the sect. It continued to increase; and, towards the close of her reign, Elizabeth issued a proclamation, by

\* Fox's Acts and Monuments, Vol. III. pp. 509—512.

† Crosby, Vol. I. pp. 69—74.

which all anabaptists, and other heretics, were ordered to leave the kingdom, on pain of imprisonment and loss of goods. In consequence of this strong measure, many dissenters withdrew into Holland; and among them not a few baptists, both English and Dutch.\* In that country, they had liberty to profess their opinions without restraint: and we shall have occasion to observe, in the next book, the use which they made of this privilege.

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SECT. 4.—*The Progress of the Doctrine of Predestination, and of the Practice of Sprinkling.*

HOW many of these worthy men, who, during the long night of popery, from age to age thus opposed infant baptism, were *general* baptists, is not easy to determine. The disputes about personal election and reprobation, concerning which principally the general baptists differ from their other baptist brethren, appear not to have been known, during many of the first centuries. Augustin was, perhaps, the first who, in the heat of his controversy with Pelagius, introduced the idea of some absolute decree of the Almighty, which fore-ordained all events, and determined the everlasting conditions of men. The schoolmen puzzled themselves about these decrees, but could by no means agree. Luther, who was an Augustin monk, followed the opinion of the founder of his order, in which he was opposed by many great men. At last, Calvin undertook to new-model the doctrine, and made

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\* Crosby, Vol. I. p. 79.

several additions to the tenets of his predecessors.\* But these disputes appear, before the Reformation, to have been confined, in a great measure, to the schools; and seldom engaged the attention of the people. Indeed, by making salvation to depend on baptism, which might or might not be administered according to the decision of man, the catholics set aside all idea of a particular predestinating decree; and the noble advocates for truth, to whom we have alluded, by adhering to the scripture declaration that "whosoever believeth shall be saved," certainly had no necessity of adverting to it. Had, therefore, these good men asserted, ever so clearly, the universal extent of our Saviour's atonement, it would neither have excited the attention of their cotemporaries, nor roused the indignation of their adversaries, like their opposition to infant baptism. It would have been considered a mere speculative question, have been understood by few in those days of darkness, and excited little interest. As to the question respecting infant baptism, the case was totally different.—It regarded daily practice, and every parent and guardian was necessarily called upon to determine the point for himself. All, therefore, became interested in it: and, as it was then generally believed, that whosoever died unbaptized must inevitably be eternally miserable; when any ventured to assert, that infants had no title to that ordinance, the tenderest feelings of humanity were engaged against him: and he was regarded as a murderer of the souls of babes and sucklings, by depriving them of the

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\* Brandt's Hist. of Reform, in the Low Countries, Book xviii. and Dr. Whitby on the Five Points.

visible seal of salvation. Thus he became the peculiar object of popular odium : and the term *anabaptist* was supposed to include every thing inhuman, impious, and immoral.

WE shall close this chapter with a brief view of the progress of the change from immersion to sprinkling.

It is generally allowed, that the usual mode of baptism, amongst the primitive christians, was by immersion ; nor do we read of any instance of a different practice till A.D. 251, when Novatian was elected, by a faction, bishop of Rome. He had been baptized, when dangerously ill, by having water poured over him in his bed. This was evidently a new case. Many of his cotemporaries expressing great doubt of the validity of his baptism, much investigation ensued : and, eighty years afterwards, it was decreed, that persons, baptized in this manner, were ineligible to the ministry.

Pouring was occasionally practised, in France, before the close of the fifth century ; and became gradually more frequent, till A.D. 1260 ; when it was esteemed a more common, proper, and safe mode than immersion. But, so late as 1585, the water was not poured from the hand ; but from a ladle kept in the font for that purpose. From France, the custom of pouring spread, though very slowly, into Italy, Germany, and Spain ; and at last reached England.

In Italy, though affusion, or pouring, was permitted in extreme cases, immersion was the ordinary and approved method, till A.D. 1260 : and it was not till some years afterwards, that it was usually laid aside, even by the catholics.

In Germany, the council of Cologne, in 1536,

directed that the infant should be thrice either dipped or wetted with the water: but, in 1557, the church of Mentz ordered the priest to take water in his hand, three several times, out of the font; and pour it on the child's head, so that the water may wet its head and shoulders.

England was very tenacious of the ancient mode. Though the coldness of our climate has furnished modern pædobaptists with so many arguments against dipping, their hardy predecessors shewed extreme reluctance to lay it aside. It was not till A.D. 816, that the first attempts were made to alter the mode. A council was immediately called, which published this decree: "Let the priests know, that, when they administer holy baptism, they must not pour water on the head of the infant; but it must *always be dipt* in the font." Erasmus, in the reign of Henry VIII. Frith, in 1533, and Watson, the popish bishop of Lincoln, under queen Mary, unite in representing dipping as the usual mode of baptism in England, in their respective ages. In the common prayer-book, printed 1549, the child is directed to be dipped three times in the water. Here occurs, indeed, the caution—"If the child be weak, it shall suffice to pour water upon it." This opened the door for innovation. The children of the rich, and, by degrees, the children of the lower orders, were excused from being dipped, under the pretence of weakness. Calvin, Beza, Whitaker, and other eminent men among the reformers, about this time, declared their opinion, that it was indifferent whether baptism was administered by immersion or pouring. These causes operated so much, that, towards the close of the reign of queen Elizabeth, immersion was nearly laid aside. The presby-

terian Directory appeared, in 1644, declaring it not only lawful, but most expedient, to use pouring or sprinkling. This was going farther than the church of England has ventured. She still orders the child to be dipt, unless it be certified that it is weak.

But these changes in the mode of baptism took place only in the western parts of Europe. The Greek church, in all its branches, has always practised immersion, and continues this practice to the present day. So late as 1745, the Russians, who are a part of the Greek church, would not admit sprinkling to be valid baptism. In that year, when Sophia Augusta, who had been sprinkled by protestants in her infancy, was espoused to the Czar Peter III. she was baptized, by immersion, according to the rites of the Greek church. And it appears evident, if we survey the whole christian world, that no country, except such as are, or have been, under the authority of the pope, has adopted sprinkling as baptism.\*

It is, perhaps, worthy of remark, that the corruption of the ordinance of baptism, both as it regards the subject and the mode, has been gradual. The primitive christians baptized only such as made a credible profession of faith in Christ, and obedience to him. In a short time, youths, who had gone through a regular course of religious instruction, were thought proper subjects. Then young children, who could repeat a few formularies learnt by rote, were admitted to baptism. At last, it was administered to infants of only a few days old,—Thus, also, the

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\* Wall's Hist. of Inf. Bap. Part II. pp. 290—306.

original manner of baptizing was, as is confessed by all competent judges, by plunging the subject into the water : and, long after the subject was changed, infants were actually dipt in the font. Pouring water on the infant from the hand or from a ladle, in a quantity sufficient to wet the upper parts of the body, was, by slow degrees, substituted for immersion. At length, sprinkling a few drops, from the tips of the fingers, on the face of the infant, was called baptism.

Surely, when a sacred rite is so deeply sunk, those who endeavour to restore it to its original standard, deserve well of every friend of the divine Institutor. Many eminent pædobaptists, especially among the clergy of the established church, have frequently expressed their strong desire that the practice of immersion might be restored. Among these, Mr. Wall, that laborious advocate for infant baptism, ranks himself.\* Every baptist would certainly rejoice to see so material a part of the dispute fairly conceded ; but whether that author's conjecture, that more join the baptists because they were sprinkled, than because it was done in infancy, be well founded, may be doubted. It is, however, to be feared, from the temper of the present age, that we shall not soon have an opportunity to make the experiment.

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\* Hist. of Inf. Bap. Part II. p. 308.

## BOOK II.

THE HISTORY OF THE ENGLISH GENERAL BAPTISTS,  
FROM THE REFORMATION TO THE COMMENCE-  
MENT OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.

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### CHAP. I.

*THE RISE OF THE GENERAL BAPTISTS, AND  
THEIR PROGRESS, TO THE RESTORATION.*

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SECT. 1.—*The Formation of the English Baptist  
Church in Holland.*

**I**T has been stated, that queen Elizabeth, towards the close of her reign, ordered all Nonconformists to leave the kingdom. Upon this occasion, numbers of good men went over to Amsterdam, in Holland; and formed themselves into a separate church, under the care of Mr. Johnson as pastor, and Mr. Ainsworth as teacher. Here they flourished some time in peace, and were joined by many of their countrymen, who left England to preserve a good conscience.

Among others, John Smyth\* went over to Holland, in the beginning of the reign of James I.

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\* Mr. Brook, who has dignified this minister, we know not on what authority, with the title of M. A. seems to confound him with a Mr. Smith, who was severely persecuted, in 1592, for nonconformity. But as this John Smith was the oldest of thirty-one persons who were apprehended, on the same charge, in 1567, it is hardly probable, that, forty years afterwards, he should have taken so active a part in the emigration to Holland. *Brook's Lives of the Puritans*, Vol. III. p. 195.—*Neal's Hist. of Puritans*, Vol. I. pp. 162, 366.

He appears to have enjoyed a liberal education. In the former part of his life he was a clergyman of the established church, and beneficed at Gainsborough, in Lincolnshire. In that station, he gained the esteem of his brethren of the establishment, and engaged in defence of the church against separatists. Bishop Hall informs us, that he published a piece, on the Lord's prayer, in which he confuted some of the positions of the sect which he afterwards joined.\* The non-conformists, or separatists, as they were then called, were numerous in his neighbourhood: and Mr. Smyth was no unconcerned observer of their conduct. By degrees, he began to disapprove of several things in the discipline and ceremonies of the church, which led him to seek for satisfaction. He spent nine months in examining the points in debate; and held frequent conferences with several eminent divines on the subject of conformity. His investigation issued in a confirmation of his former doubts; and, in compliance with the dictates of his conscience, he resigned his station, his emoluments, and his prospects in the establishment, and joined those persecuted people, whom he had formerly opposed. The importance of such a convert was duly appreciated by his new associates: and he was soon called to be pastor of a church in his native country. But, being grievously harassed by the High Commission Court, and seeing no prospect of redress from the new monarch, Mr. Smyth and his church, and Messrs. Robinson and Clifton, who were co-pastors of a neighbouring church, with their congregation, determined to

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\* Bishop Hall's Works, Vol. IX. p. 458, Note.

leave the kingdom, and seek liberty of conscience in a foreign country. They arrived in Holland, in 1606, and all joined Mr. Ainsworth's society; which received such an addition with peculiar satisfaction.\*

In this emigration, Mr. Smyth appears to have been the chief actor, and the leading man. How highly he was esteemed by his friends of the separation is evident, from the professions of Mr. Clifton, who wrote against him on the subject of baptism: "With great sorrow," says he, "I am forced to undertake this business against him that was dear to me; against him to whose charge both I and divers others had once purposed to have committed our souls."† Bishop Hall calls him, Mr. Robinson's leader, guide, general, and oracle: and apologizing for having addressed a former letter to Mr. Smyth and Mr. Robinson, he says, "Perhaps I should have indorsed it to Mr. Smyth, and his shadow: for such I perceive he was."‡ When we consider that Mr. Robinson was a divine of considerable note in those days, and the father of the independents, it is evident that Mr. Smyth stood high in the estimation of this good prelate; and confirms the assertion of another writer, that he was accounted one of the grandes of the separation.||

Mr. Smyth, being now at leisure to consult the scriptures, and in a country where he might pursue his inquiries, and divulge the result, without danger, proceeded with redoubled zeal

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\* Crosby, Vol. I. pp. 91, &c. 265, &c.—Brook's Lives, Vol. III. p. 195, &c.

† Smyth's Character of the Beast, p. 2.

‡ Bp. Hall's Works, Vol. IX. pp. 394, 401, 459, 466.

|| Pagitt's Heresiography, p. 75.

in the search of truth. He soon found reason to disapprove of the practice of his associates, in various points relating to the worship and discipline of a church of Christ: and avowed his disbelief of the doctrine of personal election and reprobation. Considerable disputes ensued among the leaders of the separation: and they were quickly increased by a difference of a more interesting nature.

In reviewing the subject of separation, Mr. Smyth discovered, that he and his friends acted inconsistently in rejecting the ordination received from the church of England, because they esteemed her a false church; and yet retaining her baptism as true baptism. This led him to examine the nature and ground of baptism: and he perceived, that neither infant baptism, nor sprinkling, had any foundation in scripture. With his usual frankness, he was no sooner convinced of this important truth, than he openly professed and defended his sentiments. He urged the inconsistency of their practice on his former associates so clearly, that the bishop before mentioned tells Mr. Robinson, "There is no remedy: you must go forward to anabaptism, or come back to us: all your Rabbins cannot answer the charge of your rebaptized brother, (Mr. Smyth.) If we be a true church, you must return: if we be not, (as a false church is no church of God) you must rebaptize. If our baptism be good, then is our constitution good." "He tells you true:—your station is unsafe: either you must forward to him, or back to us."\*

This alarmed those with whom Mr. Smyth

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\* Hall's Works, Vol. IX. pp. 400, 384.

held communion, and they cast him out of the church. Perhaps good order required this: as it is certainly very desirable, that those who are united in such a society should, as much as possible, agree in sentiments respecting points of importance. But these good men, though they had been driven from their native country by persecution, entertained very contracted notions of religious liberty. They persecuted Mr. Smyth, with the most virulent rancour. The laws of the country, in which they had found an asylum, did, indeed, restrain their resentment to words; but they loaded him, and his opinions, with every kind of reproach; and endeavoured to render both his person and doctrine the object of general abhorrence. They charged him with many enthusiastic opinions, which they have not been able to prove that he held. They reviled him, as a man of a wolfish nature, whom God had struck with blindness; a brute beast, &c. But these ravings, in the estimation of sensible observers, reflected more disgrace on themselves than on their adversary.\*

Mr. Smyth was a man not to be frightened with words. He appears to have possessed superior natural parts, accompanied with a resolution and spirit that despised opposition. He wrote several treatises in defence of his opinions, and boldly preached what he thought to be the doctrines of inspiration. In a short time, several were converted to his sentiments: and their numbers increasing rapidly, he formed them into a distinct church, chiefly, if not wholly, composed of exiles from his own country. This

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\* Crosby, ut supra.

appears to have been the first baptist church composed of Englishmen, after the Reformation. It was formed about 1607 or 1608: above twenty years prior to 1633, when the church under the care of Mr. Spilsbury, which Mr. Crosby reckons the first baptist church, was organized.\*

It seems, that Mr. Smyth and his friends were put to some difficulty, in reviving the practice of immersion. He, and all his disciples, had been sprinkled in their infancy; and therefore, according to their new views, were unbaptized. There were, indeed, many churches in Holland, who practised immersion; but, as they differed widely in sentiment from him, he did not choose to receive baptism from them. This completely refutes Dr. Mosheim's supposition, that the English baptists derived their origin from the German and Dutch Mennonites: and that, in former times, they adopted their doctrine in all its points.† On the contrary, we see that the first English baptists, of which we have any regular account after the reformation, although living in the midst of the Dutch Mennonites, declined receiving baptism from them, on account of their difference of opinion in many important points. "The foreign anabaptists," says Crosby, were such as denied Christ's having taken flesh of the Virgin Mary, the lawfulness of magistracy, and such like, which Mr. Smyth and his followers looked upon as great errors, so that they could not be thought by him proper administrators of baptism."‡ This obliged Mr. Smyth to consider of some other means of reviving the

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\* Crosby, Vol. I. pp. 94, 268, 147.

† Eccl. Hist. Vol. IV. p. 478.    ‡ Vol. I. p. 267.

ordinance. What method he took is not very clearly stated. It is most probable, that those who were convinced of the duty of believers' baptism, first formed themselves into a church, and then appointed two of their number, (perhaps Mr. Smyth and Mr. Helwisse) to baptize each other, and afterwards to baptize the rest.\*

This subject caused considerable uneasiness and reproach to the first baptists, after the Reformation, both general and particular. A similar difficulty occurred at the formation of the original baptist church in America, by Mr. Roger Williams, who had recourse to the same expedient†: and we shall find, in the sequel of this history, that the good men in Leicestershire, in the middle of the last century, when placed in similar circumstances, adopted the same method.

Mr. Smyth appears to have laboured with diligence and success. His followers increased so rapidly as to alarm the pædobaptists. They exerted themselves strenuously in defence of infant baptism; asserting, as the occasion of their conduct, the great success of the contrary opinion, both in England and Holland.‡ An early writer affirms, that "Mr. Smyth and his party do at once as it were swallow up all the separation besides."§ The sentiments professed by these original General Baptists approached very near to the principles on which our new Connection was formed. They maintained the divinity and atonement of our Saviour; but

\* Crosby, Vol I. p. 95, &c.

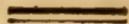
† Ivimey's Hist. of Eng. Bap. p. 562.

‡ Johnson's Christian Plea, Published 1617, p. 23.

§ Pagit's Heresiography, p. 77.

rejected the doctrine of personal and unconditional election and reprobation.

The time of Mr. Smyth's death is not recorded. It is most probable that he died in Holland in 1610.



SECT. 2.—*An Inquiry into the Sentiments and Character of JOHN SMYTH, the Father of the English General Baptists.*

As this minister has been declared the Founder of the English General Baptists, in several late publications, it may be necessary to ascertain, as far as we can, his real sentiments and character. His cotemporaries, and successors, have accused him of holding various opinions, which, if true, would diminish our respect for him: and these accusations have been generally repeated by succeeding authors, without hesitation. But we are happy in being able to give his own explicit contradiction to their reports. In a book\*, pub-

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\* Some time after Mr. Smyth had declared in favour of believers' baptism, Mr. R. Clifton, one of his former associates with whom he had been intimately connected, requested him, by means of Mrs. Byswater, a common friend, to state the grounds of his opinions respecting baptism. With this request Mr. S. thought proper to comply; lest his declining it should be construed into a distrust of his cause. He sent to Mr. C. two propositions: "1. That infants are not to be baptized:—and 2. That antichristians converted are to be received into the church by baptism." To establish each of these, he subjoined three brief reasons. Soon after the receipt of these propositions, Mr. C. published a refutation of them, under the title of "An Answer to Two Anabaptistical Opinions." To this refutation Mr. S. replied, in a quarto pamphlet of seventy three close pages, printed in 1609. This he called "*The CHARACTER of the BEAST: or, the false constitution of the church dis-*

lished within a year of his death, he takes occasion to notice them: and does it in a manner that bespeaks sincerity and decision.

“Furthermore,” says he, “we desire the separation, and all men, that they would not impute to us untruths; and condemn the innocent without cause. We are indeed traduced to the world as atheists, by denying the Old Testament and the Lord’s day:—as traitors to magistrates, in denying magistracy:—and as heretics, in denying the humanity of Christ.”

“Be it known, therefore, to all men, that we deny not the scriptures of the Old Testament; but, with the apostle, acknowledge them to be inspired of God; and that we have a sure word of the prophets, whereunto we ought to attend, as unto a light shining in a dark place: and that whatsoever is written aforetime is written for our instruction, that we, through patience and comfort of the scriptures, might have hope. And that we ought, as Christ counselleth, to search

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covered; in certain passages betwixt Mr. R. Clifton and John Smyth; concerning true christan baptism of new creatures, or new born babes in Christ, and false baptism of infants born after the flesh: referred in two propositions. Rev. xiii. 16.—xiv. 9. 10.—xxi. 5.” This work is managed in the syllogistical method: and as Mr. S. repeats the arguments of his opponent previously to his replying to each, it contains the reasonings of both parties. Though this was probably the first publication on the subject, among Englishmen, after the Reformation, there have been few arguments brought forwards. by the numberless writers who have since engaged in the controversy, which are not noticed in this pamphlet. It is written with considerable ability, and the dispute is conducted with great address. The only copy, of which we have heard, is in the possession of a London Minister: through whose friendship we have been favoured with the perusal. We should be glad to see it republished, with necessary elucidations.

the scriptures of the Old Testament, as the men of Berea did, because that in them we may find everlasting life; and that they do testify of Christ. Yet nevertheless we affirm, that all the ordinances of the Old Testament, that is, the church, ministry, worship, and government of the Old Testament are abolished: all which were types and shadows of good things to come: but the body is in Christ,

“ Secondly. We acknowledge that, according to the precedent of Christ’s disciples and the primitive church, the saints ought, upon the first day of the week, which is called the Lord’s day, Rev. i. 10, to assemble together, to pray, prophesy, praise God, and break bread; and perform other parts of spiritual communion, for the worship of God, their own mutual edification, and the preservation of true religion and piety in the church. And, that we may be better enabled to the aforesaid duties, we ought to separate ourselves from the labours of our callings, which might hinder us thereto.

“ Thirdly. Concerning magistrates, we acknowledge them to be the ordinances of the Lord; and that every soul ought to be subject to them; that they are the ministers of God for our wealth; that we ought to be subject to them for conscience’ sake; that they are the ministers of God to take vengeance on them that do evil; that we ought to pray for them that are in authority; that we ought not to speak evil of them that are in dignity, not to despise government; but to pay tribute, toll, customs, &c.

“ Finally. Concerning the flesh of Christ, we do believe that Christ is the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and of David, according to the prophecies of the scriptures; and that he is the

son of Mary his mother, made of her substance; the Holy Ghost overshadowing her, (so have other children their bodily substance from their parents.) Also that Christ is two distinct natures; the Godhead and manhood: and we detest the contrary errors.”\*

Though such an explicit and satisfactory explanation requires no comment, it may, perhaps, be useful to remark, that the good men, with whom Mr. Smyth first associated, sought for a supposed analogy between the order and worship of the temple and the synagogue, and the constitution, officers, and discipline of a congregation of christians. By following these analogies too far, they introduced too much of the Jewish hierarchy into their societies; and in a great degree obscured the beautiful simplicity of a New Testament church:—a society of equals, voluntarily associated, to promote the glory of the great Head of the church, by attending to his ordinances and worship, and to advance the good of mankind, by supporting and extending his kingdom among men. Mr. Smyth opposed the introduction of these Mosaic precedents into the religion of Jesus; and contended that the New Testament was the only source, to which we ought to apply for instruction and direction respecting the nature and order of a church of Christ. Hence his opponents, very unjustly, took occasion to reproach him with denying the Old Testament.†

He was a steady friend to religious liberty, and an enemy to all spiritual usurpation; whether

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\* Character of the Beast, pref.

† See Johnson's Christian Plea, *passim*

disguised in the garb of prelacy or presbytery. In exposing it, he sometimes, in compliance with the custom of the age, indulged in a satirical vein, which the politeness of modern polemics might perhaps condemn. He told the separatists who affected presbytery, that "their constitution was as very a harlot, as either her mother England, or her grandmother Rome: and that the separation was the youngest and fairest daughter of Rome the harlot." "When the popish prelacy," said he, "was suppressed, and the triformed presbytery of pastors, teachers and elders substituted, one antichrist was put down, and another set up in his place: or the beast was suppressed, and his image advanced. And, therefore, as they that submit to the prelacy are subject to that woe of worshipping the beast; so they that submit to the triformed presbytery are, in like manner, liable to that woe denounced against men that worship the image of the beast."\*

After hearing Mr. Smyth's vindication of himself in these essential points, there will be less necessity to spend time in confuting the reports respecting his opinions on less important subjects. We may, however, notice a few. He is charged with asserting that the translations of the scriptures were read with as little grounds in the church as in any homily or prayer of human composition.† But when we consider what he says in the passages just quoted, and join to it the twenty-third article of the Confession of

\* Friendly Debate, printed 1669, p. 173, from Smyth's Differences of the Churches of the Separation.

† Life of Ainsworth, prefixed to his Two Treatises, p. xxviii.

Faith, of which we shall soon have occasion to speak, we may safely conclude, that, whatever he might say respecting the translation of any part of the scripture, he by no means meant to depreciate the oracles of truth. He is also charged with disapproving of singing set words or verses, and of escaping persecution by flight.\* Of the first of these, we have yet seen no proof: and the writer who records it, seems almost disposed to withdraw it. The second appears to have been adopted by his followers after his death, as we shall soon see; and not to have been his sentiment.

Another tenet which he is said to have defended is, that the new creature needeth not the scripture, or ordinances, but is above them.† But this is directly denied in the passages already quoted from his last work: and therefore it is certainly the part of equity to suppose that, on this article, he is falsely accused.

This writer also asserts, that Mr. Smyth held that perfection is attainable in the present life. We have not seen any thing in Mr. Smyth's own works on the subject: but it is directly contrary to a tenet ascribed to him by Mr. Robinson, who says that he and his followers maintained that "there is a root of sin yet abiding in us which we cannot pluck up out of our hearts."‡

To these heresies in doctrine, the same author adds, that the bitter intemperate zeal Mr. Smyth shewed, in maintaining his errors, and in abusing his brethren, must have had no small influence in blinding their minds respecting that part of the

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\* Ibid. † Ibid.

‡ Crosby, Vol. I. Appendix, p. 70.

truth which he appears to have maintained.\*— But this was the fault of the times: and whoever reads this author's treatment of a minister and his followers, who, as he is obliged to confess, were in many respects able advocates for the truth, and of excellent characters, and observes how insidiously he applies to them that awful denunciation of the apostle, "Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived," will perhaps be ready to conclude that abuse and bitter zeal are not, at present, wholly banished from the disputes of theologians.†

Another charge brought against Mr. Smyth is inconstancy and instability in his religious sentiments. Mr. Neal acknowledges that he was a learned man, of good abilities; and ranks him among the leaders of the separatists. But besides his declaring for the principles of the baptists, embracing the tenets of Arminius, and plunging himself, he stigmatizes him with being of an unsettled head. This, he says, appears from the preface of one of Mr. Smyth's books, in which he desires that his last writings may always be taken for his present judgment.‡ When we consider the deplorable ignorance of the times in which Mr. Smyth began his enquiries, and the gradual developement of truth in his researches, we may easily conceive a propriety in such a declaration as this, when writing against captious opponents; without supposing any improper disposition to instability. A proud idea

\* Life of Ainsworth, p. xlii.

† Ibid p. xxviii. Note.

‡ Hist. of Puritans, Vol. I. p. 437.

that our present knowledge is perfect, and an obstinate refusal to change our sentiments, or admit any new illumination, are not, in any circumstances, the marks of wisdom: much less in the times in which these good men were called to act, when the light of scripture truth was only beginning to dawn, and the thick clouds of popish ignorance still darkened the horizon. A tenacious adherence to tenets once embraced greatly retarded the Reformation; and, in too many instances, totally interrupted its progress. So deeply did this consideration impress the minds of the puritans, that, at the formation of the first independent church, in 1616, "they solemnly covenanted with each other, in the presence of Almighty God, to walk together in all God's ways and ordinances, according as he had already revealed, or should further make them known to them."\* It will, however, it is presumed, be interesting, to hear Mr. Smyth's own defence of himself, against this charge of instability, which, it seems, was urged against him by his cotemporaries. "It may be thought," he says, "most strange, that a man should oft-times change his religion; and it cannot be accounted a commendable quality in any man to make many alterations and changes in such weighty matters as are cases of conscience. This must needs be true; and we confess it, if one condition be admitted—that the religion which a man changeth be the truth. For otherwise, to change a false religion is commendable, and to retain a false religion is damnable. For a man of a Turk to become a Jew, of a Jew to become a Papist, of

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\* Neal's History of the Puritans, Vol. I. p. 476.

a Papist to become a Protestant, are all commendable changes, though they all of them befall one and the same person, in one year, nay, if it were possible, in one month. So that to change religion is not evil simply : and, therefore, that we should fall from the profession of puritanism to Brownism, and from Brownism to true christian baptism, is not simply evil or reprobable in itself, except it can be proved we have fallen from the true religion. If we, therefore, being formerly deceived in the way of pædobaptistry, do now embrace the faith in the true christian and apostolic baptism ; then let no man impute this as a fault unto us \*”

Whatever variation had previously taken place in Mr. Smyth's sentiments, he appears to have been well settled in his final views of the points in debate. At the close of the work from which the foregoing extracts are made, he says, “ Thus through God's providence and blessing, I have come to an happy end of answering your writing ; wherein I praise the Lord for his mercy. I have received such assurance of the truth as that you and all the earth shall never be able to wring it out of my heart and hands. I doubt not but I may err in particulars, and I have resolved to be vile before men in confessing my errors ; but for the main points in controversy, and the cause I defend, it is the most undoubted and most evident truth that ever was revealed unto me.”†

When Mr. Smyth changed his views respecting predestination and baptism, it drew upon him a host of antagonists. Messrs. Ainsworth, Jessop,

\* Character of the Beast, pref.

† Ibid. p. 71.

Clifton, and Robinson, all took up the pen against him. But, though these were great men, and his former associates, he was in no ways intimidated either with their number or abilities. "For the separation," he writes, "who are the stiffest and most obstinate adversaries of this truth of the Lord, I could wish, as the tyrant wished concerning the people of Rome, that all their heads were joined into one, and all their strength comprised into one writing, that, with the sword of the spirit, it might be smitten off at once; that so we might have an end of this controversy: and that we might not be troubled and charged with the writing and printing of many books. However that be, we profess our readiness to employ our time and cost for the maintenance of the truth."\* His great fear seems to have been, that his opponents would withdraw from the field, and decline the controversy; as appears to have been the case in a former debate. To prevent this he intreats, expostulates, and even challenges.

"As ye love the Lord, and his truth, and the people that depend on you, seek it out and embrace it, and resist it not. If we be in error, shew it unto us. Why? Shall we perish through your default? Will not the Lord require our blood at your hands? Are we not your countrymen? All of us in exile for the common truths we hold against antichrist?—Answer, we beseech you, in the Lord. If we be in error, it is ignorantly, and of a desire to see the truth, and to fear the Lord. Thus, hoping speedily either to hear an answer to this writing, or to see you yield to the truth,

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\* Character of the Beast. Preface.

which I unfeignedly ask of the Lord for you, my countrymen, I send this writing the 24th day of March, 1608, N.S. 1609. J. SMYTH.\*

But the charge that has been most frequently and most confidently brought against this good man, is, to adopt the words of a late author, "his strange and unscriptural conduct in baptizing himself, without call or example, from which he has been styled a Se-baptist."† It may, therefore, be necessary to examine a little what evidence there is of the truth of this fact.

It must be granted, that most of the authors who have written of these times, since the middle of the seventeenth century, have confidently asserted this as a fact; but it is not easy to trace it clearly to an earlier date.‡ On the other hand, Bishop Hall, who wrote at the time, and appears to have had an intimate acquaintance with the persons and circumstances, would have seized with avidity a fact like this; yet he never alludes to it:—a strong presumption that no such report was then in circulation. F. Johnson, in his *Christian Plea*, and H. Ainsworth, in his *Reply* to it, though they frequently mention Mr. Smyth and his sentiments, make no allusion to this circumstance. When we reflect that they were, at first, Mr. Smyth's associates, and afterwards his avowed opponents, it is probable they either had never heard the report, or knew it to be false.

\* *Ibid.*

† *Life of Ainsworth*, p. xlii.

‡ Mr. Crosby seems to assert that Mr. Ainsworth and Mr. Jessop, Mr. Smyth's cotemporaries, charge him with baptizing himself, Vol. I. pp. 92 and 98; but it is evident, that he states this on the authority of Thomas Wall, in 1669: and had not himself seen the works of the authors in which the charge is contained.

This is rendered still more probable, by consulting Mr. Smyth's Character of the Beast. There was the fairest occasion, in that work, to mention such a circumstance; and yet it does not appear to be alluded to by either party. Mr. Clifton argues from the everlasting covenant made with Abraham and his seed, that the anabaptists, in rejecting the baptism of Christ, and devising a new baptism, do bring in a new covenant, and a new gospel; taking upon them to baptize themselves, without warrant from the word. "For I am sure," says he, "that it cannot be shewed from the word, that any one did ever baptize himself, without special commandment from God; as Abraham for circumcision, John for baptism, &c." Now it is evident, from these examples, that he did not mean to object to the anabaptists, that each of them baptized himself; but that they introduced a new ordinance, and baptized one another, on their own authority, without any proper warrant from God. For Abraham did not perform the operation of circumcision on himself; and John was then constantly quoted as an instance of an unbaptized administrator. In this sense Mr. Smyth understood him; and, after referring to the proselytes, mentioned Exod. xii. 48, replies—"As you, when there was not a true church in the world, took upon you to set up a true church, renouncing the church of antichrist, and yet will not be said to bring in a new covenant or gospel; so the anabaptists, as you call them, do not set up a new covenant or gospel, though they set up the new, or rather the old, apostolic baptism, which antichrist had overthrown. Seeing when all Christ's visible ordinances are lost, then two men joining together may make a church, as you say, why

may they not baptize, seeing they cannot conjoin into Christ but by baptism?—If all the commandments of God must be obeyed, then this of baptism: and this warrant is sufficient for assuming baptism. For as both these persons unchurched, yet have power to assume the church, each for himself with others in communion with him, so each of them unbaptized hath power to assume baptism each for himself, with others in communion.—A man cannot baptize himself into the church, himself being out of the church.”\*

In this reasoning, it is clear, that Mr. Smyth intends to prove, that, in case of a general apostacy, it is lawful for those, who are convinced of the prevailing errors, and have learnt from the scriptures the true nature of the ordinances and church of Christ, to unite and restore them. Nor does this idea of a man’s baptizing himself appear to have been at all entertained. Indeed, though it is most probable, that the report arose from a misunderstanding of some expressions used in this controversy, it is plain, that Mr. Smyth thought, that, in order to restore the ordinance of baptism, two persons at least should unite, and form themselves into a church; and that the administrator ought to be a member of this church: neither of which is consistent with a person’s baptizing himself. In perfect conformity with this idea, are the sentiments contained in a book, published by Mr. Smyth’s followers, in less than five years after his death. In answer to the question, “Who shall baptize after anti-christ’s exaltation?” after having disallowed the papist plea of succession, and the notion of the

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\* Character of the Beast, pp. 57—59.

familists of waiting for extraordinary persons to revive the ordinance, they say, "We and others affirm, that any disciple of Christ, in what part of the world soever, coming to the Lord's way, he, by the word and spirit of God, preaching that way unto others, and converting, he may and ought also to baptize them." This they endeavour to prove from the example of John the Baptist, and from the exhortation to every Israelite with whom the Lord was, and whose spirit the Lord had raised, to go and build the house of the Lord, Ezra i. 3, 5.\*

We may, therefore, presume, that the report of Mr. Smyth's baptizing himself originated in mistake: and has been perpetuated by those, who have too hastily taken up a report against their neighbour.

It is pleasing, while reviewing these accusations, to observe, that there is nothing alledged against the moral conduct of this good man. In all the changes of his religious sentiments, he appears to have maintained an unblemished character. While he continued a member of the established church, he was highly respected by those with whom he stood connected. When he joined the separatists, his personal excellence obtained their esteem and confidence. And when, in compliance with the dictates of his conscience, he thought it necessary to leave them, they still could find nothing against him, except concerning the law of his God. With every opportunity of observing his conduct, and the best disposition to report his failings, they have not cast one blot on his moral character. This is the more to his honour, as his opponents were very

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\* Persecution judged and condemned, p. 42.

forward in publishing the personal faults of each other; and thus exposed themselves and their cause to the reproach of their adversaries.\*

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SECT. 3.—*The General Baptists publish a Confession of Faith: return to England: are persecuted, and plead for Christian Liberty.*

MR. HELWISSE succeeded Mr. Smyth in the charge of the church in Holland: in the formation of which he had been his associate and fellow-labourer. Though his labours and writings were instrumental in making a number of proselytes, yet he met with much opposition. The separatists, whom he had left, attacked him and his tenets with great warmth; calling his party heretics, anabaptists, and free-willers. They charged them confidently with many extravagant notions and practices, with which their own more temperate representations are totally inconsistent. To vindicate themselves from those aspersions, the baptists published, in 1611, a Confession of Faith; accompanied with an appendix, giving some account of Mr. Smyth's last illness and death. It was called, "The Confession of Faith, published in certain Conclusions, by the remainder of Mr. Smyth's company:" and was supposed to have been chiefly drawn up by Mr. Smyth himself.†

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\* See Pagit's Heresiography, p. 64, &c.

† Crosby, Vol. I. p. 271.—As it will, doubtless, be satisfactory to our readers to learn the sentiments of these ancient General Baptists from themselves, we shall insert the principal articles of this Confession, in the Chapter on the Doctrine and Discipline of ancient General Baptists, at the close of this Book.

About 1614, Mr. Helwisse and his friends began to suspect, that, in leaving their native country, and withdrawing into foreign parts, to avoid persecution, they had been actuated by cowardice rather than prudence. They therefore left Holland, and returned to England; and there continued their church, state, and public assemblies as regularly as the intolerant spirit of the times would permit.\* The nonconformists, who continued in exile, were highly displeased with this decided conduct. They ascribed it to natural confidence rather than spiritual courage; and represented it as openly defying the government, and courting persecution. To remove these objections, the baptists took occasion, in a book which they published the following year, to explain the motives of their proceedings.

“Fleeing on account of persecution,” they say, “hath been the overthrow of religion in this island: the best, able, and greater part being gone, and leaving behind them some few, who, by the others’ departure, have had their afflictions and their contempt increased, hath been the cause of many falling back, and of their adversaries’ rejoicing. And whereas it is said by some of these flyers, that many of the people of God fled into foreign countries, and that God gave approbation thereof; as Moses, David, and our Saviour Christ in his infancy, and others, thinking hereby to justify this their flight: I answer, God preserved Moses and the rest in their flight till the time was come that he employed them in his service; then in no case would he suffer them to flee. When Moses manifested an exceeding backwardness to the Lord’s work, in helping his

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\* Crosby, Vol. I. p. 271.

people out of bondage, using many excuses, the Lord was very angry with him: and whither did our Saviour flee when the time was come that he was to shew himself to Israel? If any of these men can prove that the Lord requireth no work at their hands to be done for his glory, and the salvation of thousands of ignorant souls in their own nation, let them stay in foreign countries." After alluding to several passages in the Old Testament, such as Numb. xxx. 11, Judges v. 23, and xxi. 11, they proceed, "Did God thus respect his work and people then, that all must put to their helping hand, and none must withdraw his shoulder, lest others should be discouraged: and is there no regard to be had thereof, as fear of a little imprisonment, or the like, may excuse any, both from the Lord's work, and for helping their brethren, that, for want of their society and comfort are exceedingly weakened, if not overcome?"

"Great help and encouragement would it be to God's people in affliction, imprisonment, and the like, to have their brethren's presence, to administer to their souls and bodies; and for which cause Christ will say, "I was in prison and ye visited me; in distress, and ye comforted me:" but unto those who do not so, according to their ability, "Go ye cursed." If men had greater love to God's commandment, and the salvation of thousands of ignorant souls in our own country that for want of instruction perish, than a little temporal affliction, they would never publish nor practise as they do on this thing."\* Without venturing to decide between these men and their opponents, it may be observed, that their conduct

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\* Persecution judged and condemned, p. 5

shewed a great regard for the cause of religion, and a laudable sympathy with their suffering brethren.

This open avowal of their sentiments, and steady continuance at the post of duty, as they esteemed it, exposed the General Baptists to great sufferings. "It was not uncommon," to use their own words, "to lie many years in filthy prisons; in hunger, cold, and idleness; divided from wife, family, and calling; left in continual miseries and temptations, so that death itself would be to many less punishment. Many of them were exposed to want, lost their estates, and were confined in noisome dungeons till death released them." These severities induced them to appeal to their rulers and fellow subjects. In 1615, they published a pamphlet, entitled "Persecution for Religion judged and condemned: in a Discourse between a Christian and Antichristian: proving, by the law of God, and by king James' many declarations, that no man ought to be persecuted for his religion, so he testify his allegiance, by the oath appointed by law." The style of this work is easy, correct, and, considering the age when it was composed, very perspicuous: the reasoning strong and conclusive; and the dialogue well maintained. It presents a favourable specimen of the principles and abilities of the authors. They inveigh against the pride, luxury, and oppression of the bishops; declare their respect for magistrates; protest against the political errors of the papists; condemn those who through fear comply with any external worship, contrary to their own conscience; and refer, for evidence of their sentiments, to the Confession of Faith, published in 1611.

But the principal glory of this piece, is the manly and explicit avowal which the authors make of the true principles of christian liberty, at a time when they were either unknown or opposed, by almost every other party. They preserve a just distinction between civil and religious concerns; and while they fully allow the magistrate his proper authority in the former, they boldly maintain every man's right to judge and act for himself in the latter. In a dedication to all that truly wish Jerusalem's prosperity, and Babylon's destruction, they declare, "We do unfeignedly acknowledge the authority of earthly magistrates, God's blessed ordinance, and that all earthly rule and command appertain unto them: let them command what they will, we must obey, either to do or to suffer. But all men must let God alone with his right, who is to be Lord and Lawgiver of the soul; and not command obedience for God when he commandeth none." "If I take," says Christian, in another place, "any authority from the king's majesty, let me be judged worthy of my desert; but, if I defend the authority of Christ Jesus over men's souls, which appertaineth to no mortal man whatsoever, then know you, that whosoever would rob him of that honour which is not of this world, he will tread them under foot.—Earthly authority belongs to earthly kings; but spiritual authority belongeth to that spiritual King, who is King of kings."\*—When we consider the state of the times, this intrepid and dignified language must excite our just admiration.

That this book was published by the general baptists, is clear from their reference to their

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\* Persecution judged and condemned. Passim.

Confession of Faith ; but it appears to have been sanctioned by all the baptists in England. At the close of the dedication it is subscribed “ by Christ’s unworthy witnesses, his majesty’s faithful subjects, commonly, but most falsly, called *Ana-baptists*.” It is probable, indeed, that all the opposers of infant baptism, at that time, were general baptists, as the particulars are not mentioned till several years after this period.

About three years afterwards, in 1618, a piece in defence of believers’ baptism was published, under the title of “ A plain and well-grounded treatise concerning baptism.” It was a translation from the Dutch ; and, probably, the work of Mr. Helwisse or some of his friends who had lately returned from Holland.\*

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**SECT. 4.**—*The Baptists increase—appeal to the Government—are persecuted, and written against.*

THE baptists still groaned under persecution, which produced its constant effect :—their numbers increased in their affliction. Yet they thought themselves called upon to take every lawful method to obtain relief ; and, in 1620, presented an humble Supplication to king James I. and the parliament for redress. In this, they acknowledged it to be their duty to pray for kings and those in authority ; and appealed to God, that it was their constant practice. They represented, in strong terms, the miseries they

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\* Crosby, Vol. I. p. 128.—Crosby reckons this the first book published in English against infant baptism ; but he had not seen Smyth’s *Character of the Beast*.

suffered, by the seizure of their goods, long and painful imprisonments, in various parts of the kingdom, in which many had died, and left their widows and orphans destitute. "The learned [clergy] of this land," they tell his majesty, "procure your temporal sword to persecute us, by casting us into prisons, where many of us have remained divers years, in lingering imprisonments, deprived of all earthly comforts, as wives, children, calling, &c. without hope of release, till our God, for the practice of whose commandments we are thus persecuted, persuade the heart of your majesty to take pity on us, our poor wives and children; or his heavenly Majesty to release us by death." They challenge their enemies to convict them of disloyalty to his majesty, or injury to their neighbours; and assert their readiness to obey the law in all civil and temporal things: "But further than that," they say, "we cannot go; because God is the Lord of men's consciences, and only Lawgiver in matters of religion." They suggested to government, that, supposing them in error, the cruelties which they suffered were inconsistent with christianity, the marks of antichrist, and adapted to make hypocrites. They, therefore, humbly besought his Majesty, his nobles, and the parliament, that, according to the direction of God's word, they would let the tares and the wheat grow together till the harvest. To this petition they subjoined ten short chapters, in which they endeavour to prove—that the scriptures are the only rule of faith, and not any church, &c.—that the interpreter of this rule is the scripture and Spirit of God in whomsoever—that the Spirit of God to understand and interpret the scriptures is given to every person that fears and obeys God; but

not to the wicked—that those that fear and obey God, and so have his Spirit to understand the scriptures, are most commonly the simple, poor, despised, &c.—that the learned in human learning do most commonly err, and know not the truth—that persecution for the cause of conscience is against the doctrine of Jesus Christ, the King of kings—against the practice and profession of famous princes—and is condemned by the ancient and later writers, papists and puritans—that freedom of religion would be no prejudice to the commonwealth, but would make it flourish—and that kings are not deprived of any power given them by God, when they maintain freedom for cause of conscience. From this abstract of the contents, it is plain, that, the petitioners maintained the same dignified sentiments, and shewed themselves the same undaunted supporters of the sacred rights of conscience, as when they published “Persecution judged and condemned:” which they took this opportunity of reprinting.

Notwithstanding these sharp persecutions, the baptists gained many proselytes. One of them thought proper to inform his friends of the change that had taken place in his sentiments, and of the ground of his present opinions. With this view, he engaged a principal elder of the separation, most probably Mr. Helwisse, to draw up a letter for him to send to his relations. In this letter, infant baptism is disproved—from the natural inability of infants to confess their sins, believe the gospel, &c. all which the scripture requires as pre-requisites to baptism—from their unfitness to be members of the visible church of Christ, which ought to consist of persons called out by grace from their natural estate;

and separated from the world—from the impossibility of their inheriting from their parents a fitness for gospel ordinances; shewing, at large, that the covenant made with Abraham cannot entitle the children of believers, merely as such, to a participation of the privileges of a christian church—and, from the total want of command, example, or just consequence in scripture for baptizing them. This letter is signed H.H., and dated May 10th. 1622. Before it reached those to whom it was addressed, it fell into the hands of a warm advocate of the church of England, who immediately published it, and an answer to it, under the title of “Anabaptisme’s Mystery of Iniquity unmasked, by I. P. A.D. 1623.”\*—This author says, that the baptists, in those days, wrote many books in defence of their opinions, and were in the habit of producing great numbers of scriptures to prove their doctrines: and that they maintained an appearance of more holiness than the members of the established church, whose books and conversation they avoided. He likewise informs us, that, besides the denial of infant baptism, they also denied the doctrine of election, reprobation, and final

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\* Some have supposed that I. P. was the famous Dr. John Preston. The copy now before us is bound up with another piece against the separatists, avowedly by the same author, entitled, “Wisdom’s Bountie to heavenly Pilgrims, unmasking the Man of Sin. 1622.” This is principally employed in defending the doctrines of personal election. It does not appear, how the letter fell into I. P.’s hand. He says that, it was by God’s providence, that it came to his view. He informs us further, that H. H., in whose name the letter was written, had, by God’s providence also, previous to the publication of this answer, revolted from the anabaptists. If so, probably he had handed the letter to I. P.—*Anabaptisme’s Mystery*, Contents and page 13.

perseverance: and says, that "Though their letter question them not, yet the seeds were sown among you, so well by their apostles as books." This Mr. Crosby seems to consider a slander, and says it has ordinarily been their treatment to be accused only upon supposition. But the historian must have strangely forgotten himself. For, scarce eleven years previous to this period, Mr. Helwisse, who, as he supposes, was the writer of this letter, had published, in conjunction with his friends, the Confession of Faith already noticed, in which they certainly deny personal election, reprobation, and final perseverance. And I. P. assures us, that their sentiments, both respecting baptism and predestination, gained, in 1623, multitudes of disciples:\* or, in other words, that, at that time, the general baptists increased rapidly in numbers.†

It is probable that Mr. Helwisse died about this time; but we have no account of his death. And we are equally uninformed respecting his cotemporary and associate, Mr. John Morton. He was one of Mr. Smyth's disciples; and a fellow-labourer with him in the formation of the church in Holland. Most probably he returned with Mr. Helwisse to London: as we have evidence, that he both wrote and suffered in the cause of believers' baptism. He was a zealous general baptist. In the beginning of the civil wars, a book was found, in demolishing an old wall near Colchester, entitled "Truth's Champion, by J. Morton," which was supposed to be the production of this minister. It contained thirteen chapters in the defence of the principles

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\* Anabaptisme's Mystery, p. 61.

† Crosby, Vol. I. pp. 133—140 and 275.

of the general baptists. As it was written in a very good style, and the arguments managed with great dexterity and skill, his party were much pleased with it: and had it printed. It is probable, from this circumstance, that Mr. Morton settled, and raised a church, in this part of the country.\*

It is plain, from the books published against the baptists, at this period, that they proceeded with great courage and resolution: and, notwithstanding the severe opposition of the prelacy and the civil power, they increased much in number. Two years after the above attack, two able disputants, Messrs. Dod and Cleaver, united their strength against the baptists, in a publication called "The Patrimony of children," and apologize for engaging in the dispute, by asserting the industry with which the baptists propagated their doctrine, and the many instances in which persons of good note for piety had been drawn away by them. They appear careful not to give publicity to the performances of the baptists; as they invariably, except in one instance, conceal the names of the authors, and the titles of the books, against which they contend. They bear the same testimony to the doctrinal sentiments of the baptists: who, they say, agreed with the Arminians in some opinions; and asserted that all children dying in their infancy shall be saved, through the merits of Christ."†

There is some reason to believe that, in A.D. 1626, there was a general baptist church, at Amersham, in Buckinghamshire. In the first page of an old church-book belonging to that

\* Crosby, Vol. I. pp. 276—278. † Ibid Vol. I. p. 141.

ancient church, there is an imperfect entry in this form: "Brother David, 26 of April, 1626:" which affords a strong presumption that there was a church in that town at that early period. And we have Dr. Featley's authority for stating, that, two years prior to this, they had many converts in Southwark.\*

Seven years after this date, in 1633, the first distinct particular baptist church was formed, which was composed of a number of persons who withdrew from the independent church, under Mr. Lathorp; and, uniting in a church state, chose Mr. J. Spilsbury for their pastor. Mr. Crosby's assertion, that "the baptists who had hitherto been intermixed with other protestant dissenters without distinction, began now to separate themselves, and formed distinct societies," can only regard the particular baptists.—They, it does appear, had till now continued to belong to independent churches; and their number could not be great, as the first church consisted of fewer than thirty members. But Mr. Crosby himself has furnished us with sufficient evidence, that the general baptists formed distinct societies, twenty-five years prior to this date: and, that they continued their profession, had regular church officers, and courageously maintained their tenets, during the whole interval.†

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SECT. 5.—*Mr. Lamb's Church. Mr. Henry Denne's labours, imprisonments, and disputes.*

WHEN governments are intolerant, times of political confusion and insubordination are

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\* Dippers Dipt. Decd.

† Crosby. vol I. p. 146.

favourable to the discovery and propagation of truth. Such was the period of the civil wars which distracted England during the latter part of the reign of the unhappy Charles I. While the different parties were struggling for temporal authority, the subjects had an opportunity of following the dictates of their own consciences in religious concerns. Various sects, therefore, arose ; and the number of nonconformists rapidly increased. Nor was it surprising, when the unnatural restraints which popery and prelacy had so long imposed on the consciences of men were suddenly removed, and every man did that which was right in his own eyes, if some irregularities and much enthusiastic zeal disfigured the purest churches. That this was the case, the history of every denomination bears ample testimony ; and the character of the general baptists, in this period, was not free from these shades.

Previous to the commencement of the civil wars, a baptist church had been formed, under the care of Mr. Thomas Lamb, which usually met in Bell-alley, Coleman-street. Mr. Lamb joined the baptists, and zealously exerted himself in promoting the spread of their doctrines, when archbishop Laud presided over the affairs of the church. At the instigation of this tyrannical prelate, he was seized at Colchester, his native city, and dragged in chains to London, for dissenting from the national church, and preaching to a separate congregation. He was arraigned before the Star Chamber, and required to confess that he had administered the Lord's supper, the penalty for which was banishment. Mr. Lamb, however, pleading the right of an Englishman, refused to criminate himself, and was remanded to prison. His wife solicited the archbishop to

take pity on a mother and eight children, and to release their husband and father: but the unfeeling priest was untouched with her afflictions, and roughly ordered his servants to "take away that troublesome woman." After some time, he obtained his liberty; and resumed his favourite employment of preaching the gospel. This brought him into new troubles; from which he was no sooner delivered, than he returned to his sacred work. Thus he pursued what he thought the path of duty, till he had been confined in almost every prison in London and its vicinity. He frequently observed, that, that man was not fit to preach, who would not preach for God's sake, though he was sure to die for it as soon as he had finished.\*

At the beginning of the civil wars, Mr. Lamb's church† appears to have been in a very flourishing

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\* Crosby, Vol. III. p. 54.

† Though several late authors have classed the congregation in Bell-alley among the particular baptist churches, and have asserted that Messrs. Lamb and Denne were strict Calvinists, yet we, without hesitation, rank them among the general baptists. Mr. Edwards, who was their cotemporary, and had good opportunities of knowing their sentiments, constantly represents them as zealous assertors of the universal love of God to man. The reports of this calumniator ought, it is readily allowed, to be received with caution; but when he so repeatedly and circumstantially states a fact of which he could not be ignorant, and which, had it been false, thousands of his readers could have contradicted, he surely deserves some credit. His testimony, however, is supported by less exceptionable witnesses. Luke Howard of Dover, who, in 1672, published a "Looking Glass for the Baptists," tells us that, in 1644, there was a great contest between the general and particular baptists in Kent:—that Lamb and Barber were the leaders of the general baptists, and held the universal love of God to all; and, that Kiffin, Patience, &c. were the principal men among the particular, and held particular election, &c. This author had, at first, been

condition. The congregation was numerous ; and the meeting-house yard was frequently crouded. There were several popular and useful preachers, at that time, in the church, who laboured much in spreading the gospel. Nor did they confine themselves to their own neighbourhood ; but preached in various places in the city, and frequently went into distant parts of the kingdom with the same design. The church used to send the ministers forth, by a regular church act, to preach the gospel in dark places. In this manner, they extended their exertions, not only into most of the counties of England,

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disciple of Mr. Kiffin ; he afterwards joined Mr. Lamb's church, and at length became a quaker : he must, therefore, be acquainted with their sentiments. With respect to Mr. H. Denne, we have the authority of his friends and disciples for ranking him among the general baptists. The G. B. church at Warboys was, as we shall soon see, gathered by him : and, in the original records of that society now before us, at the year 1644, Henry Denne is asserted to have " manifested, both by his preaching and writing, the great love of God the Father, in sending his only Son, the Lord Jesus, to die for every man."—It might be added, that the churches planted by the ministry of Mr. Lamb and his associates in Huntingdonshire, Cambridgeshire, Lincolnshire, &c. &c. were, as will abundantly appear in the progress of this history, all general baptist churches.—On the whole, Mr. Crosby, who appears to have read the works of these active ministers, probably formed a correct estimate of their sentiments, when he states that Mr. Lamb " laboured to reconcile particular election with universal redemption"; and that "Mr. Denne took the middle way, being properly neither Calvinist nor Arminian." The truth is, though they firmly believed, and zealously promulgated, that glorious truth, that Christ died for all ; and that salvation through his blood was to be offered to all, yet they could not wholly divest themselves of their former principles, but mixed some confused notions of a particular election with their more liberal sentiments. Their followers, however, soon became more consistent.—*Edwards' Gangrena*, Part I pp. 124, 126, 81.—*Howard's Looking Glass for Baptists*, pp. 1, 2.—*Crosby*, Vol. III. p. 56.—Vol. I. p. 305.—*W. C. B.* 1644.

but even into Wales : and it appears from Mr. Edwards' outcry against them, that they made many converts.

Besides the regular seasons of public worship, this society, if we believe Mr. Edwards, had stated exercises, in which any member of the church might deliver his opinion on a proposed subject ; and any other member might confirm or oppose the assertions of the former. On these occasions, according to the same author, it was no uncommon thing for women publicly to engage in these disputes, and maintain their sentiments in long harangues. It is not improbable that these exercises, though well adapted to promote discussion, were sometimes attended with a degree of confusion ; which might give occasion for those exaggerated accounts which the calumniator, to whom we have already referred, has handed down to posterity. But any one who has read the detailed reports of their orderly proceedings in their church-meetings, preserved in their ancient records, will give very little credit to the extravagant misrepresentations of that author.

The most noted of Mr. Lamb's assistants was Mr. Henry Denne. He was educated at Cambridge, and left the university, in 1630. Entering into orders, he obtained the living of Pyrton, in Hertfordshire ; where he laboured, for about ten years, with great acceptance. In 1643, he professed himself a baptist, was baptized by immersion in London, and joined the church in Bell-alley. He was a man of decision and zeal : and entered warmly into the views of that society. He was much employed in travelling

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\* Edwards' Gangræna, Part I. p. 108

from place to place, to preach the gospel, and very successful in his endeavours. His mode of preaching was persuasive and affectionate; even his enemies being judges. Mr. Disborough, a person of influence and authority, appears to have patronized him; and declared, says Mr. Edwards, that "Mr. Denne was the ablest man in England for prayer, expounding, and preaching."

In one of his ministerial excursions, by the authority of the church, in 1644, Mr. Denne went into Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, and the neighbouring counties, "to preach," says Mr. Edwards, "universal grace, and to rebaptize: and, according to his commission, he did much mischief in those parts:"\* that is, he was very successful in his endeavours to convince and enlighten his benighted countrymen. His labours were, however, soon interrupted by the committee for Cambridge,† by whose order he was apprehended, and sent to prison. Mr. Denne appealed to parliament, and was, by an order from the house, brought up to London, and committed to custody in Peter-house, Bishopsgate-street.

In the same prison was confined, that noted opponent of the baptists, Dr. Featley, who had just published his famous work, which he triumphantly entitled "The Dippers dipt: or the

\* Ibid, Part I. p. 108.

† In 1641, a committee of the House of Commons was appointed, to send ministers where there were vacancies, &c. which had sub-committees in the various counties. They sometimes took security of the preachers whom they patronized. Mr. Denne was under a bond of two hundred pounds, to appear before them, whenever required, at twenty-four hours' notice.—Neal, Vol. I. p. 727. Edwards' *Gangraena*, Part III. p. 86.

Anabaptists plunged over head and ears," &c. When Mr. Denne entered the prison, this pamphlet was put into his hands; and he, feeling himself called upon to defend the principles for which he suffered, sent the Dr. a message; offering to dispute with him on the arguments advanced in his book. The Dr. accepted the challenge with alacrity: but, when they had only debated the first of his ten arguments, probably not much liking his opponent, he declined proceeding; under pretence that it was not safe, without the permission of the magistrates. He desired Mr. Denne to write, and he would defend his own arguments. Mr. Denne accordingly drew up an elaborate answer to the "Dippers dipt;" and, in little more than a month, presented it to the author: dating it, in prison, Feb. 22d. 1645. It does not appear, that Dr. Featley, though he had so boldly promised to defend himself, thought proper to make any reply.

After some time, Mr. Denne obtained his liberty, by the interest of his admirer, Mr. Disborough; and went down to Elsly, in Cambridge-shire, where he preached in the parish church; and, though an avowed baptist, enjoyed for a season the emoluments of the benefice: such was the confusion of the times. Here his ministry was greatly followed; and he laboured much to spread the gospel, especially by encouraging and employing lay preachers. He was much opposed, by both prelatists and presbyterians; but firmly maintained his ground. Being once forbidden to deliver a lecture in the church at St. Ives, going into an adjoining church-yard, he preached, under a tree, to a numerous company; and, if we credit Mr. Edwards, shook off the dust

of his feet against St. Ives, pronouncing many fearful woes against its inhabitants for not receiving the gospel.\*

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SECT. 6.—*General Baptist Churches gathered at Fenstanton, Warboys, Spalding and in Kent.*

It was probably during Mr. Denne's excursion, which ended in the imprisonment already mentioned, that the general baptist church at Warboys, in Huntingdonshire, was formed.—Mr. Denne had, previous to the year 1644, been instrumental in gathering a church at Fenstanton, in the same county, which appears to have been, at this time, numerous and flourishing. The date of its rise does not appear; but we have a manuscript volume of its Records, commencing in 1651. The church at Fenstanton may be considered as the mother church, in these parts, from which the general baptist cause spread itself into several adjacent counties. The original Records of the church at Warboys have also been preserved, and are now before us. They contain an account of the manner in which this church was gathered; which, as it is curious in itself, and may give an idea of the mode in which such societies were most usually formed, the reader will, it is presumed, be pleased to see in their own words.

“1644.—Mystery Babylon, the great whore spoken of by the blessed apostle John, in the Revelations, with whom the inhabitants of the earth have committed fornication, had so deceived

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\* Crosby, Vol. I. p. 303—Edwards, ubi supra.

the nations of the world, that, although something had been done in this nation by way of reformation; yet so great was the darkness, that few knew in what manner churches ought to be gathered and governed, according to the scriptures and practice of the holy apostles, in their time. It pleased God, about this time, to stir up some in this town to search the scriptures: and, by the Lord's providence, one Henry Denne, an able and learned teacher, did, by preaching and writing, manifest the great love of God the Father to mankind, in giving his only Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, to die for every man: and further declaring, that whosoever did believe in him, and repent of their sins, ought to be dipt in water, (which is baptism;) and from thenceforth to walk in holy obedience to the scriptures: declaring such to be the church of God. By the preaching of the said Henry Denne, many in this county received the faith, of whom some were of this town: who considering that, lest Eusebius Hunt, the parish teacher of Warboys, should be offended at it, thought good to acquaint him with it: and, finding an opportunity when he had sprinkled an infant, one William Dunn told him, he had no ground for so doing in the scriptures; but it was a tradition of man: desiring him to take it into consideration, and leave it off. Eusebius Hunt said he would dispute it. Whereupon, Henry Denne being sent for, came to Warboys, accompanied with sundry of the brethren: and Henry Denne preached in the public meeting-place; who confirmed them much in the truth of the gospel. Afterwards Henry Denne was desired to come again: when, after a long dispute with Eusebius Hunt, Henry Denne demanded, whether he judged it best to

sprinkle infants, or let them alone: Eusebius Hunt answered, "To let them alone." Henry Denne said, surely we are to do the best way. William Dunn with the rest being resolved to join with Henry Denne, acquainted him of their mind: who exhorted them not to delay the time of their baptism. Not long after, these by name were baptized: William Dunn, John Richards, John Ward, John Kidson, and William Askew."

"1647.—They continued in the apostles' doctrine, and breaking of bread, and prayer; assembling often with the church at Fenstanton; but by reason of the great opposition they had in going to Fenstanton, by the rude people of Fenstanton and St. Ives, William Dunn said "Let us have their advice at Fenstanton, about some to carry on the work of the gospel, and administer the ordinances among us." Whereupon, advising with John Matthews, a leader in the church at Fenstanton, he answered after this manner.—"Seeing that three of you use to teach the word, my advice is, that you cast lots for one overseer, and one deacon;" which being agreed upon, they five aforesaid, together with William Bass, and John Palmer of Bidley, cast lots. The lot fell on William Dunn for an overseer, and John Richards, for a deacon: the rest were content therewith."\*

In the year 1646, Mr. H. Denne was invited to preach the gospel, and administer the ordinances, at Spalding, in Lincolnshire, by one John Markernesse, who appears to have been a respectable inhabitant of that town. Mr. Denne arrived at Spalding, on the Monday, and preached several

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\* W. C. B. 1644 and 1647.

times at the house of his inviter, and at a Mr. Enston's. It seems there were several candidates waiting for an opportunity of being baptized; but they feared to administer the ordinance in a public manner. They therefore determined to avail themselves of the shades of the evening: and, on Wednesday, near midnight, Mr. Denne baptized four persons, in a place called the Little Croft. The persons baptized were, Anne Stennett and Anne Smith, both servants to Mr. Marknesse, Godfrey Roote, and John Sowter.—The female candidates had, very prudently, invited a young woman to accompany and assist them. Their companion, by some means, divulged the transaction, and the report soon reached the ears of the magistrates. They sent the officers to arrest Mr. Denne on the Lord's-day morning; and kept him in close custody the whole day, to prevent him from preaching.—Mr. Denne was strictly examined, and confessed that he had preached; but declined accusing himself of baptizing. The next day, June 22d. the young woman, who had been present, was examined on oath; and confirmed the fact. The magistrates threatened to commit him to Lincoln gaol: to which he replied that he cared not for himself; but was concerned that his great work should be interrupted. Crosby says he was committed; but the result of this examination is not stated by Mr. Edwards. It is plain, that there were many baptists, at this time, about Spalding, as the magistrate who apprehended this minister informed our author, that several had been brought before him.\*

While these good men were thus exerting

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\* Edwards' *Gangræna*, Part III. p. 86. Crosby. Vol. I. p. 223.

themselves to extend the cause of truth in these parts, others were equally active in distant countries. In Kent, and its vicinity, the general baptists appear to have gained considerable ground, before the commencement of the civil wars. Here, Mr. William Jeffery, and his brother David, were the principal instruments of spreading and supporting their doctrines, if not of introducing them. They probably had been convinced under the ministry of Mr. Lamb, or some of the itinerants connected with him. They were sons of pious parents, of the parish of Penshurst. Mr. W. Jeffery, was born in 1616; and, after he arrived at manhood, settled at Bradburn, near Seven Oaks, in Kent. At this place, he gathered a church, over which he was ordained pastor, which was for some time called the church of Bradburn, but afterwards took its name from Bessell's Green. This society flourished much under his care; but it did not engross all his attention. He raised a church about Speldhurst and Pembury, which he settled in gospel-order, under the superintendence of Mr. John Care, whom he ordained to the pastoral office. This church has since assembled at Tunbridge-wells. In short, by the assiduous labours of this active man, assisted by his brother, more than twenty churches were gathered, in the county of Kent, which all existed in 1738, when Mr. Crosby wrote: and some of them, at that time, had large congregations. Several of them remain to the present day; but, it is painful to be obliged to add, that most of them are in a very low state.

Mr. Jeffery was eminent for maintaining the great truth that Christ died for all; and has left an elaborate defence of it, in a publication, entitled "The Whole Faith of Man." He laboured

earnestly to establish the churches in the foundation principles of the gospel, which he and most of the general baptists for many years after him, built on Heb. vi. 1, 2. He was a zealous assertor of the distinguishing truths of christianity; as fully appears in the work just mentioned. It cannot be ascertained when he commenced baptist; but, in the title-page of the second edition of his book, which was published in 1659, he says he has been for years a poor labourer in Christ's vineyard: and he was an eminent defender of the baptist cause in 1644. It is therefore probable that he embraced that opinion, and was engaged in propagating it, several years prior to the civil wars.\*

Mr. Jeffery was made the instrument of convincing many eminent members of the established church of the divine institution of believers' baptism. We shall mention an instance. Mr. Francis Cornwell, M.A. was educated at Cambridge, and preferred to the living of Marden, in Kent. Here he probably became acquainted with the general baptists, and began to be dissatisfied with some of the ceremonies of the church. He refused to conform, and was confined, with another minister, in Maidstone jail. Among others that came to visit him, was a woman, who had some doubts respecting infant baptism. She applied to Mr. Cornwell for a solution of her scruples: and he endeavoured, by the best scripture arguments he could recollect, to give her satisfaction; but could neither satisfy her nor himself. This caused him to examine the subject; and the result was, his full convic-

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\*Crosby, Vol. III. p. 97. Vol I. p. 344, compared with Vol. III. p. 9.—Jeffery's Whole Faith of Man.

tion that infant baptism was unscriptural. He obtained his liberty some time after, and returned to Marden, where he cultivated an acquaintance with Mr. Jeffery, and was privately baptized by him. As he had not yet openly declared his sentiments, he was chosen to preach a visitation sermon, in 1644, at Cranbrook, in Kent. This was thought a proper opportunity of making a public confession of the truth.—Accordingly he read as a text, “In vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.”\* In pursuing his discourse, he declared that infant baptism was an antichristian innovation, an human invention; unsupported by any precept, example, or just inference in the word of God. This startled the ministers who heard him: and when he came down, they offered to dispute the subject with him: but he referred them to Mr. Jeffery, who was present. They found Mr. Jeffery better prepared for the defence of Mr. Cornwell’s assertions than they were for the attack. Mr. Christopher Blackwood, therefore, one of the ministers, desired them to suspend the debate till the next meeting; when, as he had taken the sermon in short hand, he would return an answer which he trusted would be satisfactory. Mr. Blackwood studied the subject closely, but was overcome by the force of evidence. At the time proposed, he brought, not a refutation of Mr. Cornwell’s sentiments, but a confirmation of them; in a series of papers, which he afterwards published under the title of “The Storming of Antichrist.” These gentlemen afterwards became eminent ministers among the particular baptists.†

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\* Mark viii. 7. † Crosby, Vol. I. p. 344, Vol. III. p. 7, &c.

SECT. 7.—*The Spirit of Persecution predominates, and the Baptists feel its effects.*

To those who have not been accustomed to contemplate the inconsistency of the human character, it may appear strange, that, men who had liberal ideas of civil liberty, and were actually in arms against their king, in defence of it, should have very contracted views respecting the liberty of conscience, and labour to destroy it: yet such was the fact. The presbyterians, who, in the beginning of the civil wars, obtained great influence in the state, while they pulled down the established religion, and involved prelacy in the fate of royalty, discovered little inclination to countenance, or even to tolerate, the other sects of non-conformists. Their ministers laboured assiduously, both in their writings and preaching, to represent the granting of liberty to every man to judge and act for himself in matters of religion, as the height of madness and impiety;—a plan originating in the infernal regions, and employed by the enemy of all good to overthrow christianity, and ruin both church and state. Edwards, the great champion of the party, after exhorting the civil magistrates to proclaim public fasts against heresies—to call upon all the people to subscribe the national creed—and to burn the books in favour of heresy and toleration, by the hand of the common hangman, for a sweet smelling sacrifice to God—roundly asserts, that, “the government should keep the people in such awe, by authority and penal statutes, as that they should not dare but stand to the covenant:” or, in other words, conform to the religion of the state: and cordially recommends to the rulers of this country the example of the

senate of Zurich, which decreed, that, when an anabaptist had been dealt with by ten several disputations, and still continued to rebaptize, he should be drowned.\* Calamy, Burgess, Baxter, Marshall, and other eminent divines, at this period, advanced similar doctrines, though generally in more guarded terms.†

It is pleasing, in such times as these, to discover any traces of a true christian spirit. We read, therefore, with peculiar satisfaction, Mr. Edwards' account of meetings in London, about 1643, in which seekers, anabaptists, antinomians, Brownists, and independents, united in endeavouring to procure full liberty of conscience for all the professors of religion of every denomination, including even the Jews. Some presbyterians, who attended on these occasions, through a desire to understand more clearly the object of their meeting, were the only persons who opposed a general toleration.‡ Some of the nonconformists, who were now under the yoke, shewed too plainly, by their conduct, when they gained the ascendancy, that their circumstances had too much effect on their present professions; but the general baptists have always been the steady advocates of the rights of conscience.

The persons who had seized the civil government acted on the same principles with the presbyterian divines, though with less precipitation. The ministers made heavy complaints against their want of decision in the good cause, and were very earnest, in their public prayers, for an increase of their zeal. The first step taken by the parliament, was an ordinance which passed,

\* Gangræna Part I. pp. 200—204.

† Crosby Vol. I. pp. 176—184. ‡ Gangræna Part I. p. 14

April 26th. 1645, in these words: "It is this day ordained and declared, by the Lords and Commons in parliament assembled, that no person be admitted to preach, who is not ordained a minister, either in this or some other reformed church: except such, as intending the ministry, shall be allowed, for the trial of their gifts, by those who shall be appointed thereunto by both houses of parliament."\*

This has generally been the first step against the liberty of conscience, and the prelude to the fiercest persecutions. Under a pretence of securing respectability to the ministry, and of preventing improper persons from intruding into the sacred office, a right of licensing persons to preach the gospel has been assumed by some powerful sect. Whenever this occurs, religious liberty is so far extinct; and that sect usurps the authority of the great Head of the church, whose prerogative alone it is to send forth labourers into his vineyard. The predominant party cannot be expected to sanction any preachers but such as propagate its peculiar tenets: and all others must either retire; or, by venturing to follow the dictates of their conscience, expose themselves to the penalties denounced against transgressors.

Thus it operated at this time. Mr. Lamb, the pastor of the church in Bell-alley, had never been ordained, according to the intent of this ordinance. He was, originally, a soap-boiler; and had probably been called, by the church of which he was a member, to exercise amongst them; and, after suffering much for the truth, had been regularly set apart to the pastoral

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\* Crosby, Vol. I. p.93.

office, by the church which he then served. This, however, was not recognized by the legislature as a church: and, therefore, he was required, in conformity to the ordinance, to lay aside preaching. But it was not to be expected, that he, who had braved the haughty Laud, would silently submit. He continued his labours, without noticing this new law. Information against him was laid before the Lord Mayor, who sent the peace officers to arrest the lay-preacher, and his assistants: for, as we have before seen, that church had several preachers. The officers went, in the time of public worship, to Bell-alley, and attempted to seize Mr. Lamb, and a young man, who had, for a few months, preached amongst them. The congregation, incensed at the interruption, called the officers persecutors: but Mr. Lamb appeased the rising tumult. He treated the officers with great civility, requested permission to conclude the service, and engaged that he and the young man would attend the Lord Mayor at six o'clock in the evening, to answer any charge that might be brought against them. Such was the confidence which these officers reposed in them, that they took their words, and returned; and, at the time appointed, Mr. Lamb and his companion waited on his lordship.

That magistrate first interrogated the youth, and asked him why he preached, and what warrant he had?—He replied, that God had opened his mouth, and he must shew forth his praise. My lord observed, that he might shew forth the praise of God in the discharge of his calling, as a private christian: and enquired how long he had been a preacher. He answered, ever since he was baptized. His lordship,

whose thoughts, it seems, ran wholly on infant baptism, exclaimed, "Hath your mouth been opened ever since your infancy?"—"My infant baptism," rejoined the youth, "was no baptism: I have not been baptized more than six months." His lordship then, turning to Mr. Lamb, said, "You have transgressed an ordinance of parliament." "No," replied the intrepid minister, "I am a preacher, called and chosen by as reformed a church as any is in the world." The Lord Mayor held them to bail, to appear before a committee of parliament, which sent them to prison. They were, after a time, released by the intercession of some powerful friends: when they resumed their labours with renewed zeal: and preached more openly and frequently than before this interruption.\*

It was probably about this time, that a circumstance happened, which deserves recording.—Mr. Lamb had made known his intention of baptizing a woman, in Old Ford river, a place then much used for this purpose. Her husband, an inveterate enemy to the baptists, carried a large stone under his coat, with a determination, as he afterwards confessed, to throw it at Mr. Lamb, as he stood in the water. But the prayer which this minister offered before the administration of the ordinance, so affected this opposer of the truth, that he dropped the stone, and melted into tears: and was himself the next person who was baptized.†

The prosperity of the baptists alarmed the pædobaptists, and they used every method to misrepresent their doctrines and practices.—Amongst other expedients, they frequently took

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\* Edwards' Gangræna, Part I. p. 126. † Crosby. Vol. III. p. 55.

occasion, both from the pulpit and the press, to describe the baptists as murderers: pretending, in direct opposition to the experience of thousands in every age, and to the testimony of the ablest physicians, that immersion in water was prejudicial to health, and even destructive to life itself. Such a charge from an Edwards or a Featley excites no surprise: we know the men and their communications. But, we blush for the weakness of our nature, when we hear the learned and pious Baxter assert, that baptism by immersion is "good for nothing, but to dispatch men out of the world who are burdensome in it, and to ranken church-yards:" and that "the abettors of it are no more to be suffered than highway murderers."\* Weak as this charge is, it appears, at this time, to have been urged with considerable effect: a remarkable instance of which we have in the treatment of Mr. Samuel Oates, one of Mr. Lamb's associates and fellow-labourers.

This young man, Mr. Edwards informs us, was a weaver by trade. This may be true; but it is certain that he possessed good natural abilities, was a popular and acceptable preacher, and an able disputant. Under the sanction of the church in Bell-alley he had itinerated, in the year 1645, with great success, in the counties of Sussex and Surry. In the beginning of the following year, he spent several months in the same employment, in different parts of Essex. His labours were abundantly blest, and he baptized numbers on a profession of faith. This roused the enmity of his opponents, who appear to have been exceedingly mad against him. They sought

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\* Baxter's Plain Scripture Proofs, pp. 135, 136.

for an occasion to blast his character: and, at length, flattered themselves that they had found one. Among the multitudes that were baptized by Mr. Oates, was a young woman, named Anne Martin, who died in a few weeks after her baptism. His enemies laid hold of this circumstance to irritate the populace against him, as the cause of her death. An inquest was held on the body; but so eager were the magistrates to secure him, that they committed him to Colchester jail before the coroner's jury had returned their verdict. His friends, however, did not forsake him; but flocked in crowds to comfort him, during his confinement. Such was their esteem for him, that numbers of respectable persons took a journey from the metropolis, to see him. It vexed the envious Edwards most sensibly to hear, that "there was a great and mighty resort to him in prison: and that many came down from London in coaches to visit him." But this was too great an indulgence to be long allowed: and orders were soon procured to admit none to the prisoner.

At length the day of trial arrived, and Mr. Oates was indicted for murder, at the assizes at Chelmsford. But, to the confusion of his accusers, it was proved, by unexceptionable witnesses, amongst whom was the young woman's mother, that, for several days after her baptism, the deceased had enjoyed an unusually good state of health, and had walked abroad with comfort. The jury pronounced a verdict of not guilty, and he resumed his labours the ensuing Lord's-day. His enemies, thus disappointed in their attempts upon his life, still continued their ill offices. They incensed the populace against him to such a degree, that some strangers arriving

at Wethersfield, and being mistaken for Mr. Oates and his friends, the mob seized them, and, says Mr. Edwards, "pumped them soundly." And, some weeks after, Mr. Oates himself going to Dunmow, they dragged him out of the house, and threw him into the river: thus, adds the same author, with evident satisfaction, "thoroughly dipping him."\*

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SECT. 8.—*General Baptists at Coventry and in London.—The Parliament enacts severe laws.*

IN the very beginning of the civil wars, if not before that period, a general baptist society existed at Coventry. Though the members were a "poor despised people," we have an account of their diligence and zeal left us, by one of their number, which ought to be recorded, in order to provoke others. "Upon the weekly day of public worship," says he, "I was accustomed, with several others, to rise early in the morning, and meet together to pray and confer about the things of God, in order to help each other forward in our christian race. Thus we did, till church worship began. The same improvement of our time we made in the interval after dinner, till the beginning of the afternoon worship; and, at the end thereof, we repeated the same exercise, and continued it until seven or eight o'clock. Oh!" adds the venerable narrator who wrote this account sixty years afterwards, "Oh! that, before I die, I might see the fruit of such zeal, liveness, and thorough godliness in professors; such

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\* Edwards' *Gangræna*, Part II p. 121.—Part III. p. 105.—Crosby, Vol. I. p. 208.

as I know to have been in those chosen out of the world, and who closed with precious Jesus, at that time!"\*

The general baptist cause gained ground about this period also in London. Mr. John Griffith, about 1640, began to preach and collect a church, over which, in 1646, he was ordained pastor. It afterwards assembled in Dunning's-alley, Bishopsgate-street. Another general baptist church was gathered by the worthy Mr. John Gosnold, which met, for upwards of one hundred and twenty years, in Paul's-alley, Barbican, in a building which, it is said, was erected for a play-house, but was let to them because the government refused to license it.† These churches, as we shall see in the sequel, afterwards became numerous and respectable, under the pastoral care of their founders.

There was, also, another society of the same persuasion in London, which probably was gathered before either of the former. It was held at the Spital, Bishopsgate-street, under the superintendence of Mr. Edward Barber. In 1641, this minister was imprisoned eleven months, for publishing a book, in which he asserted that "our Lord Christ appointed dipping, and that the sprinkling of children is not according to Christ's institution." He afterwards laboured zealously, in conjunction with Messrs. Lamb and Denne, in spreading the gospel in country places, especially in Kent: and was esteemed a leader among the general baptists.—Crosby says, his congregation was small; but Edwards

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\* J. Davis's Last Legacy, pp. 11, 12.

† Wilson's Hist. and Antiq. of Diss. Churches, Vol. II. p. 176.  
—Vol. III. p. 228.

assures us that he had many in fellowship with him. He tells us that, on Nov. 12th. 1645, about eighty anabaptists met, at a house in Bishopsgate-street; "many of them," says he, belonging to the church of one Barber," when five new members were received. From his manner of telling the story, it is more than probable, that this was a meeting of Mr. Barber's church, to receive new members by the imposition of hands, and to celebrate the Lord's supper. His church must, therefore, at this time, be numerous and prosperous. Mr. D'Anvers states, on the authority of an eye and ear witness, that this was the first church that practised the laying on of hands on baptized believers: and that it was introduced about the year 1646, among them, by Mr. Cornwell.\*

In the close of this year, the parliament, finding their former ordinance against unordained preachers, by various pleas and evasions, rendered ineffectual, published a Declaration, dated Dec. 26th. 1646, of a more decided nature. It excludes unordained preachers, not only from churches and chapels, but from preaching and expounding in any public place: and it prohibits them, and all other persons, from speaking or writing any thing "against, or in derogation of the church government which is now established by authority of both houses of parliament:" and authorizes and enjoins, not only the civil magistrates, but officers of the army, "to prevent offences of this kind, and to apprehend the offenders, and to give notice hereof to this

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\* Crosby, Vol. I. pp. 151 and 219.—Looking Glass for Baptists, pp. 1, 2.—Gangræna, Part I. p. 45.—D'Anvers' Laying on of hands. p. 58.

house, that thereupon course may be speedily taken for a due punishment to be inflicted on them."\* This was certainly a strong measure, and shewed too plainly the real disposition of the presbyterians, whose discipline was now established by law. But the circumstances of the times, in a great measure, restrained its operation. There were numbers of nonconformists, or, as they were then called, sectaries, in the army, and in every part of the kingdom, who boldly asserted their right to think and act for themselves in matters of religion: and the civil powers did not judge it either practicable or prudent, in the unsettled state in which the government then stood, to push matters to extremity.

The baptists, both general and particular, were now very numerous; and several of them persons of influence and property. Many were in the army, both in the ranks and among the officers. Their tenets and their practices, therefore, became better known; and their importance, as members of society, was more justly appreciated. It was, probably, these, and similar causes that induced the parliament, in less than three months from the date of the last declaration, to publish another, that discovered more of a christian spirit. It was dated March 4th. 1647, and, after adverting to the never-to-be-forgotten Munster anabaptists, proceeds thus: "But for their opinion against the baptism of infants, it is only a difference about a circumstance of time in the administration of an ordinance, wherein, in former ages as well as this, learned men have differed both in opinion and practice. And

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\* Crosby, Vol. I. p. 94.

though we could wish that all men would satisfy themselves, and join with us in our judgment and practice in this point ; yet herein we hold it fit that men should be convinced by the word of God, with great gentleness and reason, and not beaten out of it with force and violence.”\*

From such a declaration as this, it might have been conjectured that the parliament began to entertain more liberal views of the rights of conscience ; but the events of a few months tended to prove the fallacy of such conjectures. The ruling party were the avowed enemies of toleration in religious concerns : and though the embarrassments of their situation, the fear of displeasing many of the soldiers, and the growing influence of Cromwell, checked their progress ; yet they persevered, with a steady zeal, in their endeavours to promote their favourite scheme of uniformity. On May 2nd. 1648, they passed an Ordinance for punishing blasphemies and heresies. In this they declare, first, that whosoever shall, by preaching, writing, or printing, maintain opinions contrary to theirs, on a long list of obscure subjects, shall be adjudged felons without the benefit of clergy : and, secondly, that every one who maintains any tenet included in a second list of heresies, shall be required to renounce his errors in the public congregation ; and, in case of refusal, shall find bail not to maintain his errors any more. In this latter catalogue of heterodox doctrines, is the asserting, “ that the baptizing of infants is unlawful, or such baptism is void ; and that persons ought to be baptized again, and in pursuance thereof baptizing any person formerly baptized.”†

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\* Crosby, Vol. I. p. 196. † Ibid pp. 199—205.

This terrible Ordinance, which exceeded in severity most of the laws of the papists, and proscribed, at once, all the inhabitants of England, except the rigid presbyterians, discovered too plainly the spirit of that party. Had their designs succeeded, and their government obtained a permanent settlement, it is evident, that persecution, in all its horrors, would have been the portion of every one who should have dared to differ, though ever so respectfully, from the creed established by law. It is, however, the part of justice to remark, that the presbyterians, of the present age, entirely disavow the arbitrary principles of their predecessors: and heartily join in those liberal sentiments respecting the right of private judgment, which distinguish modern professors of almost every persuasion.

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SECT. 9.—*Religious liberty enjoyed in a great degree during the Interregnum.*

THE affairs of the unhappy and misguided Charles I. were now fast approaching to a crisis. After enduring a long captivity, and being dragged about from place to place, at the discretion of his former subjects, he was, at length, beheaded, Jan. 30th. 1649. As this event had been hastened by the officers of the army, they began to assume more importance: and, relying on the support of their troops, claimed a share in the management of public affairs.

Oliver Cromwell was now at the head of the army, and directed all its motions, though he had only the title of lieutenant general. This great man, for such he certainly was, had much more correct sentiments respecting religious

liberty than many of his cotemporaries. In a correspondence, A.D. 1650, with the ministers of Edinburgh, who, being rigid presbyterians, and strenuous advocates for the dignity of the ministerial office, reproached him with opening the pulpit doors to all intruders, by means of which a flood of errors had broken in upon the nation, Cromwell writes thus: "We look upon the ministers as helpers, not as lords over God's people.—Where do you find in scripture that preaching is included in your function? Though an approbation from men has order in it; yet he that hath no better has none at all.—I hope that he that ascended on high may give his gifts to whom he pleases: and if those gifts be the seal of mission, are you not envious though Eldad and Medad prophesy? You know who has bid us earnestly desire the best gifts; but chiefly that we may prophesy; which the apostle explains to be speaking to instruction, edification, and comfort; of which the instructed, edified, and comforted can best tell the energy and effect. Now if this be evidence, take heed lest you envy for your own sakes; lest you be guilty of a greater fault than Moses reprov'd in Joshua, when he envied for his sake. Indeed, you err through mistake of the scriptures. Approbation is an act of convenience with respect to order; not of necessity to give faculty to preach the gospel.—Your pretended fear lest error should step in, is like the man, who would keep all the wine out of the country, lest any should be drunk. It will be found an unwise and unjust jealousy to deny any man the liberty he hath by nature, under the supposition he may abuse it. When he doth abuse it, then judge."\*

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\* Neal, Vol. III. p. 24.

These rational sentiments of their leader were shared by the majority of the army, in which, as we have already observed, were many independents and baptists. Their influence acted as a check on the proceedings of the parliament.—When the army was in the neighbourhood of the metropolis, the votes and ordinances of the commons breathed an air of moderation and liberality; but no sooner were the forces removed than the spirit of party began to prevail, and every exertion was made to enforce a strict uniformity to the established faith. The genius of Cromwell, however, at length gained a decided ascendancy; and liberty of conscience was the happy result.

Soon after the death of the king, Cromwell, who was sent, as lord lieutenant, to reduce Ireland, which had declared for young Charles, addressed letters to the parliament, previous to his departure, recommending the removal of all penal laws relative to religion: and, in consequence, the house appointed a committee to make a report concerning a method for the ease of tender consciences. This was seconded by a petition from general Fairfax and his council of officers, presented Aug. 16th. 1649, praying that “all penal statutes formerly made, and ordinances lately made, whereby many conscientious people were molested, and the propagation of the gospel hindered, might be removed.” The house received it favourably, and promised to take the subject into speedy consideration.

An ordinance was, accordingly passed, September 20th. 1650: by which it was enacted and ordained “That all clauses, articles, and provisions, in any act or ordinance of parliament, whereby any penalty or punishment is imposed,

or meant to be imposed, on any person whatsoever, for not repairing to their respective parish churches; or for not keeping holy-days, or for not hearing common prayer, &c. shall be, and hereby is, wholly repealed and made void." In order, however, to guard against the abuse of this liberty, by the licentious and profane, the law goes on to ordain "that all persons not having a reasonable excuse shall, on every Lord's day, and day of public thanksgiving or humiliation, resort to some place of public worship; or be present at some other place in the practice of religious duty, either of prayer or preaching, reading or expounding the scriptures."\* This was a large advance towards relieving tender consciences; but as it only repealed acts made for the security of the church of England, it left some of the most obnoxious ordinances of the present parliament in full force. The confusions of the times appear, however, to have almost totally suspended their operation.

In 1653, the disputes between the parliament and the army were very violent: till Cromwell, on April 20th. dissolved the parliament by force; and, turning the members out of the house, assumed the reins of government. Dec. 16th. he was installed, with great magnificence, as the Lord Protector of the Commonwealth of England. In the Instrument of Government, drawn up by him and his officers, it was declared—"That none should be compelled to conform to the public religion, or otherwise; but that endeavours should be used to win them, by sound doctrine, and the example of a good conversation—that such as profess faith in God by Christ

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\* Neal, Vol. III. p. 28.

Jesus, though differing in judgment from the doctrine, worship, or discipline publicly held forth, should not be restrained from, but protected in the profession of their faith, and exercise of their religion, so as they abuse not this liberty to the civil injury of others, and to the actual disturbance of the public peace—and that all laws, statutes, and ordinances to the contrary shall be esteemed null and void.”\*

Thus persecution was restrained : and the interval from the death of Charles I. to the restoration of his son, may be considered as a season of religious liberty. We turn now to enquire what improvement the general baptists made of this inestimable blessing.

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SECT. 10.—*The progress of the General Baptists in Lincolnshire, during the protectorate.*

ABOUT the year 1644, there had arisen, during the civil wars, a church in the South Marsh of Lincolnshire, probably of the independent persuasion. The members of this church suffered much from calumny and persecution. They, at first, sprinkled infants ; but admitted no sponsors, and rejected the use of the cross and other ceremonies. They were a zealous and pious people : earnestly engaged in searching out the will of God, and sincerely desirous of practising what they judged he commanded. It was not to be expected that perfect uniformity would subsist, in the views of a number of persons, equally engaged in this important inquiry ; and all claiming a right to determine for themselves. Many differences arose amongst them ; and the

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\* Neal, Vol. III. p. 73.

result was, that they divided into distinct societies. In 1651, four of the members united to form a new interest, on the principle of baptizing by immersion on profession of faith. These four appear to have had the honour of laying the foundation of the general baptist cause in that part of the county \*

The principal instrument, used by the great Head of the church, for reviving the truth in these parts, was the celebrated *Thomas Grantham*. He probably, though then only seventeen years of age, was one of the four just mentioned. He soon began to be active and useful among them, and became the chief support of the infant cause. As he will bear an important part in the transactions of the general baptists for the ensuing forty years, it may be proper to give a short account of him.

He was born in the year 1634, in the village of Halton, near Spilsbury, in the east of Lincolnshire; and the house in which he first saw the light is still shewn as an object of curiosity and veneration. Tradition reports, that he was brought up in the occupation of a tailor: though we shall find that he afterwards was a respectable farmer.† We have no account of his parents; but it is probable that his family held a respectable rank in society, and was of long standing in that county. In the dedication of his principal work, he styles them, “The ancient family of the Granthams, in the county of Lincoln.”‡

He was, early in life, brought to a sense of the importance of religion. He himself states,

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\* Crosby, Vol. III. p. 77.

† Theol. Mag. Vol. III. p. 2. ‡ *Christianismus primitivus*.

that the Lord wrought faith and repentance in his soul, in the fourteenth or fifteenth year of his life : and that as soon as he found a people congregated upon the foundation principles of Christ's doctrine, Heb. vi. 1, 2. he joined himself to them. This was at Boston, in the same county, where he was baptized, in 1653, when only nineteen years of age.\* As this was no more than two years after the four persons already mentioned had left the independents, it is probable that this church at Boston had existed previous to that period. Mr. Grantham, however, continued his connection with those few friends: and was very helpful to them in procuring ministers to preach for them; whose labours were highly blest to their establishment in the faith, and to the increase of their numbers.

But it was not long before his associates discovered, that he had abilities to serve them in his own person. He was, therefore, encouraged to exercise his gifts amongst them: and in a short time, was called to the work of the ministry. He has left a very ingenuous description of his feelings on this occasion, which was written within six months of his death. "When first it pleased God to concern my thoughts about preaching the word," he says, in a letter to the Rev. Mr. Connould, dated June 11th, 1691, "I do assure you, in all faithfulness, nothing seemed more terrible to me. The greatness of the work, and my poor and low capacity, and great unfitness for so sacred a work, did cause me to strive much against many pressures in my spirit, which yet I hope were from the Lord. I remained silent under a heavy burthen, with much begging of God

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\* Dispute with Connould, p. 5.

that I might be excused ; but if not, that it would then please him to fit me for, and bless me in, the work. And he was stronger than I, and prevailed. Then I opened my mouth with great trembling and fear : (the Lord knows it.) I had rather have been sent to any drudgery in the world, than to preach. Howbeit, it pleased God to bless my weak beginnings to the edification of some, and to the illumination, and, I hope, true conversion of others. This being observed by some leading men among the baptized churches, for to them I was now related, I was chosen, though God knows unwillingly, to the office of presbyter, to take the oversight of a small congregation ; and solemnly ordained, by fasting and prayer, and laying on of hands, of such as were ordained before me.”\* This took place in 1656 : when, though only twenty-two years of age, he was chosen pastor to the church which had been gathered by the exertions of himself and the three friends who separated with him from the pædobaptists. Being settled in church order, Mr. Grantham laboured assiduously, and the church flourished under his care. Some attempts were made to disturb their peace, during the government of Cromwell, though probably without his knowledge or countenance. Warrants were obtained against them, on false accusations ; and Mr. Grantham and others were hailed before the magistrate. But they cleared themselves, and were discharged. They went on cheerfully preaching the gospel, not only in Halton, where Mr. Grantham dwelt, but in most of the neighbouring towns and villages. They frequently were roughly treated by the mob, who sometimes

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\* Ibid p. 100.

interrupted them in their discourses, dragged them out of the meeting-houses, and even stoned them. It seems that, in some instances, the magistrates themselves acted contrary to the professed principles of the Protector's government: for Mr. Grantham complains, thirty years afterwards, that, "in the time of Cromwell's usurpation, they did then hale us before the judgment-seats, because we could not worship God after the will of their Lord Protector; for so they styled him, in their articles against us. And we had then our goods taken away, and never restored to this day."\* The baptists bore all with moderation and patience; and proceeded diligently in their endeavours to spread the gospel. At length, they obtained a grant of Northolm-chapel, near Wainfleet; in which they continued several years, and had much success. One of their converts, Mr. John Watts, is mentioned as a "person very eminent, of honest repute and good note, in those parts." He was educated at the university; but, as he could not conscientiously conform to all the ceremonies of the established church, he obtained no preferment in it. He became the pastor of a society of baptists, which met in his own house.†

It appears, also, that there were, during the protectorate, other general baptist churches, in different parts of Lincolnshire, which had regular officers, and were in a flourishing state. On Sep. 11th, 1653, a letter was read in the church at Fentanton, from the general baptist church at Westby, Lincolnshire: which was dated Aug. 27th 1653, and signed by Thomas Williams, messenger; John Alleine, pastor; Kimmidge Wortley,

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\* Crosby, Vol. III. p. 86.

† Ibid Vol. III. pp. 78, 79.

deacon; J. Bullimer, W. Bullimer, J. Ibit, R. Wright and R. Cox. Its object was, to enquire into the conduct of two messengers, John Lupton and Joseph Wright, who had been sent from them into the county of Huntingdon. This letter gives a favourable idea of the number and order of the general baptists in those parts of Lincolnshire; as they had three messengers, besides pastors and deacons. They entertained lofty notions of the power of the congregation, and granted extensive commissions to the messengers whom they sent to other places. In the commission granted to John Lupton and Joseph Wright, they said, "We give them power and authority to call in question all persons, and to judge and determine all matters." Such a general warrant justly excited the jealousy of the baptists at Fenstanton; and they excepted against it. On this, J. Wright was observed to blot something out of his credentials; and, when he arrived at the next stage, the offensive clause had disappeared. The church at Westby, however, hearing of this manœuvre, disapproved of the conduct of their messenger, and sent this letter to enquire into the circumstances.

They also took this occasion to request the church at Fenstanton to send them the scripture grounds, on which they permitted persons, who had not submitted to the ordinance of laying on of hands, to communion with them: and why they broke bread in remembrance of Christ's death, at or after a feast or supper. For these Lincolnshire general baptists were strict in their discipline; and admitted none to the Lord's table with them who did not coincide, in every respect, with their sentiments. It is evident, however, from their letter, that there were many churches,

in the same county, that differed from them, in both the particulars mentioned. The answer of the church at Fenstanton to these inquiries breathes such a spirit of christian candour and forbearance, that we presume our readers will be pleased to read an extract from it, though it may, perhaps, be a little misplaced.

“Concerning your second demand,” they say, “why we do admit into the fellowship those who are disobedient to part of Christ’s doctrine, viz. the laying on of hands on all baptized believers; we answer, Because we judge them faithful in the Lord, although ignorant in that particular: and it is written, ‘him that is weak in the faith receive;’ and we read that Apollos was fervent in the spirit, instructed in the way of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John. Such we desire to take into our bosom: and, with all meekness and patience, to instruct them more perfectly in the way of the Lord, rather than to reject them, which we do not see any warrant to do. Dear brethren, we are not ignorant of the wiles of Satan, who seeketh by all means to make divisions and separations in the church of Christ; that so he may hinder the building of the Lord.

“Unto your third request, to know our grounds of breaking bread after supper, we do judge it a safe and blameless way, to follow a practice so often recorded in the scripture. Christ did institute it after supper; and it appears that the Corinthians did so practise: and that they are not blamed for supping, but for their disorder in supping. Sure we have more to say for ourselves than if it should be demanded of us, why we should receive it before supper. Yet, dear brethren, we do not judge the churches of Christ: neither do we lay it upon churches, as a command

from the Lord; neither any farther binding than an example in this kind may be binding. And for a feast of love in the church of God, if the scripture had not spoken of it all, which yet it doth often, yet we find it very necessary, the brethren coming from far, that the congregation should be refreshed before it be dismissed. Holy brethren, if we have offended, we shall be ready to correct ourselves, when it shall appear to us that we walk, in any thing, contrary to that anointing which dwelleth in you and all the saints, leading you into all truth. We beseech you, brethren, pray for us, that we may labour together in the unity of the faith; that we may be like minded one toward another, according to Christ Jesus; that we may, with one mind and one mouth, glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. The brethren with us salute you all. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of the Father, and the fellowship of the Spirit be with you all. *Amen.*

Your brethren in the Lord Jesus Christ,

JOHN DENNE.

*From Caxton, the 25th day of 7th Month, 1653."*

It would have been well if the baptists at Westby had adopted the candid and healing sentiments that prevail in this letter; and ceased to have placed so much importance on these controverted points. This unhappily was not the case: and two years afterwards, a division took place in this church. Those who adopted a supper before the breaking of bread separated from those who did not; and refused to have any communion with them. The latter wrote to the churches in Huntingdonshire to desire that Mr. H. Denne should be sent to endeavour

to reconcile their differences ; but as he was, at that time, on a mission to Canterbury, their request could not be granted.\*

At this period, there existed also a number of general baptists in those parts of Lincolnshire about Bourn, and Market Deeping. Sept. 20. 1653 a long letter was received at Fenstanton, from "the church of God in and about Langtoft and Thurlby," dated at Norborow, Sept. 18. 1653, and signed by John Bissell, Francis Wright, John Whalpoule, Rob. Dyer, Edm. Claxton, Richard Wale, John Measure, Will. Lane, John Cattell, Jonas Johnson, and Rob. Woorokes. From this letter we learn, that some time previous to this date, there had been a public dispute at Caistor, between the baptists and the priests; † and that H. Denne had been invited to assist in this debate. Many being convinced of the propriety of believers' baptism, by this conference, they united together ; and soon after requested the same active minister to pay them another visit, and assist in forming them into a regular church. This appears to have taken place at a meeting, at Helpstone : and Robert Wright, one of their members, was chosen pastor. This church did not practise the laying on of hands ; but Mr. Wright had not been long their pastor before he professed to be convinced that this

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\* F. S. R. pp. 92, 101, 204.—This society appears to have spread over many Villages. Westby, Welby and Easton, are particularly mentioned ; the two former are situated three or four miles east of Grantham, and the third about seven miles south of the same town ; in the south west part of Lincolnshire.

† It is not clear whether the episcopalian or presbyterian ministers be meant in this place : as the G. B.s used to call them all priests who partook of the emoluments of the establishment.

practice was sanctioned by the scriptures. This caused considerable uneasiness between him and the people : and Mr. Oates, of London, being in the neighbourhood, was desired to converse with him. After a full discussion of the subject, Mr. Wright seemed to give up the practice as dubious ; and engaged to leave the church to act according to its own views respecting it ; provided that he might do the same. This compromise did not produce any lasting peace. Disputes soon broke out afresh : and proceeded to such a length, that Mr. Wright and his adherents withdrew from the church ; and adopted, not only the practice of laying on of hands, but also the washing of feet, and a feast before the Lord's supper. The people whom they had left, thinking this conduct irregular, had put him and his followers under the censure of the church ; and threatened to proceed to excommunication against them. Before they took this severe step, they thought proper to submit the case to the friends in Huntingdonshire, and to solicit their advice and assistance. This was the object of the letter from which these particulars are gathered. In compliance with their request, John Denne, and Edmund Mayle, two elders of the church at Fenstanton were sent over to assist them : and were the happy instruments of restoring harmony amongst all parties.\*

During this disagreeable altercation, we are informed, that friends were invited to assist them from other societies, at Burly, Peterborough and Surfleet ; and that Mr. Coale and Mr. Spener were especially requested to attend their meet-

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\* F. S. R. pp. 94—99, and 102.

ings. From this we may conclude, that there were at this time, general baptist churches in those places, and that these two were leading men among them.\*

There was also a church of general baptists at Coningsby and Tattershall, during the government of Cromwell. The first entry in the original church-book of Coningsby, now before us, stands thus: "This book was bought by John Lupton, at London: and is to keep in memory such things as are of much concernment to the baptized people and churches in Lincolnshire; and in special for the congregation at Coningsby and Tattershall.

Sept. 29th. 1657.

JOHN LUPTON."

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SECT. 11.—*General Baptist churches in the counties adjoining to Lincolnshire, before the Restoration.*

Mr. R. Wright did not continue long with the people at Thurlby: for, in 1655, we find him preaching for a general baptist church, at Peterborough, in the adjoining county of Northampton. How long this church had existed, previous to this date, we have no means of determining. It appears not to have adopted the practice of the laying on of hands, till the beginning of that year. On April 22d. 1655, Thomas Pierson, a member of this society, applied to the church at Fenstanton, requesting that some elder might be sent to them, to administer that ordinance. John Denne and Edmund Mayle were accordingly sent; and, on May 10th, 1655, at-

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\* Ibid p. 97.

tended a meeting of the Peterborough friends, and laid hands on fourteen persons. They were afterwards informed, that Robert Wright maintained doctrines that tended to licentiousness; and were desired to admonish him of his errors. This they did; but it produced little effect. In the following August, Messrs. Denne and Mayle visited Peterborough again, at the earnest solicitations of the friends there, to take the matter into further consideration. They were pleased to find Mr. Thomas Lamb, of Coleman-street, at that place: and, in conjunction with him, proceeded to examine the charges against Mr. Wright. The result was, an unanimous resolution that, if he should, notwithstanding the reproofs of the church, continue to maintain those opinions, they would have no communion with him. The opinions held by Mr. Wright, for which he was censured, are thus recorded:—  
“1. That the Lord Jesus Christ, by his death, hath taken away all sin, whether past, present, or to come: and 2. That believers ought not to pray for the pardon of any sin.”\* What effect this measure had, we are not informed; as we hear nothing more of this society for many years.

About this time, the general baptists were numerous and active in various parts of Cambridgeshire. At Wisbeach, a number of persons of this persuasion appear to have supported the cause for some time, without being regularly organized as a church. Two leading men among them were Mr. John Milles and Mr. Taylor. The former wrote to the church at Fenstanton, Feb. 20<sup>th</sup> 1655, giving an account of the state of

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\* F. S. R. pp. 211, 214, 224, 232, 233.

the congregation: and earnestly beseeching them to send faithful messengers, "to do the work of the Lord, and to administer his ordinances to those amongst them, whose hearts were free and ready to embrace the truth." In compliance with this invitation, John Denne and Edmund Mayle were sent to Wisbeach; and on April 9th attended a meeting of the congregation. They were gladly received by the brethren; but found them much divided in their sentiments concerning several points of discipline, especially respecting the imposition of hands. Mr. Taylor strongly opposed the practice; but Mr Denne and his companion answered his objections so much to the satisfaction of the congregation, that thirteen of them submitted to the ordinance, and the opposers of it were silenced. These messengers afterwards composed some differences between the church and John Milles, and prepared for their departure. The Wisbeach friends having many things in which they desired their assistance, requested them to continue with them some time longer. The messengers, however, did not feel themselves authorized to extend their visit without the authority of the congregation, which had sent them; but promised, on their return, to lay their request before their church: which they did, and the friends at Fenstanton agreed that they should pay a second visit to Wisbeach.

These ministers, therefore, set out, on May 13, following; but Mr. Denne was recalled, after he had begun his journey, on account of some occurrences at home. Mr. Mayle, on his arrival at Wisbeach, found there Messrs. J. Lupton and J. Wright, the two Lincolnshire messengers: who insisted, that it was the duty of those who prac-

tised laying on of hands to separate from those who did not, and to have no communion with them. This being contrary to the opinion of the baptists in Huntingdonshire, caused considerable discussion: and the minds of the friends became too much agitated to proceed to any regular determination. Mr. Mayle returned, and left Messrs. Lupton and Wright. These messengers did not, however, settle the controversy: for, in the September succeeding, in compliance with the earnest request of the baptists at Wisbeach, Messrs. Denne and Mayle paid them another visit. On their return, they gave a pleasing account of their proceedings, to a general meeting of their own congregation, Oct. 7th. 1655.— This report, containing several interesting particulars, we shall insert, in their own words; as a specimen of the manner in which their records were kept.

“ On the seventh day of the eighth month, at a general meeting of the congregation, held at Papworth Everard, after prayer and supplication to the Lord, and some words of doctrine and exhortation, Edmund Mayle spake as followeth: viz. ;

“ Brethren, according to your order, upon the two-and-twentieth of the seventh month, our brother Denne and myself went to Wisbeach; where we were joyfully received by the brethren.

The next day, being the first day of the week, the brethren did assemble together; and we being present with them, after we had prayed, they desired us to speak some words of exhortation, which accordingly we did. After this, the brethren did certify us, that they were all convinced of the doctrine of laying on of hands; yea, even brother Taylor, who was so mightily

against it, when we were with them before. They likewise desired us to administer it unto them; which accordingly we did: praising and glorifying the name of the Lord, for that he had wrought such unity that day.

After this, the congregation certified us, that they had chosen officers amongst themselves, both elders and deacons: and they desired, that they might be ordained by us. We demanded who they were that they had chosen. They then declared their names to us: Edmund Smith, and Israel Cave, were chosen elders. We then desired to know whether there had been a free election, according to the rule of the holy scripture, with the consent of the whole congregation; and we likewise desired, that if any person belonging to the congregation had any thing to object against the persons nominated, they would freely speak, and declare what they had to say: but there was not any that objected, but every one testified their free assent, according to their former election. Whereupon we prayed to the Lord for them, that he would indue them with wisdom, and in every thing fit them for the work unto which he had called them. After which we ordained them, by the ordinance of laying on of hands and prayer: whereupon there was much joy in the congregation, and prayer was rendered unto God: and so the assembly was dismissed.

The next day, when we had prayed and taken leave of the brethren, we returned home.”\*

In the same county, there was also another general baptist society, at Littleport, in the Isle of Ely, under the care of Samuel and Ezekiel Cater, as Elders; two persons of considerable

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\* F. S. R. pp. 192, 208, 216, 224, 232, 238.

eminence in the church. Both these embraced the doctrine of the quakers ; and carried along with them many of the members. Report of this defection being brought to a conference of baptist ministers, at Cambridge, May 3rd. 1655, they proceeded to consider the case ; and sent two messengers, John Ray and John Tabram, to reprove them ; and, if they did not repent, to degrade them from their eldership, and afterwards to excommunicate them. In virtue of this appointment, these two ministers arrived at Littleport, on the following day : and, learning that the quakers were assembled in an orchard, immediately went thither. Perceiving the two Caters present, John Ray proceeded to execute his commission. " I made my speech," says he, in a letter to the churches, to certify them of his proceedings, " I made my speech in the audience of them all : declaring, that I was sent, with brother Tabram, from the general assembly of the elders and brethren of the church of Christ, assembled the third day of May, at Cambridge, who did, after mature consideration, determine that we should come both to degrade and excommunicate these two apostates Samuel and Ezek. Cater. After this was done, I charged all good people, in the name of the Lord Jesus, likewise to disown them ; so far as to have nothing to do with them at all : neither to receive them into their houses, nor yet to wish them ' God speed ; ' no, nor yet to entertain any discourse or dispute with them ; but to shun them, and all such profane and vain babblers and babbling, because their words will eat as doth a canker : and increase unto more ungodliness : and, therefore, they were much rather to be shunned than reasoned with."

After this thundering speech, Mr. Ray went to the parish church, with the unanimous consent of the inhabitants of the town; the greatest part of whom followed him. There he declared, publicly, for what purpose he was come to that place, and by whose authority: and afterwards preached Jesus to them, both in his person and offices, from 2 Pet. ii. 20, 21. Before he had concluded, the quakers came, in a body, to the church, and railed against him with great rudeness; but he, esteeming them past conviction, had come to a previous resolution, not to attempt to reason with them, and, therefore, left the church, without replying to their invectives.—The next day, the baptists held another meeting, in a private house, and were again interrupted by the quakers. It seems, from a list subjoined to this account, that twelve members of this little church, became quakers, and twenty-two remained stedfast to their principles.\*

These public excommunications and interdictions certainly discovered no small disposition to lord it over other men's faith; and would have proceeded with more grace and consistency from

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\* F. S. R. pp. 213. 217.—In 1657, James Parnell, one of the quakers who were present when John Ray excommunicated J. and E. Cater, published an account of that transaction, which, when we consider the different views of the narrators, agrees very well with the relation given by J. Ray. According to him, when J. R. had finished his speech J. P. rebuked him. J. R. however, declined staying to hear him; but informed them that he might be found shortly at the steeple-house. J. P. after his departure continued his harangue as long as he pleased; and then went in search of him to the parish church. "I found thee, John Ray," says he, "set in the chiefest place in the assembly, in the seat of the Pharisee, speaking a divination of thine own brain." The quaker then gives a curious account of the sermon, which, as he asserts, consisted of meanings, uses, applications,

a conclave of cardinals, than from a meeting of a few lay preachers, and their bearers, assembled at the dwelling-house of Brother Hindes, at Cambridge. But the extravagant and impious opinions and practices which, in those times of licentiousness, disgraced many professors of religion, made it necessary for the friends of truth and sobriety to draw the line of distinction plain and strong, that they might not be involved in the odium of tenets which they abhorred. This may excuse, but cannot justify the measures we have just contemplated.

There was also a general baptist church at Streatham, in the county of Cambridge, which, in 1656, was under the pastoral care of John Tabram. It appears to have been numerous and flourishing; as, on Oct. 26th. of that year, Messrs. J. Denne and E. Mayle, in compliance with their earnest request, paid them a visit; and assisted in the ordination of two teachers and one deacon. The names of the former were, Thomas Bedford and Robert Gardiner; and of the latter Thomas Gotobed. Thomas Bedford soon after removed to Hawson, and fell into divers immoralities, which obliged the brethren to withdraw from their communion with him.

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and divinations, in which believers' baptism was defended from Col. ii. 12. When J. R. had concluded, J. P. stood up and claimed a right, from the usage of the primitive church, 1 Cor. xiv. 30, 31. to speak in his turn. He proceeded to confute the sentiments just delivered from the pulpit; and, if we credit him, drove the preacher discomfited out of the steeple-house.—The next day there was another squabble between these two parties, when J. Tabram pushed the quaker out of doors; who, in return, shook off the dust of his feet against the baptists.

*Parnell's Watcher, or Stone cut out of the Mountain without hands striking at the feet of Jesus. 1657. p. 38. &c.*

And, though he afterwards earnestly applied for re-admission into their society; yet, his conduct not being consistent with his profession, he was refused.\*

Besides these societies of general baptists which we have already enumerated, we have notices of several others in the same county, which appear to have been at this period numerous and respectable. Many of the branches of the church of Fenstanton were scattered in various parts of Cambridgeshire. Mr. Henry Denne resided at Elsley, and had many adherents: and his son John, who was for many years a principal elder in that church, dwelt at Caxton pastures. In most of the towns and villages bordering on Huntingdonsire, there were societies of general baptists; most of whom were considered as united with Fenstanton church: but there were others that acted as distinct churches. The following transaction brings some of them to view.

November 17th. 1654, a fire broke out on the premises of John Wilson, of Great Eversden, a farmer, and member of Fenstanton church; which in a short time consumed his barns and all his out-houses, together with his whole stock of hay and grain. He asked the advice of the church on the propriety of applying to the magistrates for letters of request to the inhabitants of the county. A meeting was called, to consider of the subject; and, as it was thought that the honour of the gospel was deeply interested in it, the final adjustment was referred to a general meeting of two brethren from each church in the neighbourhood. This was summoned to meet at Cambridge, on December 8th; when it was una-

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\* F. S. R., pp. 298, 306, 324, 327, 341, 349.

nimously agreed to help their distressed brother amongst themselves, and neither to apply to the county, nor to distant churches. The brethren present, therefore promised, on the behalf of their respective societies, each to give a certain sum. Brother Hindes, of Cambridge, was appointed treasurer; and the money ordered to be all paid into his hands, before the first day of the ensuing month. The whole loss was estimated at thirty pounds; of which the congregation at Fenstanton agreed to raise six. The other churches, to which invitations were sent on this occasion, are thus recorded:—“1. To Warboys and Chatteris. 2. To Ely, Littleport, and Streatham. 3. To Cambridge. 4. To Salsham, Burwell, and Wigan. 5. To Wood-Ditton and the places adjacent. 6. To Wilbroim\* and Balsham. 7. To Melbourn, Royston, Hawson, and Thaxfield.” These societies appear to have punctually fulfilled the engagements entered into by their representatives; except Thaxfield church, the elder of which, Anthony Grey, objected to the mode of assessment.† Though we shall probably meet with no other mention of some of these societies; yet there is every reason to believe, that, during the protectorate of Cromwell, there existed a regular general baptist church at each of these places.

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SECT. 12.—*The Transactions of the General Baptist Church at Fenstanton, Hunts.*

WE have seen, already, that the general baptist society at Fenstanton was flourishing, in the

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\* Probably Wilbraham.

† F. S. R., pp. 154, 163, 172.

year 1644, and had their regular officers.\* Mr. Henry Denne appears to have been a principal instrument in gathering it, and a diligent labourer in it. But his active disposition, and the great usefulness of his labours, both as a preacher and disputant, often leading him to distant places, to plant new churches, or to set in order those which he had already planted; it does not appear that he was ever considered as the settled pastor over any congregation; though he was many years a regular member of this church.

In the close of the year 1651, our official account of the proceedings of this society commences. At that time, it was numerous and extended, on every side, over many villages. John Denne, the son of H. Denne, just mentioned, and Edmond Mayle, were co-pastors; or, as they were then called, joint elders; and they had several other acceptable preachers. About this period, the quakers, ranters, and other enthusiasts were very active in spreading their extravagant notions; and too successful in making proselytes. Many members of this church fell into their errors: and, pretending to have superior manifestations of the Holy Spirit within, despised the scriptures, and neglected the means of grace. A number of persons belonging to this congregation, resided at Yelling, amongst whom these opinions had gained many advocates. The first church act, contained in their Records, is a sensible letter to these deluded people, dated Dec. 10th. 1651; and signed by John Denne, Edmond Mayle, John Disbrow, and Thomas Coxe. After some pious and affectionate salutations, they say, “Brethren, we do much rejoice

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\* See above, p. 104.

to hear of the great manifestations that God, if it be as you say, hath been pleased to give unto you; earnestly desiring, that the Lord would confirm you more and more, until you be perfected in the knowledge of God: for it is our desire, and above all things we wish, that all the Lord's people were prophets. But, beloved brethren, we wonder much to hear, that you are in doubt how you should try the spirits. What! know ye not your own minds, that you ought to try the spirits by the scriptures, which are able to make a man of God perfect unto salvation? We beseech you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you would meditate on the holy scriptures; and receive them, as a light to your feet, and as a lantern to your path, to guide you in the way of truth; and in no wise receive any inward manifestations above, or contrary to, the written word." After urging the propriety and necessity of attending to this advice, from a variety of excellent topics, they conclude thus: "We write not these things as judging you; but in love, to warn you: that you might take heed of the temptations of Satan, and continue steadfast in the ways of our Lord God: to whom, with his Son, and the blessed Spirit, be all honour, praise, and thanksgiving, both now and for evermore."\*

Notwithstanding the affectionate and timely admonitions of their friends, these enthusiasts persisted in their error. Some of them carried their impiety and folly so far, that they derided all the ordinances of christianity, declared that they were arrived at perfection, and would not follow the apostles, who were poor imperfect

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\* F.S. R. pp. 4-6.

creatures:—sighted the scriptures of truth, and refused to be guided by them;—asserted that all things were God, and that there was no sin; and many other unintelligible fancies. The church exercised great forbearance towards them; and took great pains to convince them of their errors; but without effect: and, in the beginning of the next year, 1652, they were obliged to exclude a considerable number; some of whom became, afterwards, leading men amongst the quakers.\*

These zealous baptists appear to have been very attentive to discipline: and their elders much employed in travelling from place to place, to comfort the afflicted, strengthen the weak, encourage the desponding, reclaim the wandering, and rebuke the gainsayers. This, however, did not satisfy their enlarged desires: they panted to be more extensively useful. At a general church-meeting, Oct. 23d. 1653, Mr. H. Denne put the brethren in mind of the commission of Christ, “Preach the gospel to every creature.” “I desire,” said he, “that we may seriously consider whether we are not in a great fault, in being so negligent in sending forth persons to divulge the gospel in those many places that are ignorant thereof. Truly I conceive we are much to blame; and, especially, seeing there are many towns hereabouts that have no teachers: and who can tell but the Lord may work in this opportunity!”† The congregation, convinced of the justice of this charge, appointed the 28th of the same month for a day of fasting and prayer, to confess their fault in this matter, and to humble themselves before God. On that day, Mr. H.

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\* . S. R. pp. 12, 17, 19, &c. † Ibid p. 104.

Denne “was chosen and ordained, by imposition of hands, a messenger to divulge the gospel of Jesus Christ.” At the same time, John Gilman was elected a deacon.\*

On the 3d of November, Henry Denne set out from Elsley, on his tour, accompanied by Christopher Marriatt. They visited Kingston, Toft, Hasingfield, Hawson, Cambridge,† and Shelford in Cambridgeshire; Littlebury, and Newport‡ in Essex; and returned through Royston, Melbourne, and Cambridge to Elsley, on the fourteenth day of the same month. On the twentieth they gave a written account of their proceedings to the congregation by which they had

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\* F. S. R. p. 105.

† Mr. Denne and his companions spent the first Lord's day of this tour at Cambridge, where their friends procured for them the use of “a place in public,” most probably the parish church; and Mr. Denne preached to a numerous and attentive auditory. In his discourse, he took occasion to assert believers' baptism, oppose infant sprinkling, and prove that ordinances had not ceased. Many professed to be convinced; but desired time for consideration and instruction. The itinerants therefore proposed to return and preach again the next Lord's day: when they arrived, however, at the time appointed, some discontented persons had exerted themselves to get “the place in public” shut against them; and they spent the day in a private meeting for exercise and prayer, with the brethren, at the house of brother Hindes.—F. S. R. pp. 106. 115.

‡ “The same night,” say these messengers in their report, “we went to Newport in Essex, where we entered into the house of one Fordam, a tanner, unto whom we declared the end of our coming to enquire after the people and to know their state. He told us, we were welcome, desired us to sit down, and commanded meat to be set before us.” After they had eaten, their generous host began a long mystical discussion, to prove—that the humansoul was God—that there exists nothing besides God—that men sinned by the power of God—that there is no sin, &c. These extravagant doctrines alarmed his pious guests. “We went aside,” say they, “and consulted together whether it were safe for us to abide in the house all night; though

been sent forth, which is preserved in their Records. In most of the places which they visited, Mr. Denne preached with great acceptance, and declared the ordinances of the gospel. In some he baptized several; and, in many, he found persons who had formerly been united with the baptists, to whom he administered reproof and admonition. It appears, on the whole, that this short journey produced good effects.

On the 19th of November, Mr. H. Denne, at the earnest request of many of the inhabitants of Hawson and Shelford, paid another visit to those places. The clergyman and chief men of Hawson requested him to preach in the parish church.— With this request he complied; but a mob, instigated, as it afterwards appeared, by the same persons who had invited him, collected together, and would not suffer him to proceed. He, therefore, left the church; and, going to a private house, he preached there to a numerous audience, in defence of his peculiar tenets. Next day he went to Shelford; but a clergyman, who was a justice of the peace, exerted himself to prevent the people from going to hear him. His discourse, however, had a good effect; and two persons followed him to Hawson, and were baptized. A third offered himself; but wished to

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it was late: and we were both pressed in spirit to depart. We then came to him again, and told him, that, forasmuch as we did perceive, that he had forsaken the faith and followed delusions, we could not but judge, that God was not in that place; and therefore we were resolved to depart. He desired us not to be angry; if we would stay, we should be welcome. We answered, we were not angry; but grieved much to hear such things from him. We departed, and went up and down the town to find a lodging in the night: which at last God provided for us. We cannot perceive, but that all fear of God, as far as we can see, is extinct in that place.”—F. S. R. pp. 111,—114.

stipulate for liberty to hear the ministers of the church of England as often as he pleased. Mr. D. asked him whether he esteemed them the ministers of Christ or antichrist. The man confessed they were the ministers of antichrist; but urged that they preached some good things.—“Yes,” replied H. Denne, “and so did the devil, when he said that Jesus was the Son of God.” At length, the candidate confessed that he held a farm of a gentleman, who would turn him out, if he knew that he was baptized. H. Denne observed, that the earth was the Lord’s, and the fulness thereof; and exhorted him to trust in God, and he would be a better landlord to him than his present one. The man promised to consider of it, and departed; but, like the rich young man in the gospel, it does not appear that he ever returned.\*

A transaction of a more private nature, which took place about this time, is recorded; and ought to be preserved. A poor woman, of the name of Mary Whittock, a member of the church at Fenstanton, had procured a livelihood, by hawking small wares round the country. She had an infirm mother, and several small children dependent on her for support. In the beginning of the winter of 1653, her mother being much indisposed, and the weather inclement, she was unable to travel as usual, and was reduced to great distress and want. She had been driven from several places by the parish officers, who feared that she would become chargeable to them. At last, she sought an asylum at Royston; but was ordered away from that town, under the same apprehensions. Thus, destitute of shelter,

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\* F. S. R. pp. 115—117.

and not knowing whither to direct her steps to obtain support, she was found, Nov. 30th. by Mr. H. Denne, and Mr. Gilman, another worthy minister of the same church, who had gone to Royston on business. They immediately took the outcast into their care, and carried her, in their market cart, to Caxton. Here Mr. J. Denne took her into his house, supplied her wants for several weeks, and then laid her case before the congregation. Three brethren were appointed by the church to provide her suitable lodgings and accommodation; and, lest she should again be disturbed by the parish, security was given that she should not become chargeable to it. After nourishing her and her dependents through the severest part of the winter, they supplied her with money to purchase a small stock of goods, that she might resume her little trade; and gave her a letter of recommendation to the neighbouring churches.\*

The ministers of this church were very successful in their endeavours to spread the knowledge of the gospel. It appears, from a Register of Baptisms preserved in Warboys' church book, that, in less than four years, commencing from the close of 1651, there were added to the churches of Fenstanton and Warboys only, by baptism,

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\* Ibid pp, 118, 123.—Mr. Edwards is much displeas'd with Mr. Denne for disgracing the dignity of the ministerial office, by having been seen driving a cart on the road to London. If this was the occurrence to which he refers, we may venture to leave it to the judgment of every true gentleman, whether Mr. D. or Mr. E. were more *honourably* employ'd: the one, in conducting a distressed sister to relief and protection; the other in raking the kennels of calumny and prejudice for dirt, with which to blacken the characters of cotemporaries more worthy than himself.—*Edward's Grangræna. Part. 1. p.106.*

more than one hundred and seventy persons; most of whom resided in those two places, or in their immediate neighbourhood. When it is recollected, that this society then spread over many towns and villages, in several adjacent counties, their numbers must have been great. The discipline of this church, during this period, appears to have been diligently exercised: and, notwithstanding the distance of many branches of the congregation, there was a vigilant inspection maintained, not only over the conduct, but also over the opinions of the members. Indeed, the strange and impious tenets which were then propagated by many wild enthusiasts, rendered such a watchful jealousy highly necessary. The quakers, especially, were very busy in those parts, and several baptists were led away by them. In the beginning of 1654, when Messrs. J. Denne and E. Mayle, by order of the church, visited Bolton and Dunton in Bedfordshire, they found that several of the brethren in those villages had "forsaken the faith;" whom, after many unavailing attempts to reclaim, they were obliged to exclude.\*

In the following year, 1655, this church suffered a heavy loss, by the defection of one of its principal ministers, who embraced Calvinistic sentiments. This was John Matthews, who, so early as 1647, is mentioned as "a teacher in the church."† He was a preacher of great eminence amongst the general baptists. To adopt the words of his associate, J. Denne, in giving the congregation an account of the proceedings against him, "He not only owned the truth, but likewise preached it publickly to the world; at

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\* Ibid pp. 124—133. 134, 135.

† See above, p. 106.

which time the Spirit and power of God was so manifested in him, that none of the adversaries durst open their mouths to oppose it." Mr. Matthews, it appears, had gone into Ireland, whether as a preacher or not does not appear. He continued some time in that island; and, on his return, was discovered to have changed his creed, in several important particulars. His former friends were grieved at this alteration; and sent Mr. J. Denne, and some other brethren, to converse with him. In this conference, he frankly acknowledged his change of sentiments; but insisted that the general baptists were in an error, and that he had discovered the truth. They endeavoured to convince him of the contrary; but he remained unmoved: and told them, that "it was in vain to multiply words about the matter; for he knew what they could say; he being once as ready to say the same things." "Whereupon," says J. Denne, "we did, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, reprove him for his sin, exhorting him to consider from whence he was fallen, and repent and turn unto the Lord; if, peradventure, the thought of his heart might be forgiven him. But he refused to hearken to our words." Afterwards other messengers were sent to admonish him a second and a third time: but their reproofs were as ineffectual as their arguments, and he still persisted in his opinions. He was therefore, at last, summoned before the church: when the congregation, after repeating their arguments, reproofs, and exhortations, and "finding no hope of recovery, but a stubborn persisting in his evil, delivered him unto Satan."

The heresies of this deserter are thus described:—"The things affirmed by him, contrary to the doctrine believed by us, and formerly preached

by him, are as followeth : “ 1. That Christ died only for his elect, even such as either do or shall believe in him.—2. That God hath from the beginning chosen a certain number of persons to himself: to which persons he cometh with such a compulsive power that they cannot resist.—3. That God hath, from the beginning, preordained a certain number of persons to condemnation, from which persons he withholdeth all manner of power, so that there is not any possibility of their believing.”\*

It must be painful to every candid mind, to observe men, who could so forcibly plead the cause of religious liberty against the encroachment of the civil power, assume to themselves the right of “ delivering their fellow-christians to Satan,” for venturing to differ from them in sentiment. Their censures were, however, wholly spiritual: and, while they thus freely dispensed the sentences of the congregation, they disclaimed every idea of men’s circumstances, as members of society, being affected by any decision of the church. Another opportunity may occur, when it will be proper to shew, that they affixed significations to the most grating terms much less offensive than a modern reader would suppose. In the mean time, it is pleasing to observe, that these old general baptists were men of principle and decision; hearty in the defence of what they esteemed the doctrines of the gospel; and determined to have no fellowship with those who dishonoured or opposed them.

The affairs of the church at Fenstanton continued to exhibit the usual mixture of pleasing and painful events: but for several years the

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\* F. S. R. pp. 226.—231.

cause flourished, and their numbers increased. Their judicious and laborious ministers not only superintended their own flock with affection, diligence, and zeal; but were very instrumental in gathering, and setting in order, distant churches; in composing differences among their neighbours; and in promoting the interests of religion, and the good of society. Their Records afford abundant evidence of the truth of these assertions; but it would far exceed the limits of this work to enter into the detail. What has already been said will give the reader some idea of the flourishing state of this society during the protectorate of Cromwell.

The circumstances of the neighbouring church at Warboys, during this period, were very similar to those at Fenstanton. Its formation has been already noticed.\* In the years 1648 and 1649, the hearers increased, and several were added to the church: but, in the following year, the quakers, ranters, and levellers seduced so many of the members, that the remainder were discouraged, and the regular meetings of the congregation were much neglected. For a short season, indeed, they appear to have been nearly discontinued. But, in 1651, those who retained their sentiments, and wished for the success of the cause, were encouraged and assisted by the elders of Fenstanton to seek out one another, and resume their stated assemblies. And the next year, William Dunn was again chosen, by lot, for overseer; and John Richards for deacon.

In three years after this date, the cause had so much prospered, that it was thought necessary to increase the number of their officers: when

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\* See above, p. 104.

Thomas Chapman was chosen as joint elder with William Dunn; and John Stockley and Richard Hawkins were added to the deacons. These were all ordained by Messrs. J. Denne and Edmond Mayle. About this time, also, the practice of imposition of hands, and of a feast before the Lord's supper, were adopted by this society; because "the ancient churches did practice them, and for greater unity with other churches near to them."

In the succeeding years, 1656 and 1657, many were baptized: but they were obliged to exclude several for disorderly conduct, or erroneous principles. Amongst those who were called to account for their irregularities, was John Dunn, the brother of William Dunn, their elder.—The latter shewed too great an inclination to defend his relation: and this caused a coldness between him and his people. He was, also, about this time, charged with some unsoundness in the faith, and with leaning too much to the church of England: though it is probable that these accusations would not have been heard of, had not the seeds of disaffection been sown by his conduct respecting his relation. His colleague in office, Thomas Chapman, appears to have been his most active accuser. By his influence, the elders of Fenstanton were requested to come over to Warboys, to assist the church in composing this difference. Accordingly, April 15th 1658, Messrs. J. Denne and E. Mayle paid them a visit: and the whole business was laid before them. The result was, that W. Dunn, refusing to acknowledge he had done wrong, was forbidden to preach. On this decision, he absented himself from the public worship of the congregation; and, for that offence, was excommunicated.—These unhappy altercations continuing

through the two succeeding years, greatly retarded the progress of the cause; and prevented the success of the gospel.\*

Before we close this section, it may be proper to notice a transaction of a more public nature. A meeting of elders and brethren, from many of the general baptist churches, was held, at Stamford, July 2d and 3d, 1656. A request was sent to this meeting, from a number of general baptists at Uppingham, in Rutlandshire, "that messengers might be sent into the west, for the work of the ministry." Two ministers, John Fairbrother and William Reignolds, were accordingly appointed to this service. It was agreed that each messenger should be allowed ten shillings weekly, for the support of himself and his family, while he was employed in this mission: and certain brethren were appointed by the assembly to take care of their wives and families in their absence. In order to raise the necessary funds for this undertaking, each of the brethren present

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\* W. C. B. 1647.—1660.—When we consider the characters of the good men who assisted the church on this occasion, we must conclude, that they proceeded on sufficient evidence in censuring William Dunn; otherwise an entry in the church book would lead us to suspect the contrary. This entry was made, probably, by Mr. Dunn, himself; and, if we credit it, the only proof they had of his "favouring the priests" was, that he had said, in company with a few friends, that he thought it was better to hear some of the priests, than to sit at home not employed in the service of God.—That Thomas Chapman was his accuser appears from the letter sent to Fenstanton to invite their elders. It runs in this strain. "Brethren, forasmuch as many differences have happened between William Dunn and Thomas Chapman, elders of the church at Warboys;—We beseech you to send one or two of your elders to hear the said differences between the said elders of Warboys, and to help the brethren at Warboys with your advice for ending them."—W. B. C. p. 16. F. S. R. p. 365.

engaged that his own church should contribute towards the expences; and promised that he would endeavour to "stir up" those societies that lay near him, to assist in the good work. A list of the names of the persons, and of the societies, is preserved: and it is inserted here, as the best catalogue that has come to hand, of the general baptist churches existing, at that time, on the north of the metropolis.

"These are the names of the persons that did engage for the societies hereafter named: William Inge, and Thomas Christian, for Leicester; and to stir up Eccleshelton and Mountsorrell—John Kirby, for Nottingham; and to stir up Winford and Rimson—Isaac Spener and Christopher Bell, for Peterborough; and to stir up Wisbeach and Fenstanton—Benjamin Morley and Francis Stanley, for Kavensthorpe; and to stir up Newton, and as many as they can—Geo. More, for Whitwell and Markfield; and to stir up Twyford\*—John Wilkinson to stir up Langtoft, Thurlby, and Bitome."

In pursuance of this arrangement, Messrs. Spener and Bell wrote to the church at Fenstanton, informing them of the design, and requesting their assistance in its execution.—This letter is preserved in their Records: and from that source these particulars are drawn.—The congregation at Fenstanton, however, declined any immediate co-operation; because that, by the mode proposed, it would be impos-

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\* The church at Twyford, in Leicestershire, addressed the church at Fenstanton in behalf of a distressed brother, James Arding. The letter was dated, August 26, 1655, and signed by John Bull, Richard Hill, Charles Latham, William and Thomas Pocklington, and seven others. This is the only notice of this church we have yet seen.—F. S. R. p. 255.

sible to ascertain whether the sum collected was adequate or inadequate: and, because that one of the messengers nominated had formerly fallen from the truth, and joined the ranters; by which he had, in their opinion, for ever disqualified himself for bearing any office in the church. This opinion they founded on Ezek xliv. 10—13.\*

There was a general baptist church, not mentioned in this list, which appears, at this period, to have been numerous and flourishing: though much disturbed by the contentions which then unhappily agitated the whole body of baptists. This church was gathered about Thorpe and Wackerly, in the county of Rutland. Some of the members of this society held the propriety of laying on of hands on baptized believers: but the majority, with the elders, Robert Ward and F. Tiptoft, at their head, esteemed it a scriptureless practice; and passed a decree, declaring it unlawful to have communion with those who adopted it. This provoked the minority; and they remonstrated freely against the temper and manner in which this step had been taken. The other party retorted their charge, by placing their opponents under the discipline of the church, and threatening to proceed against them to excommunication. On this, the minority addressed an epistle to the church at Fenstanton, dated Nov. 29th, 1656, entreating their advice and assistance. The congregation at Fenstanton wrote a conciliatory letter to the majority: recommending them “to stay the proceedings; and to let some brethren, of other churches, who were not concerned in the things in difference, hear the matter.” To this proposal the majority at

Thorpe returned a decided answer: "As for uniting together again," they say, "it is impossible, unless they disown that which the scriptures will not own. And, whereas you intreat us to stay our proceedings, and to let others, that are not concerned in the difference, have the hearing thereof; we judge there are none in fellowship, but are either under, or not under laying on of hands; and so must needs be concerned. And, as for our proceedings, we have the scripture for our warrant, and God and our consciences for our witnesses; and we are determined to follow their counsel therein." When their friendly monitors found them thus resolute, they wisely concluded to "let them alone."

In the letter from Fenstanton, there is mention made of a meeting at Leicester, at which it was agreed, between those who practised imposition of hands, and those who disowned it, "that the work of the Lord should be carried on together." This agreement excited great joy in the hearts of the candid baptists at Fenstanton; but was the "cause of sorrow and grief" to the zealots at Thorpe, because "they had joined them from whom they are commanded to withdraw."\*

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SECT. 13.—*The state of the General Baptists in Kent, Sussex, and London, prior to the Restoration.*

THERE is sufficient evidence, that the general baptist cause had gained many proselytes; and that a regular society of that persuasion had been formed, at Canterbury, in Kent, prior to the commencement of the civil wars. Messrs. Lamb,

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\* F. S. R. pp. 310—316.

H. Denne, Barber, and their associates, were very successful in their itinerant labours in that county, till about the year 1644, when they had great disputes with the particular baptists, which caused considerable ferment. The political confusions that followed increased their disorder; and the enthusiastic opinions, propagated by various sects of professors, seduced too many of the baptists: so that, for many years, genuine religion was almost extinct.\*

In 1654, Mr. H. Denne being accidentally at Canterbury, with his usual diligence, took the opportunity of preaching several times in public. In consequence, many of the inhabitants resorted to him, among whom were several that had been formerly baptized by himself; and pressed him to make some stay with them. Though much disposed to yield to their intreaties, he did not esteem himself at his own disposal. He told them that "he could not speak either good or bad, but what the congregation should say to whom he belonged."

On this, they proposed to send two messengers immediately to Fenstanton, to obtain the consent of that church; but Mr. Denne himself offered to convey their request. On his return, therefore, being personally indisposed, he desired his son, J. Denne, to lay the case of the Canterbury baptists before the church-meeting, on Nov. 5th, 1654: when it was resolved to send a letter, to enquire whether their circumstances and desires remained unchanged. In less than a week, an answer was received, describing their state, and repeating, in very pressing terms, their request.†

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\* Howard's Looking Glass for baptists, pp. 1, 2.

† This letter was dated November 13th, 1654, and subscribed

From this letter we learn, that, many years previous to this date, there were a considerable number of general baptists in that place; many of whom had "turned out of the way into the mystery of iniquity," having become ranters, &c. by whose means the way of truth had obtained an evil report:—that, during this time of darkness and disgrace, there always had been a few that "owned the principles of the gospel of Christ;" but, "for want of inward and outward abilities," were unable to make any effectual stand against the general declension; especially as they were in a state of disorder, and without any regular officers:—that, Mr. Denne's discourses, which had animated these to a re-union, had been instrumental also in reclaiming some of the fallen, and excited the attention of many:—that a respectable party now earnestly wished for him to reside for a time among them; because they esteemed him to be endued by "God, with wisdom and understanding in the mysteries of the gospel: and able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convince the gainsayers."

After considering this request, the church at Fenstanton, though not without much debate, agreed to this resolution: "That the congregation is unwilling to lay such a burden upon our brother Denne, as to send him such a long journey, contrary to his own mind; but if he should be willing to go to reside there, the congregation would willingly condescend thereunto." When this resolution was imparted to Mr. Denne, he declared his willingness to go; but was dissatis-

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Jonas Cooke, John Wigmore, Thomas Skillett, John Smith, John Gouldhack, John Miles, Richard and Thomas Beacham, Thomas and Daniel Jarman, and John Ratcliffe.

fied with the act of the church, “because it was not an express commission.” A regular commission was, therefore, granted to him; and notified, in due form, to the friends at Canterbury.\*— Money, horses, and necessaries were provided by

\* The following is the letter sent on this occasion.

“The Brethren in and about Caxton and Fenstanton, in the Counties of Huntington and Cambridge, to the faithful, in Christ Jesus, at Canterbury, wish grace, mercy and peace, from the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Dear and holy brethren, called out of this present evil world, and sanctified, through the knowledge of the truth, by the Spirit of our God, we do greatly rejoice, giving thanks unto our God, who according to the riches of his mercy and the abundant glory of his grace, manifested in the face of our Lord Jesus Christ, hath shed abroad his love in your hearts; teaching you to love the brethren and to receive the truth in the love and simplicity thereof, as it is in Jesus: being confident, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Christ. Beloved brethren, we received your letter, dated the thirteenth day of the ninth month, whereby we do understand, that it is your earnest desire, that our beloved brother Denne should come to reside with you: which thing we have taken into our serious consideration. And although, at the first, we were very unwilling to condescend thereunto, being very desirous to enjoy his company with us, that by him we might be edified and comforted in the way of our God; yet taking your condition into our serious consideration, and fearing lest through the love of ourselves we should any ways hinder the honour of God, or good of his people, we have thought fit, in this particular, to satisfy your holy desires; earnestly desiring that he may be beneficial unto you, as, blessed be our God, he hath been in this place; both for the enlightening of many persons that sat in blindness, and for the strengthening of the church of God. We beseech you, brethren, pray for us, that we may labour together in the unity of the faith, being filled with the fruits of righteousness and holiness to the glory and praise of God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Brethren, farewell. Be of one mind; live in peace; and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of the Father, and the fellowship of the Spirit shall be with you all evermore. Amen. Your Brethren, assembled in the name  
 CAXTON, *the 31st day of the* of our Lord Jesus Christ.  
*10th month, 1654.*

the society for his journey, and brother Catlin appointed to accompany him. Mar. 11th, 1655, a letter was received, from the congregation at Canterbury, announcing his safe arrival in that town; and stating that he was provided with a house and comfortable subsistence among them.\*

How long Mr. Deune resided at Canterbury we have no information. As he is no more mentioned in the Records of the church at Fenstanton, it is probable that he did not return thither before the beginning of the year 1658, when those Records close. Of the result of his exertions we are equally ignorant; but there can be no doubt that he laboured diligently and successfully, in converting sinners, in establishing the saints, and in reducing the baptists there into regularity and gospel order.

We have, during this period, but little information respecting the state of the general baptist churches in the west of Kent. We may, however, safely conclude, from their subsequent history, that they were prosperous and increasing, under the affectionate and diligent superintendence of their pious founders, Messrs. Jeffery, Hammon, Reeve, &c. Nor did these active men confine their exertions to their pastoral duties: they were frequently engaged in defence of the truth against learned and determined opposers. During the period now under review, Mr. Geo. Hammon, the pastor of the general baptist church at Biddenden, in this county, maintained controversies with Mr. Matthias Ratton, Mr. Hezekiah Holland, and Mr. S. Hendon. Two of these controversies appear to have originated in public personal disputations between the parties, and to

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\* F. S. R. pp. 152, 153, 158.—162, 164, 173, 202.

have been carried on from the press. Hezekiah Holland was a clergyman, of Sutton Vallance. In the course of these disputes, Mr. Hammon published, 1. "Dagon's Downfall:" 2. "A Discovery of the latitude of the loss of the earthly paradise by original sin; occasioned by a disputation between Mr. M. Rutton and himself, 1655." 3. "Sion's redemption discovered, 1655." 4. "Sion's Redemption, and Original Sin vindicated; being an answer to Mr. H. Holland, 1658." 5. "Sion's Redemption redeemed." 6. "Truth and Innocency prevailing against Error and Insolency: in an Answer to Mr. Holland's book, entitled, 'Truth's Conflict with Error'." 7. "The Good Ancient Laws and Statutes of King Jesus: occasioned by a conference between himself, Mr. S. Hendon, and his Son John, June 3rd 1658." He published, also, "Annotations on the Ninth Chapter to the Romans;" but its date is not specified.\* It was, also, in the last year of this period, 1659, that Mr. Jeffery published the second edition of his "Whole Faith of Man." It is very probable, from these numerous publications, that this was a time of considerable zeal, activity, and success among these churches.

Throughout this period, Mr. M. Caffin was labouring, with great success, in Sussex, and the adjacent counties. His church was at Horsham. In September 1655, he had a public dispute with the quakers; which commenced in their meeting house in Crawley, and was adjourned to his own house, near Southwater. Mr. Caffin was then so celebrated for his ability in defending the truth, that, as his opponent informs us, he was "cried up, by the general baptists in Sussex, as

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\* Crosby, Vol. III. p. 104, and private Information.

their battle-axe and weapon of war.”\* We shall have frequent occasion, in the following pages, to introduce this gentleman to our readers.

The general baptist churches in London continued to flourish, during the protectorate of Cromwell. Messrs. Lamb, Griffiths, Gosnold, and Barber were actively employed: and, we shall find in our next chapter that their congregations were numerous, and firmly attached to their principles. But, as these good men quietly and unostentatiously pursued their great work, during this season of religious liberty, few documents of their transactions remain. It is highly probable, too, that the general baptist church in the Old Jewry, of which Mr. Jeremiah Ives was upwards of thirty years pastor, was gathered in this period. We shall have another occasion to speak of the character and sufferings of this valuable minister.

There was also, at this time, another society of general baptists, which assembled at Tower-hill, under the pastoral care of Mr. Samuel Loveday; whom Mr. Crosby calls “a learned, pious, and very serious minister of the gospel.”† From several circumstances, this congregation appears to have been numerous, respectable, and zealous for the honour and success of the gospel. The church which, at present, meets in Church-lane, Whitechapel, under Mr. Dan Taylor, is the same which, in Cromwell’s time, assembled at Tower-

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\* Mr. Caffin’s principal opponent published an account of this dispute with this whimsical title: “An untaught Teacher witnessed against: or, the old Bottle’s mouth opened, its wine poured forth, drunk of the drunkard, denied of them who have tasted of the new: By Thomas Lawson. 1655.” From this tract we have obtained the above hints.

† Crosby, Vol. IV. p. 250.

hill. The following hints are all the information which we have been able to collect respecting it, that belongs to this chapter.

Mr. John Denne, Nov. 1st. 1657, informed the congregation at Fenstanton, that, being lately at London, and "at the assembly of the brethren that meet at Tower-hill," he received, from several members of that congregation, a heavy accusation against John Blowes, who, as it appears, was a preacher among the baptists in Huntingdonshire. This person had gone to reside in London, and introduced himself to the friends at Tower-hill. Being indisposed soon after his arrival, he contracted debts with his landlady for board and lodging, for which she threatened to arrest him. The members of Mr. Loveday's church, when apprized of these circumstances, "being tender of the honour of God, and their brother's good," voluntarily advanced the money to pay his debts, and procured him accommodations with one of their number. Upon his recovery, instead of gratefully acknowledging their kindness, and exerting himself to repay them, he neglected his business; and privately returned to Huntingdonshire, without satisfying their demands. The church at Fenstanton took up the matter with commendable spirit; and desired Mr. Denne to write to Mr. Loveday, for a confirmation of the charges. Mr. Loveday returned a full explanation of the circumstances; and the delinquent was forbidden to preach, and suspended from communion. He thought to have escaped the censure of the church, by paying the sums which he owed: but they refused to receive him till he had written a penitential letter to the brethren in London, and satisfied them of his sincere con-

trition. This he did ; and, at length, was restored.\*

In the year 1653, that indefatigable veteran, Henry Denne, whom we lately left at Canterbury, was publickly engaged in defending believers' baptism, at St. Clement's church in the Strand, London, against Dr. Gunning, who was afterwards bishop of Chichester. This disputation lasted two days : and, in conducting it, Mr. Denne proved himself a good scholar, and an able disputant. So triumphantly did he maintain his opinions, that this occurrence has been thought one of the most remarkable passages of his life, and that by which he rendered most essential service to the baptists. When we consider the extent and usefulness of his other labours, this must have contributed very highly to the credit and success of his cause, to have deserved this distinction.†

We shall here close our account of the general baptists, under the protectorate. The notices we have been able to collect respecting them, during that period of religious toleration, are disjointed and scattered ; and several of the incidents which we have recorded, may, perhaps, be thought too minute and unimportant. But such particulars sometimes afford the best means of ascertaining character : and it was thought, that these authentic details of the proceedings of the churches, at so early a period, might be interesting for their antiquity, and useful to modern societies, either as examples or warnings.—These ancient christians were evidently men of like passions

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\* F. S. R. pp. 345, 347, 352, 353, 360, 364.

† Crosby, Vol. II. p. 306.

with ourselves; and, by no means, free from the imperfections of human nature. When we consider the circumstances of the times in which they were called to act, it will, in some measure, apologize for their defects and weaknesses: while their zeal for the truth, their love to one another, and their active exertions to spread the gospel, claim our respect and imitation.

Their frequent disputes will certainly excite a sigh in the breast of every sincere lover of peace. It ought, however, to be recollected, that, at this time, men had very recently obtained permission to think and act for themselves in matters of religion: and had hardly learnt to exercise this new right with prudence and moderation. The general baptists appear to have maintained a jealous vigilancy, that no encroachments should be made on this important privilege. They not only protested against the impositions of colleges and councils, of prelates and presbyters, but were cautious that their own leaders should not obtain an undue influence over their opinions. They were determined to call no man master on earth. This disposition, though it had a tendency to multiply their debates, will not lessen their character among consistent dissenters.—Besides, it ought to be recollected, that, with respect to many of these churches, we have no memorials, except of their contentions. We know very little of the general baptists during this period, more than is contained in the records of Fenstanton church. In these records, other societies only are mentioned, when any occasion of correspondence between them and this church occurred. These occasions most frequently originated in the disputes which arose in distant churches, which induced them to request the advice and

assistance of the ministers and brethren in Huntingdonshire. Hence, we have records of debates in churches of which we have no other mention. The rise of such churches, their progress, their ministers, their zeal and activity in the cause of Christ, and their numbers, are, most probably, buried in lasting oblivion.—Nothing is preserved but their contentions. Yet these contentions prove, not only their existence, but frequently furnish evidence of their numbers and attachment to what they believed to be the doctrines of inspiration. It was, therefore, thought more prudent to notice these disputes, than wholly to omit the societies in which they happened.

It would not, perhaps, be easy to form an estimate of the number of general baptists in England at the Restoration. When we glance over the congregations in the different counties which have been mentioned in this chapter, and recollect that we have traces of large societies in other parts of the kingdom, of which we have not been able to obtain any particulars, we naturally conclude they were numerous. Thomas Grantham and his colleagues, who had every opportunity of obtaining accurate information, stated them, to king Charles II. not two years afterwards, at upwards of twenty thousand: and it is probable that this account is not at all exaggerated.\*

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\* Confession of Faith. Crosby, Vol. II. Appendix, No. IV.

## CHAP. II.

*THE HISTORY OF THE GENERAL BAPTISTS,  
FROM THE RESTORATION TO THE REVOLUTION.*

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SECT. 1.—*A concise view of the Laws respecting Religious Affairs made during this period.*

**B**EFORE we pursue the history of the general baptists, it may be useful to present the reader with a brief account of the various statutes respecting religion, which were enacted during the period on which we are entering. This will enable him more easily to understand the subsequent details.

After Oliver Cromwell had governed these realms, under different titles, for nearly ten years, and raised the reputation of the nation to a great height, he died Sept. 3rd. 1658, and left the authority to his son Richard. But the factions, which had been restrained only by the vigilance and firmness of the Protector, broke out, with increased violence, on his death: and his successor, finding it either above his abilities or contrary to his disposition, to struggle with such difficulties, resigned his authority into the hands of parliament, in less than eight months after his father's death. The Commonwealth was, for a short time, restored; but the parliament and army disagreeing, confusion ensued, and violent parties arose. General Monk, who was at the head of an army in Scotland, took advantage of the public ferment, and procured for himself the chief military command, under the title of General of the Armies of England, Scotland and Ireland. Thus vested with power, he marched into England, and declared for the

calling of a free parliament to settle the government. He recalled all those members of the long parliament who had been forced to abandon their seats during the government of Cromwell, and reinstated them in their places. Thus the Presbyterians regained a short ascendancy; but the army soon obliged the parliament to dissolve itself and to issue writs for a new election. In the mean time, Monk, who observed that reasonable men of every party began to grow weary of the unsettled state of things and to wish for the restoration of the ancient constitution, artfully fell in with the general feelings of the nation; and, by a course of the most unprincipled hypocrisy, prepared the way for the return of the king.

The new parliament met according to summons, April 25th 1660; and six days afterwards, Gen. Monk delivered a letter from Charles II. to the house, inviting them to return to their duty. This letter was accompanied by a royal declaration, dated from Breda, in which, after offering a full pardon for political offences, his Majesty adds, "We do also declare a liberty to tender consciences, and that no man shall be disquieted or called in question for differences of opinion in matters of religion which do not disturb the peace of the kingdom." When this declaration was read in the house of commons, that enlightened statesman, Sir Matthew Hale, moved for a committee to consider of proper means to secure the civil and religious liberties of the subjects, and guarantee the performance of these liberal promises. This reasonable motion, though seconded, was over-ruled by Gen. Monk; and a vote was passed to recal the king without conditions, and to trust to his royal word for the fulfilment

of his engagements: a confidence of which all parties had soon sufficient reason to repent. King Charles landed at Dover, May 26th 1660; and on the 29th entered London in triumph.

The constitution being thus restored to its ancient form, all the regulations adopted during the late innovations were, of course, superseded. Among these, the laws in favour of the rights of conscience became void, and the persecuting statutes resumed their power. Episcopacy, in a few months, was reinstated in its former authority; and the nonconformists found it time to look to their own safety. The independents and baptists, disapproving of national churches, petitioned the king only for a toleration; but the presbyterians, who had contributed much to the restoration of monarchy, depending on the gratitude and promises of the king, struggled long and vigorously to obtain a place within the pale of the established church. All their efforts were fruitless; and it soon appeared, that the prelates and priests were determined to maintain inviolable their monopoly of profit and power. The justices of the peace, in several counties, presuming on the support of government, began to harass the nonconformists: and it was not long before an event happened, which furnished a pretence for proceeding to greater severities.

During these times of political confusion, an opinion that Christ was about to descend from heaven, and to reign personally over all nations for a thousand years, had gained many advocates. As four great monarchies had already appeared in the world, they called this expected government of the Messiah, the fifth monarchy: and hence they obtained the name of fifth-monarchy-men. Among these, one of the most enthusiastic

was Thomas Venner, a cooper. Conceiving that every thing that resembled royalty must be overthrown to make room for king Jesus, he had been very restless during the Protectorate; but, when Charles II. was restored to the throne, he was driven to distraction. He thought, that it was the duty of the subjects of the fifth monarchy to open the way for its commencement. He gained followers, provided them with good arms, and prepared a standard, on which was the Lion of the tribe of Judah, with this motto, "Who shall rouse him up?"—He appointed them to muster, at the meeting-house, in Swan-alley, Coleman-street, whence they sallied out, to the number of fifty, well armed, on Sunday, Jan. 6th. 1661; after a sermon by Venner, assuring them of the immediate commencement of the kingdom of the saints. They proceeded through the streets, proclaiming king Jesus, till they reached St. Paul's church-yard; when they challenged a person whom they met, and immediately slew him, on his replying that he was for God and the king. This alarmed the city, and the train bands were sent to disperse them; but these were instantly put to flight, by the impetuous zealots, who, after parading the streets for some time, retired to Cane-wood, near Hampstead. Here they were attacked by a party of horse and foot, driven from the wood, and a few made prisoners. The remainder returned to the city; and, after fighting desperately till Venner was wounded and twenty of his followers slain, they were overpowered and seized. They were, in a few days, arraigned and condemned for treason; but shewed no sense of their error, or conviction of having acted improperly. Venner, and one Hodgkins, a captain amongst them, were hanged

before the meeting-house in Coleman-street, and their quarters exposed on the city gates: and fourteen others suffered a similar punishment in various parts of the metropolis.

This mad attempt furnished a pretence to harass the sectaries: and, on Jan. 10th. his Majesty issued a proclamation, by which the anabaptists, quakers, and fifth-monarchy men, were forbidden to assemble together, under pretence of worshipping God, except in some parochial church or chapel, or in private houses, by the persons there inhabiting; all meetings in any other places being declared unlawful and riotous. Mayors, and other peace-officers, were commanded to search for such conventicles, and cause the persons guilty to be bound over to the next sessions. The nonconformists, finding themselves thus held up as dangerous and seditious subjects, and deprived of their rights as christians, thought it proper to vindicate their characters; and publicly to disown any participation in Venner's insurrection, or any cognizance of it. This was done by the independents, baptists, and quakers respectively, in apologies addressed to their rulers and fellow-subjects.

But these vindications, satisfactory as they were to impartial judges, did not produce the desired effect. In a few months a bill was passed, which has been too well known, under the title of the Corporation Act. This law enacts, that all persons chosen to offices in corporations, shall take the oaths of allegiance and supremacy—shall swear that it is not lawful, on any pretence whatever, to take up arms against the king—shall renounce the solemn league and covenant—and shall have received the Lord's supper, ac-

ording to the rites of the church of England, within one year next before such election.

The nonconformists, being thus at once excluded from the magistracy, and rendered incapable of serving their country in the lowest civil offices; it was next determined to force them out of the church. This was the object of the famous Act of Uniformity, which received the royal assent, May 19th 1662, and took place Aug. 24th following. By this law, every dean, &c. all masters of colleges, &c. all public professors, in the universities or elsewhere, all parsons, vicars, curates, lecturers, and every schoolmaster keeping any public or private school for the instruction of youth, and every person instructing youth in any private family, are required openly and publicly to declare their unfeigned assent and consent to all and every thing contained and prescribed in the book of Common-prayer—to take the oath of canonical obedience—to renounce the solemn league and covenant—to abjure the lawfulness of taking arms against the king on any pretence whatsoever—and to be re-ordained, if they had not been episcopally ordained before. The penalties for presuming to act contrary to this statute were, for those who possessed livings or benefices, to be deprived of them; and for schoolmasters and tutors, three months' imprisonment for the first offence; and for every succeeding offence, three months' imprisonment, and the forfeiture of five pounds to his majesty: and for any one who presumed to administer the Lord's-supper before he had been episcopally ordained a priest, the forfeiture of one hundred pounds.—The effects of this rigorous measure were felt by all parties. It exposed the dissenting ministers and teachers to fines and imprisonment, if they

ventured to worship God after the dictates of their own consciences; and it deprived the church of England of more than two thousand useful, active, and pious ministers, who nobly resigned their places, their incomes, and their prospects, rather than, by complying with the conditions of this act, wound their consciences.

Charles II. was a man of pleasure, and paid little regard to any religion: but he appears to have been most partial towards the Roman catholics, and was, probably, in secret, a professed papist. His natural disposition inclined him to permit every man to enjoy full liberty of conscience; and, had not his clergy and parliament driven him forwards, his subjects might have been unmolested. But he was profuse, and void of principle; and always ready to sanction any measure for a supply of money, to waste on his pleasures. In the latter years of his reign, he was closely connected with the French court; and, as the parliament laboured to suppress the papists, whom that court particularly favoured, he executed the laws more severely on the dissenters, that he might force them to espouse the cause of general toleration, and thus ease the catholics.—Soon after the Act of Uniformity had passed, the silenced ministers applied to the king for relief: and, after the lapse of four months, his majesty issued a proclamation, by which he *indulged* the dissenters with an exemption from penalties for offences merely religious; *dispensed* with the laws which imposed them; and promised them to endeavour to procure them more legal relief when the parliament should meet.—The parliament, however, neither approved the indulgence, nor the dispensing power by which it was granted: and, accompanying their expres-

sions of disapprobation of the measure with the grant of a sum of money, the king recalled his indulgence, and ordered the laws to be put in execution.

In the following year, the infamous Conventicle Act was passed. It declares the 35th of Elizabeth to be in full force; which condemns all persons refusing peremptorily to come to church to banishment; and, in case of return, to death, without benefit of clergy. It further enacts, that if any person, above the age of sixteen, shall, after July 1st. 1664, be present at any meeting, under pretence of the exercise of religion, in any other manner than is allowed by the liturgy of the church of England, where there shall be present five or more persons besides the household, shall, for the first offence, suffer three months' imprisonment, or forfeit five pounds; for the second offence, six months' imprisonment, or forfeit ten pounds; and, for the third offence, be banished to some of the American plantations for seven years, or pay a fine of one hundred pounds: and, in case of returning, or making their escape, such persons to be adjudged felons, and suffer death. This act, also, impowered the sheriffs, justices of the peace, &c. to dissolve, dissipate, and break up all unlawful conventicles, and to take into custody such of the persons as they thought fit. Those who suffered conventicles in their houses or barns were liable to the same forfeitures as those who attended: and married women, taken at conventicles, were to be imprisoned twelve months, unless their husbands paid forty shillings for their release.

This severe law pressed hard upon the hearers; but it was soon followed by another, which fell as heavy upon the ministers. In the midst of the

great plague, when eight or ten thousand were dying weekly in London, and the parliament was removed to Oxford, an act was passed, to restrain nonconformists from inhabiting corporations; which prohibited, under severe penalties, any minister from coming within five miles of any city or corporation, unless he took an oath never to oppose the king, nor, at any time, to endeavour any alteration in church or state. It also rendered all persons who refused this oath incapable of teaching any school, or taking any boarders. This act received the royal assent, Oct. 31st. 1665; and has generally been known by the appellation of the Oxford, or Five-mile act.

Notwithstanding these severities, the number of dissenters continued to increase, to the no small mortification of the clergy and high church-party. These were continually teasing his majesty to enforce the laws, while he, desirous of favouring the papists, was often unwilling to proceed to extremities. In 1667, they induced him to publish a proclamation for suppressing conventicles; which, not being executed to the satisfaction of the clergy, was followed, in the next year, by another, which was more effectual in rekindling persecution. The conventicle act which had, at first, been passed only for three years, was, in 1670, revived, with some modifications. The fine, for the first offence, on the hearers, was five shillings; and for the second, ten: on the preacher, for the first offence, twenty pounds; and for the second, forty: and twenty pounds on the owner of the house, barn or yard, in which the conventicle was held. The fines to be levied by distress on the goods of those on whom they were laid; or, in case of poverty, on the goods of any other person that was present:

and to be divided, in equal portions, to the king, the poor, and the informer. Any justice of the peace, refusing to do his duty in the execution of this act, was to forfeit five pounds for each refusal : and all the clauses were to be construed most largely and beneficially for the justification and encouragement of all persons employed in the execution of it. If a person fled from one corporation, or even from one county to another, his goods were made seizable wherever they could be found. This law was so cruel, so unjust, and so repugnant to every idea of personal liberty, that many of the magistrates left the bench, and refused to disgrace themselves by enforcing it. Others, however, were soon found less scrupulous ; and this iniquitous statute became an instrument of most vexatious oppression.

In the following year, the king ventured to publish another declaration, in favour of dissenters ; and to offer them licences for places of public worship ; which, for a time, produced some abatement in their sufferings. But the Commons remonstrating against this unconstitutional measure, Charles, being in want of money, and willing to please them, broke the seal of his declaration with his own hands, recalled his licences, and left the dissenters exposed to all the fury of their enemies.

As many papists had lately been put into offices of trust and profit, both civil and military, and the king openly appeared as their protector, the nation began to entertain serious fears of the introduction of popery. An act, therefore, passed both houses of parliament, requiring all persons, bearing any offices of trust or profit, to take the oaths of allegiance and supremacy—to

receive the Lord's-supper according to the usage of the church of England—and to renounce the doctrine of transubstantiation, under the penalty of civil disabilities, and a fine of five hundred pounds. The royal assent, extorted through the fear of a civil war, was received, March 5th. 1673. —This statute, known by the title of the Test Act, was acknowledgedly intended to operate against the papists; and it was proposed to distinguish between them and protestant dissenters; but, as this was likely to produce some debate, the dissenters generously waved their claims, and declared themselves willing to lie under the severity of this law for a time, rather than clog a more necessary work with their concerns. Alderman Love, a leading man among them, therefore moved, that, since this was a considerable barrier against popery, the bill might pass without any alteration, and nothing interpose till it was finished. “And then,” said the Alderman, “we will try if the parliament will not distinguish us dissenters from popish recusants, by some mark of their favour.” But this worthy magistrate sadly over-rated the gratitude of the high church party. This act continues to the present day to exclude protestant dissenters from their rights as citizens; and every attempt to procure relief from restrictions never intended for them, though made in the most respectful manner and seconded by the most enlightened statesmen, has hitherto been ineffectual.

These were the statutes under which dissenters of every denomination groaned, during the whole of this despotic period. In the former part of it; the clergy and the parliament united in oppressing them: and the court, hoping that the papists might be sheltered under their name, en-

deavoured to favour them. In the latter years of Charles II., and throughout the reign of James II. the parliament, learning to appreciate more justly the character and importance of dissenters, made several attempts to relieve them, which were constantly frustrated by the influence of the court, who were determined that they should enjoy no privilege from which the papists were excluded. In 1680, a bill passed both houses, to exempt his majesty's protestant subjects, dissenting from the church of England, from the penalties imposed upon the papists, by the act of the thirty-fifth of Elizabeth: but when it should have been offered for the royal assent, at the close of the session, it could not be found; the clerk of the crown having withdrawn it from the table, by the king's special order. All the commons, therefore, could do, was to pass two resolutions in their favour. Both these monarchs, however, claimed the power of dispensing with the laws; and sometimes issued their proclamations to indulge dissenters in their religious scruples: by which their sufferings were occasionally, for a short period, mitigated. But the nonconformists themselves did not approve of this stretch of prerogative; and it was always condemned by all true friends to the liberties of the nation: these indulgences therefore were received with jealousy and caution, and often were of short duration.\*

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\* *Neal's Puritans*. Vol. IV. p. 194. &c.—Some of the cruel laws, mentioned in this section, still continue to disgrace our statute-book; though, since the glorious Revolution, their operation has been, in a good measure, restrained by the Act of Toleration and the spirit of liberality which has spread among all parties. Some attempts having, within these few years, been made to enforce the Conventicle Act, and some magistrates

Through these times of oppression and persecution we are now to trace the general baptists: and, in order to exhibit a distinct view of their affairs, we shall consider them as composing various districts—the churches in Lincolnshire—in the counties adjoining—in London and Kent—and in the southern counties.

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SECT. 2.—*The proceedings of the General Baptists in Lincolnshire, from the Restoration to Mr. Grantham's first imprisonment.*

WE have seen, in the last chapter, that the general baptists in Lincolnshire were numerous and zealous: and that, during the protectorate, their success exposed them to obloquy and interruption. Immediately on the restoration, their enemies, presuming on the countenance of the court, broke out into open hostility. The baptists were forbidden to assemble for the worship of God, without giving security for their good behaviour. In the simplicity of their hearts they complied, never imagining that peaceably attending to their religious duties would be construed into bad behaviour. Their enemies, however, esteemed this the height of their offending, and proceeded to still more violent outrages.—The baptists, finding no redress upon applying

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shewing a disposition to inflict its penalties, the attention of the patrons of the rights of conscience was called to the subject; and, in the first section of the New Act of Toleration, which received the royal assent, July 29th. 1812, the Conventicle and the Oxford or Five Mile Acts were formally repealed. May we not hope, that the time is not far distant when all penal statutes respecting religion will be numbered among the things that have been, but are not?

to the magistrates of the county, resolved to appeal to the king. Accordingly, they drew up a narrative of their sufferings, in an address to his majesty; which, by the interest of an honourable member of parliament, their messengers obtained an opportunity of delivering into the hands of Charles II. on July 26th. 1660. These messengers were, Mr. Thomas Grantham and Mr. Joseph Wright: the former, though scarcely twenty-six years of age, was the principal support of the general baptist cause in the South Marsh of Lincolnshire; and the latter a messenger of the church of Westby, in the same county. At the same time, these messengers presented to the king a brief Confession of Faith, which had been composed in the preceding spring. We shall have occasion to notice this Confession in a subsequent chapter: and shall here insert an extract from the Address, as containing an affecting relation of their oppressions, in their own words. It runs thus:

“ May it please your Majesty,

“ Being commanded thereto by the Lord, we have met often together, to acquaint each other what God hath done, doth daily, and will do for our souls: and what, therefore, we ought to do towards him, each other, and all men.— From which assemblings, O king! we have been discharged by some in magisterial capacity in these parts; although therein we bless God none hath ever found us with multitude or tumult. But being taught of God to obey him in the things by him commanded, rather than man, though in the place of magistracy, when commanding things contrary; we therefore durst not receive that discharge. Wherefore some of us have been silenced from making mention of

the name of the Lord, as formerly, by being entangled in bonds, pretendedly imposed upon us for this good behaviour. To which, in our innocency, we readily yielded; being bound to the good behaviour in conscience, we feared not to be bound thereto by law. But such is the sad estate of this generation, that they call good evil, and evil good; with sorrow we speak it; taking their advantage against us, in our serving the Lord. Upon account of the condition of these obligations, accounting us, O king! peace-breakers, when, in the sincerity of our hearts and innocency of our souls, we peaceably meet to worship our God: in his fear we affirm it. Since thus entangled, O king! we have been much abused as we pass in the streets, and as we sit in our houses; being threatened to be hanged, if but heard praying to the Lord in our families, and disturbed in our so waiting upon God by uncivil beating at our doors, and sounding of horns; yea, we have been stoned, when going to our meetings; the windows of the place where we have been met struck down with stones; yea, taken as evil-doers, and imprisoned when peaceably met together to worship the Most High, in the use of his most precious ordinances. We have, O king! spread these things before them in authority in these parts, but can have no redress from them: but the rage of our adversaries hath been augmented, by hearing us abused by some of them in open court who sat on the bench of justice, under the odious terms of knavish, juggling, impudent, and fanatic fellows, &c. And, as if all this were too little, they have, to fill up their measure, very lately, indicted many of us at the sessions: and intend, as we are informed, to impose on us the penalty of twenty

pounds per month for not coming to hear such men as they provide for us; of whose principles and practices, we could give a most sad and doleful, yet, O king! a most true relation," &c.

Signed by,

<i>John Wats</i>	<i>Joseph Brittain</i>	<i>T. Maxworth</i>
<i>William Burton</i>	<i>Robert Maultbey</i>	<i>Thomas Clay</i>
<i>William Dawson</i>	<i>T. Ratclyffe</i>	<i>R. Grantham</i>
<i>John Dawson</i>	<i>George Pay</i>	<i>Charles Cock</i>
<i>Thos. Harrison</i>	<i>M. Brumby</i>	<i>John Rutter</i>
<i>Peter Betts</i>	<i>John Gree</i>	<i>James Carden</i>
<i>William Roweth</i>	<i>Luke Robinson</i>	<i>Richard Clark</i>
<i>R. Wilkinson</i>	<i>W. Harker</i>	<i>Robert Pagson</i>
<i>James Dyon</i>	<i>Rob. Fletcher</i>	<i>Robert Shalder</i>
<i>R. Richardson</i>	<i>William Hill</i>	<i>Joseph Wright</i>
<i>Roger Fawn</i>	<i>Edward Wood</i>	<i>T. Grantham.</i>
<i>W. Hunter</i>	<i>Thomas Croft</i>	

To this address his majesty, with his usual complaisance, replied, that it was not his mind, that any of his good subjects, who lived peaceably, should suffer any trouble on account of their religious opinions; promised that he would have special care over them, that none should in future molest them; and, while they were present, ordered a member of parliament to go to the Chancellor and Secretary, and have the proper measures taken for their security, which the member promised should be done.\*

What effect this application produced, or in what manner these royal promises were kept, we are not informed. Probably the fury of their adversaries might, for a little time, be restrained. But the rash insurrection of Venner and his associates, which followed, in a few months, sup-

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\* Jessey's Lord's Loud Call to England. 1660. p. 15.

plied a plausible pretence for breaking all measures with the sectaries: and the baptists became the objects of peculiar odium. The old tales of the Munster enthusiasts were revived: and all anabaptists, as they were styled, were represented as the genuine successors, in spirit as well as in name, of John of Leyden. Nor were these injurious suspicions confined to the unthinking mob; they were sanctioned by the highest authority. In less than four days after this insurrection, the king issued a proclamation, forbidding all fifth-monarchy-men, quakers, and anabaptists to meet, under pretence of religious worship; plainly insinuating that peculiar danger was to be dreaded from their machinations.

To clear themselves from these aspersions, the Lincolnshire general baptists, in conjunction with their brethren in other parts of the kingdom, published a spirited defence of themselves, entitled, "The humble Apology of some commonly called Anabaptists, in behalf of themselves and others of the same judgment; with their Protestation against the late wicked, most horrid, and treasonable insurrection and rebellion, acted in the City of London; together with an Apology formerly addressed to the king's most excellent Majesty." It begins thus: "We should be stupid and senseless, if we did not resent those black obloquies and reproaches, cast upon those of our profession and practice in the point of baptism, by occasion of the late most horrid treason and rebellion in this city of London. We most sadly see and feel, that among many it is become enough to render any man criminal to be called an anabaptist; or at least a ground sufficient to question his loyalty and fidelity to the king's majesty.

We may not, therefore, be so negligent of our duty unto God, in respect of our profession, or unto ourselves and families, as silently to suffer our names and profession to be buried under such causeless infamy: neither may we be so much wanting in our duty to our king, as by such silence to offer his majesty just occasion of being jealous of our loyalty and obedience, and to leave him without all possible security of our humble subjection and fidelity." The apologists then, after adverting to the tumults at Munster, and shewing, in a forcible manner, the absurdity of assuming those excesses as grounds of suspicion against the English baptists, who avow the utmost detestation of their seditious principles, proceed to clear themselves of any participation in Vener's enterprize—by declaring, that all who were concerned in that mad attempt, except one, were assertors of infant baptism, and professed enemies to the baptists;—by appealing to the readiness with which many of the baptists ventured their lives in opposing those insurgents—and by a solemn protestation of their entire ignorance of the whole design. On these grounds, they challenge the confidence and good opinion of their governors and fellow-subjects; appeal to their good sense whether there is any connection between believers' baptism and rebellion; and conclude thus: "And, therefore, we humbly hope that the omnipotent Power of heaven and earth will so dispose his majesty and his people's hearts, that we may worship God in peace and freedom, according to the faith we have received, living a peaceable and quiet life in all godliness and honesty." In a postscript, they refer, as an evidence, that these are their real sentiments, and not assumed in consequence of the bad suc-

cess of the late attempts to the Petition and Confession of Faith, presented by them to the king a few months before.\*

But the Lincolnshire general baptists did not content themselves with uniting in this public apology. They made a separate application to the throne, and presented a petition, which was published soon after, under the title of "The second humble Address of those who are called Anabaptists, in the county of Lincoln, presented to his majesty Charles II." It was as follows :

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\* *Grantham's Christianismus Primitivus, Book III. p. 7.*—The Signatures subscribed to this Apology, in *Grantham's Christianismus Primitivus*, are those of the baptist ministers in or near London, both general and particular; but there is strong internal evidence, that it is the production of the general baptists, and probably of the same party as signed the Confession just mentioned. In one passage, adverting to the injustice of supposing, that because they agreed with the Munster insurgents in the article of believers' baptism, they therefore agreed with them in their political errors, they say: "It would not be holden just to aver every protestant to believe consubstantiation, or absolute predestination and reprobation, because Luther was zealous in the one and Calvin in the other; why therefore should the errors and impieties of others be imputed to us, whilst we earnestly contend against them?" Now it is hardly to be supposed that the particular baptists would have introduced their distinguishing tenets in such company. But the reference to "the apology of *our* ancient and constant principles presented, with *our* humble petition, to the king's most excellent majesty some months since, in the year 1660," seems to decide the point. We have no information that the particular baptists presented any petition or apology, at that time; but we have seen, that the general baptists presented both, on the 26th of the preceding July, about five months previous to Venner's insurrection. Possibly the signatures to this apology have, by some accident, been transferred from that which immediately follows it, both in *Grantham* and *Crosby*; which was published, at the same time, and on the same occasion, by the "baptists in and about the City of London," and therefore might be supposed to have the signatures here affixed.

*Grantham's Christ, Prim. Book III. p. 10. Crosby Vol II. p. 42.*

“ May it please your Majesty,

Once more to permit your distressed yet faithful subjects, to spread their innocency and sorrow of heart before you. It seems it must needs be that offences do or shall come ; but the woe is deservedly their portion by whom the offence cometh. When we read your letter from Breda, and the revival thereof in your declaration for ecclesiastical affairs, and your princely promises to us, when, by your clemency, permitted to be present with yourself: O king ! when we remember these things, we are ready to say, (not, why was the king's proclamation so hasty ? but) why was the extension thereof so large ? Shall the righteous suffer with the wicked ? God forbid. Must your peaceable subjects be judged riotous ; whilst many unpeaceable ones (such as swearers and drunkards) are freed from that judgment ? The Lord will not accompany such proceedings.

Our humble requests, therefore, from these premises are, that there may be a righteous distinction in the administration of government ; lest the cries of the innocent, and their ruined families, come up before the Lord : whilst your prisons are filled with such as whose prayers have come up to a throne of grace on your majesty's behalf: and can approve their hearts to the Lord in respect of loyalty and good fidelity to your majesty, and the civil government of this nation under your hands,” &c.\*

To strengthen this remonstrance, a paper was delivered, Jan. 23d. 1661, to some Lords of the privy council, to be presented to his majesty, entitled “ The Character of an Anabaptist.” It

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\* Kennett's Historical Register and Chronicle, p. 361.

was evidently written by a friend, in order to soften the rancour that existed against that sect. It begins with asserting, that "An anabaptist is so called, for being baptized according to the scriptures, and as the Rubric and book of Common-prayer commands and instructs."\* From the opening, we may suppose that it was an animated and shrewd performance: but we have only seen this introduction.

It appears that these means failed of the desired effects: the baptists still continued to be the objects of suspicion and persecution; yet they did not despond. Encouraged, probably, by the gracious manner in which their messengers had been received at court, they resolved to make another attempt. On February 23rd 1661, they waited on his majesty, with "The third Address of those persons known by the name of Anabaptists, in the county of Lincoln." In order to remove every reasonable ground of jealousy, the heads of the several congregations proposed, in this address, to give security in behalf of the rest, for the support and protection both of his majesty's person and government. This was subscribed by Thomas Grantham, Valent. James, Dan. Cheesman, John Kelsay, Thomas Muckworth, Richard Crawforth, John Lupton, and John Thorpe. In answer to this proposal, the king assured them, with great seriousness, that he was very well satisfied concerning the Lincolnshire petitioners, that they were a peaceable people, and good subjects; and that he would take it into his princely care to preserve such. And the lord chancellor, who was present, said that an instrument was drawing up for that purpose.†

\* Ibid.

† Ibid p. 383.

But these specious promises were illusory: and the effect, if any was produced, was very partial, local, and transient. Persecution still continued to oppress nonconformists of every denomination. The magistrates exerted themselves, even beyond the laws, cruel as they were; and thousands, on account of their religion only, were stripped of their possessions, and thrown into prison; or obliged to flee from their habitations, and forsake their callings and families. Every thing seemed hastening to confusion; and protestant governors shewed a strong disposition to adopt the most intolerant principles of the papists. In this time of public ferment, some of the principal general baptist ministers in Lincolnshire, Hertfordshire, Kent, &c., who had witnessed their attachment to the truth by bonds and sufferings, published a well-timed and excellent Address to the king, parliament, and people. This was not designed to vindicate their own peculiar tenets, but to oppose the principle on which all public persecution is built—the right of the magistrate to *impose* any thing in the worship or service of God. The title is, “Sion’s Groans for her distressed: or, sober endeavours to prevent innocent blood,” &c. It was signed by Thomas Monck, Joseph Wright, George Hammon, William Jeffery, Francis Stanley, William Reynolds, and Francis Smith; and dated March 8th, 1662. They express their views in this publication, and state their own sentiments so explicitly in the following passage, that we are persuaded that our readers will be pleased with its insertion.

“Lest, therefore, those unchristian principles of persecution for conscience, which troubleth the world, should take root in this nation, to the stirring up of men’s minds to shed the blood of

the innocent, the guilt whereof is sufficient to sink the most flourishing kingdom into an ocean of misery and calamity; we have here written some arguments, which we humbly offer to all men, to prove how contrary to the gospel of our Lord Jesus, and to good reason it is, for any magistrate, by outward force, to impose any thing in the worship of God, on the consciences of those whom they govern; but that liberty ought to be given to all such as disturb not the civil peace, though of different persuasions in religious matters. In which discourse, we neither desire nor design to diminish any of that power which God hath given to the king's majesty that now reigneth: whom we own to be chief magistrate and governor of these nations, over all persons, as well ecclesiastical as temporal. And to all his commands, that do not oppose the scriptures of truth, shall we yield active obedience, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. And if any thing otherwise shall be required, we shall be passive, and suffer what may be inflicted on us for our consciences. For, whatever hath been suggested by evil men, yet that magistracy and government is an ordinance of God, hath been frequently asserted in our discourses and writings, and is by us believed as fully as the apostle Paul in the thirteenth chapter to the Romans hath taught. And all that we desire, which is dearer to us than our lives, is, that our spirits and consciences may be left free to serve the Eternal God: which ought to be granted us, seeing, as the same apostle saith, in these cases, ' We shall every one of us give an account of himself to God'."

Mr. Crosby has preserved the whole of this excellent piece; but our limits will only permit

us to give a very concise summary of its arguments. The power to impose any thing in the worship or service of God cannot, they say, belong to the magistrate, as such, because : 1. If all magistrates have the power, heathen magistrates have it : and, therefore, the subjects must be papists, Turks, &c. in different countries. 2. No such power is given by Christ, in the New Testament. 3. The apostles refused to obey their rulers in things pertaining to religion. 4. The directions in scripture, which enjoin obedience to magistrates, referred to heathen powers. 5. If magistrates had this power, all religion would consist in obeying them, and persecution must cease. 6. The wise Gallio thought otherwise, Acts xviii. 12.—Nor has the magistrate this power as a christian : because 1. The Lord Jesus would never exercise it. 2. The apostles disclaimed it. 3. The parable of the wheat and tares forbids it. 4. Magistrates, both civil and ecclesiastical, are fallible, and have erred. 5. It is contrary to our Saviour's golden rule, of doing to others as we would they should do to us.—After treating each of these topics with perspicuity and spirit, they reply at large to the objections, that the kings of Israel punished religious offences ; and that it is inconsistent with the safety of the state to allow various modes of religious worship. The authors conclude with a pertinent extract from bishop Taylor's Liberty of prophesying ; and a request that they might have the privilege of a public dispute, between themselves and the members of the establishment, in the presence of the king.\* This piece certainly does great credit to the abilities, principles, and tem-

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\* Crosby, Vol. II. pp. 97—144.

pers of the good men by whom it was published. Happy would it have been for the nation, if the rational sentiments which it recommends had been more universally respected.

Unhappily these sentiments did not prevail. Persecution, in all its various forms, visited the conscientious nonconformists. The enemies of all religion, incited by the severity of the laws, took the opportunity to vex and spoil their innocent neighbours. Informers, of the most abandoned characters, were openly encouraged by the magistrates, to hunt for the liberties and property of all who ventured to worship God after the dictates of their own consciences, though in the most private and inoffensive manner. Nor were there wanting men of influence, who countenanced these wretches by their money and support; and sometimes descended so low as to join them in their ignominious vocation. In Lincolnshire the general baptists endured their full share of these oppressions. One Radley, a gentleman of considerable property in that county, distinguished himself by his enmity against the baptists. Under the authority of the Act of Uniformity, he went with an armed force to their meeting, with a design to apprehend them: but the soldiers, struck with their innocent deportment, to the great mortification of their leader, refused to molest them. This Radley, after doing all the mischief in his power to his pious neighbours, became a bankrupt, and died of the plague in London. His widow was reduced to great poverty, and his children thrown on the parish for support. Some of them were relieved by those very baptists whom their father had so rancorously persecuted.\*

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\* Crosby, Vol. III. p. 79.

But the innocency of the baptists did not long protect them. Soon after Radley's abortive attempt, a party of soldiers entered their meeting-house at Boston, during public worship, and seized several of the congregation. After some time, they dismissed all, except Mr. Grantham and two others. These they dragged to a public-house, and lodged them there all night: where their pious ears were sorely vext, by the profane and impious language of their guards. In the morning they were conveyed to Lincoln, and lodged in the common jail. In order to prejudice the people against them, it was confidently reported that they were papists; and several clergymen who visited them affirmed, to Mr. Grantham's face, that he was a jesuit in disguise. Mr. Grantham effectually refuted this calumny, by publishing, under the title of "The Baptist against the Papist," a dispute which he had maintained with a Roman catholic. Having thus removed the slander, he turned his pen against the slanderers, and wrote a small piece, in verse, which he called "The Prisoner against the Prelate: or, a Dialogue between the Common Gaol and Cathedral of Lincoln: wherein the true Faith and Church of Christ are briefly discovered and vindicated, by the Authority of Scripture, Suffrages of Antiquity, Concessions and Confessions of the chief Opposers of the same church and Faith. Written by a Prisoner of the baptized churches in Lincolnshire." Though this Dialogue can claim little merit as a poem, yet it attacks the arguments which are generally urged in defence of the established church, with great force of reasoning; and, in some instances, with a shrewdness and sprightliness that prove the equanimity which the pious author enjoyed, even in

his bonds. It contains severe strictures on the pomp, carnality, and errors of the church; and the pride, cruelty, avarice, and immorality of her priests. In the course of the work is introduced a versification of the Confession of Faith presented to the king, with the testimony of scripture and antiquity subjoined to each article.\*

These publications, in connection with the peaceful and edifying behaviour of Mr. Grantham and his friends, turned the popular disapprobation against the clergy, who had used every method to deprive them of their liberty and good name. When the people beheld the prisoners employed chiefly in prayer and praise to God, and holy conversation with each other,

\* As a specimen of the style of this poem, we insert the conclusion of the Dialogue. The scene is laid in the Cathedral, which kindly admonishes the Jail to pray against delusion.

JAIL.

“ That is my pray'r : but I'll not pray with thee,  
Till in the truth we shall united be :  
Which we may be, if we ourselves deny,  
And learn of God in due humility :  
Which when thou dost in truth, 'tis in my mind,  
Not here, but in the Jail, I thee shall find.

CATHEDRAL.

What ? Is the Jail and truth so near united ?  
This dreadful doctrine will make men affrighted.  
And few will find the truth ; for if't be so,  
There few to seek the truth to jail will go.  
Now fare thee well : keep that place as thy treasure,  
And I'll keep this, and here enjoy my pleasure.

JAIL.

Adieu, Cathedral : go take thy fill  
Of organ music. And, since 'tis God's will,  
I'll back to that unpleasant cell of mine ;  
Where some truth's known, which else would never shine  
In its bright splendour : also there our God  
Doth shew himself a Father by his rod.”

they began to esteem their enemies self-interested persecutors of those who were better than themselves. Yet their imprisonment was protracted for a tedious period ; and two assizes must have passed, before they were permitted to plead in court. At length, in the spring of 1663, they were brought to the bar ; and no accuser appearing, were discharged ; and returned to their joyful friends, after spending fifteen months in close confinement.\*

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\* *Crosby, Vol. II. p. 149, &c. Grantham's Christ. Prim. Book IV. pref. Prisoner against the Prelate, passim.* Mr. Crosby, who is sometimes very loose in his statements, informs us, that about the year 1662, Mr. Grantham was apprehended and carried before a magistrate, who bound him over to the assizes ; and that many of the Lincolnshire baptists were sorely harassed, by the levies of twenty pounds per month, for absenting themselves from the established church. The latter assertion is highly probable ; but the former must, if the account in the text be accurate, be a mistake, as Mr. Grantham was in Lincoln jail all the year 1662. These circumstances might apply to some other of the persecutions which this good man endured.—The same author goes on to state, that, in consequence of these troubles, the Lincolnshire baptists sent Messrs. Grantham and Wright again to court, with a Petition for indulgence, and the Confession of Faith formerly presented : and that the king received them courteously, and promised them redress. “ And accordingly,” adds the same author, “ he set forth his declaration in their favour, the 26th of December following ; and they who had been indicted for religion were, at the next sessions or assizes, acquitted in open court, to the shame and vexation of their enemies, who were upon the bench.” Here, again, there must be an error : since Mr. Grantham being, as already observed, in prison at the time, could not present the petition. It is not unlikely that this refers to one of the addresses presented in 1661 : and Mr. Neal gives a very different and more probable account of the intention of the court in the Proclamation of December 26th. 1662.

See *Crosby, Vol. III. pp. 79, 80. Neal, Vol. IV. pp. 385—389.*

SECT. 3.—*The transactions of the Lincolnshire General Baptists, continued to the Revolution.*

IN 1664, the Conventicle Act gave new spirits to the enemies of the nonconformists. Under the sanction of this law, soldiers were sent into different parts of the country, to disarm the dissenters, and break up their meetings. Some troops, employed on this business in Lincolnshire, under the pretence of searching for arms, rifled the houses of the general baptists; and, though they found no arms, pillaged their goods. They apprehended Mr. Grantham and several others, and made them run by the side of their horses, from one town to another, refusing to inform them whither they intended to take them, or to what punishment they were destined. When night overtook them they put up at an inn, and confined their prisoners in a very incommodious room; tying them up so that they could take no rest. The soldiers spent the night in an adjoining room; and, by their drunkenness and impiety, added much to the grief of these godly ministers. In the morning they took them to Louth, and secured them in the house of correction. After some time, they were brought before the magistrates, who, instead of enquiring into the charges from their accusers, endeavoured, by ensnaring questions, to lead them to criminate themselves. Finding this did not succeed, they tendered them the oaths, and demanded whether they would conform to the establishment. This the prisoners explicitly and resolutely refused to do. For which Mr. Grantham, Mr. John Gree, and Mr. John Green were sent to the common jail. After they had been confined several months, the assizes commenced; but their ene-

mies prevented their cause from being heard. They were, at length, brought before the justices, at the quarter sessions: but those magistrates refusing to recognize them, or to hear their cause, the sheriff said that, as he had produced them in open court, he had discharged his duty; and set them at liberty.\*

The persecutors were still desirous of avenging themselves on the baptists: and, esteeming Mr. Grantham their chief support, they bent all their malice against him. Soon after he was set at liberty, an action was brought against him for damages of one hundred pounds, for beating and ill-treating a woman whom he had baptized: but, to the confusion of his adversaries, the cause was thrown out of court, at the next assizes, as an ungrounded and malicious prosecution.†

So great was the rancour of the people against the baptists at this time, that they were frequently denied the benefit of the common burying places; though, as Mr. Grantham observes, they paid all the rates for fencing them and keeping them in order. Sometimes they carried their enmity to still greater insults. In the year 1666, Robert Shalder, who was a person of some eminence among the Lincolnshire general baptists, and signed the first address presented to the king, died at Croft, in that county. He had been, for a long time, a prisoner for conscience' sake, and obtained his liberty only a little before his death. His friends buried him among his ancestors, in the parish burying-ground: but, on the same day, some of the inhabitants of Croft opened his grave, took out the body, and dragged it on a sledge to his own gate, where they left it

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\* Crosby, Vol. III. p. 81.

† Ubi supra.

exposed, on the ground. It appears that his friends re-interred his remains in some private place, to avoid a repetition of such inhuman treatment. The two chief actors in this disgraceful business did not long survive it. One died suddenly; and the other languished for some time, under a painful disease, greatly tormented by a guilty conscience.\*

The general baptists in Lincolnshire, though so violently opposed, not only maintained their ground, but increased in numbers and order. In 1666, Mr. Grantham was ordained to the office of a messenger. "I was," says he, "elected, by the consent of many congregations, and ordained to the office of a messenger by those who were in the same office before me. The place where I was ordained was in my own mansion or dwelling house, the place where the church usually met." "I was chosen," says he, in another place, "by the consent of many churches, to take a larger trust: and ordained messenger, to oversee the churches in divers places that had need of help."† From these statements, it is evident that the general baptist cause had spread much, and was conducted with zeal and prudence.

We have few particulars of these professors for several years. There can be no doubt, but they continued to pursue their great work with steadiness and spirit: and had their full portion of the persecutions which were then the lot of all dissenters. But neither present sufferings, nor the fear of future afflictions, deterred them from standing boldly forth in the defence of the truth, when they considered the honour of religion made it necessary.

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\* Grantham's Christ. Prim. Book III. chap. 10. Crosby, II. 239.

† Dispute with Connould, pp. 5 and 100.

Mr. Robert Wright, most probably the same person whom we have already had occasion to mention\*, who had been a baptist preacher, was, before this time, excluded from their communion for irregular conduct. After spending his estate in dissolute pleasures, he applied to the bishop of Lincoln for a living in the church; promising to renounce the principles of the baptists, and to preach against them. The bishop accepted his terms, and gave him a place. To prove the sincerity of his apostacy, Mr. Wright, in 1670, delivered, in the city of Lincoln, some violent discourses in defence of infant sprinkling: in which he cast some severe reflections upon the tenets and practice of his former associates. The members of the establishment were highly elated on this occasion, and began to suppose that the cause of believers' baptism would soon be ruined. To vindicate themselves, and check the insolence of their adversaries, Mr. Grantham drew up a challenge to the aforesaid Mr. Wright, inviting him to a friendly public conference, in the same place where he had attacked the baptists; promising him, that, on due notice, he should "find some, if God permitted, to maintain the doctrine and baptism of repentance to be from heaven; and the sprinkling and crossing of infants to be man's tradition." Four copies of this challenge were signed by Mr. Grantham; and, during the time of the assizes, posted up in the most conspicuous places in that city. Two of them were soon taken down; and, as it was supposed, carried to the bishop and the judge. The other two remained the greatest part of the day, and were read by numbers. At length they were taken

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\* See above, pp. 135 and 138.

down by the clergy, who threatened that the writer should answer for them before the council. Mr. Wright, however, did not find it convenient to accept the challenge: and the blusterings of the clergy ended in an angry letter, sent by the bishop's chaplain to the baptists, to which Mr. Grantham returned a spirited answer. This closed the business: neither the old advocates for infant sprinkling, nor their recent convert choosing to enter the lists in its defence:\* but it is not improbable that one of the ten imprisonments, endured by Mr. Grantham, was either occasioned or hastened by his resolute conduct on this occasion.

In the year 1670, died John Lupton, a messenger of the general baptists in Lincolnshire. The first notice we have of him is in 1653; when he was joined with Joseph Wright, in a visit to the churches in Huntingdonshire. We find him, also, with the same companion, in 1655, at Wisbeach. In 1657 he appears to have been settled at Coningsby or Tattershall: and, in 1661, as one of the heads of the congregation, he signed the third Address of the Lincolnshire baptists to the king.† He evidently was a person of some influence in the former part of his ministry; but appears to have declined in his circumstances towards the end of his life. He was a pious man; and preserved the esteem of his brethren in the ministry to the last.‡

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\* Crosby, Vol. II. p. 242. † See above, pp. 132, 137, 139, 193.

‡ Of this, the following epitaph on him, preserved in Coningsby Church-book, and composed by T. G. (most probably Thomas Grantham) affords pleasing evidence.

“Thou wast both call'd and fitted for thy place,  
By Him who is the Donor of all grace.

Though the baptists were heavily oppressed by outward trials, yet they were too ready to devour one another. About this time, the controversy respecting the laying on of hands was carried on among them with great zeal. Through the intervention of some moderate men, considerable progress had been made towards a friendly agreement: and hopes were entertained, that "brotherly concord, peace, and truth, would possess the room of all their divisions in affection, judgment, and practice, especially on this point." But these hopes were disappointed, through the intemperate heat of some of the opposers of the practice; more particularly by a publication, entitled, "A Search for Schism," by a number of ministers who opposed the practice; which contained some very severe reflections on the churches which adopted it. This produced several replies. Among others, Mr. Grantham, who had too great a reverence for the testimony of God to allow him to esteem any thing indifferent which he found in the oracles of truth,\* published a small treatise, in 1671, which he dedicated to the church of Christ in London, and the General Assembly, under the title of "A Sigh for Peace: or, the Cause of Division discovered." In this work he vindicates the practice of laying on of hands, and the propriety of those who practise it declining to join in communion at the Lord's table with those who oppose it. He also

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Equall'd by few, and blest with great success:  
 Till fortune's snares thy heav'n-born soul did press,  
 Thy death was thy release: Heav'n so decreed,  
 Thy friends in thee man's various state may read."

C. C. B. p. 17

\* "There is no readier way to destroy any truth, than to let it pass for a thing indifferent."

*Grantham's Sigh for Peace, p. 119.*

subjoined a defence of the messenger's office, which, it appears, some of the churches, at that early period, began to dislike. This work led to an interview between the author and Mr. Jer. Ives, a general baptist minister in London; who, it seems, adopted the opposite side of the controversy: when Mr. Ives, if we credit Mr. Crosby, finding himself hard pressed by his antagonist, broke off the conference in a very amicable manner.\*

When Charles II. issued his proclamation in favour of dissenters, March 15, 1672, Mr. Grantham, accompanied by another messenger, was deputed, by the Lincolnshire general baptists, to wait upon his majesty, with an address of thanks for his indulgence. But, after expressing their gratitude for what he had done, these honest subjects seized that opportunity of instructing their monarch in what respects even his indulgence infringed that liberty to which as christians they esteemed themselves to be entitled. They besought him to permit them to pray and preach at such times and in such places as they should think, under the guidance of scripture, most for the edification of the church, without any restraint from government—declared their intention of continuing to act in this manner till they obtained his permission—and assured him that no less liberty than the scriptures warrant it to claim would be acceptable to the church of God. In conclusion,† they thanked his majesty for his lenity; and prayed, that “God would magnify grace in his princely soul; that whilst he reigned here on earth he might excel in all true honour;

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\* Grantham's Sigh for Peace. Crosby, Vol. II. p. 278.

† Crosby, Vol. III. p. 83.

and, after this life, enjoy a crown of immortality and a throne of glory in heaven."

In less than a year, however, all these prospects of liberty vanished: for, March 8th, 1673, his majesty withdrew his protection from the dissenters. It is highly probable, that, on this change, the plain remonstrance of these honest men would be recollected to their disadvantage. Certain it is, that they suffered severely by the various modes of persecution which continued to rage, with short intermissions, till the Revolution. Of their heavy sufferings they have left a simple, but affecting account, in a narrative drawn up by Mr. Grantham, probably about 1685,\*entitled "The Baptists' complaint against the persecuting Priests," &c. This Complaint was never published; but a manuscript copy of it fell into Mr. Crosby's hand, and he has preserved large extracts from it. After acknowledging the worth of some of the clergy of the established church, they complain of the persecuting spirit of others, who sought their utter ruin; and incited magistrates to persecute them, notwithstanding they had faithfully endeavoured to obtain peace and brotherly kindness with the ministers of the church of England, not only by their friendly deportment, but also by several public overtures. They then quote Job and the Psalmist as precedents for complaining under severe oppressions, and proceed thus:

"Now our case being, as we believe, much like the case of these good men, we do also make our just complaint; that we live among those, who, by their place, should be men of peace and meek-

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\* They speak of Cromwell being Lord Protector above thirty years before they made this complaint.

ness, but are far otherwise; so haughty, a man can scarce tell how to speak to them: and when we speak of truth and peace, they are for war: bitterly calling us damned fanatics and heretics, even in their pulpits; only because we dissent from them in some things, which the most learned confess have neither precept nor precedent in the word of God.

We have borne the unkind usage of many of our countrymen, and of persecuting priests in particular, for more than thirty years. For, in the time of Cromwell's usurpation, they did then hale us before the judgment-seats, because we could not worship God after the will of their Lord Protector; for so they stiled him in their articles against us. And we had then our goods taken away, and never restored to this day.

And, lest the reader should suppose we provoked these men, by withholding their dues; let him know, that we gave them their demands as well as any; and, perhaps, from better principles than some others: for we consider, that when we either hire or purchase land, the tenths are excepted, and so not ours. But yet, it is also to be considered, that they were not given to maintain men in drunkenness, lording, persecuting, and ruining such as fear God, merely because they dissent from them in the things aforesaid. Yet thus goes the business in these days; by which unreasonable practices, they outdo the false prophets which were of old: for they prepared war against those that did not put into their mouths; but these devour those that labour to maintain them.

Nor shall we, as yet, make a particular rehearsal of the sufferings of the baptized believers in this nation; having learned, with Jerome, to

say, 'If at any time, for the commandments of God and the verity of faith, the priests, or false prophets, or foolish people be angry with us, let us not esteem or make any account of it; but let us keep the commandments of God: not thinking on our troubles which are present, but beholding the goodness to come.' Let it suffice, then, that we briefly touch or reflect upon the things which have come upon us, in one county only, in Lincolnshire, though we be but few in number, and generally poor men: because there may be a more general account of these things transmitted to posterity. And,

1. We have sustained not less than the imprisonment of one hundred persons; some by the writ *de capiendo*, others by the writ *qui tam*; some for hearing, others for preaching the word of God: not any man amongst us being any ways concerned in plotting, or any misdemeanour against our lord the king: for whom we give thanks to God, with prayer that he may have a long and happy reign over us.

2. We have borne the trial of no less than three hundred levies: some, for sixty, forty, twenty, and ten pounds; some, for two-pence per week; which, by the often repetition of them, have weakened many poor men, and caused them to remove their habitations.

3. Indictments at the assizes and sessions, upon the statute of two-pence per week and twenty pounds per month, we have had the trial of not less than a thousand: which has been no small charge to those who have been prosecuted there.

4. Presentments and excommunications in the commissary courts, we have had some hundreds, to the great prejudice as well as charge of many of us: with many other particular vexations

from private persons, not here to be inserted. And yet, we trust, we may humbly use the words of the Psalmist: 'All this is come upon us, yet have we not forgotten thee; neither have we dealt deceitfully in thy covenant.' But these things have contributed, in general, to our more full assurance, that the truth is with us, in the things wherein we dissent from those who persecute us. And, in this holy confidence, we hope to pass through the valley of the shadow of death, if our God shall call us to it. For we believe and are sure, to persecute is no mark of the true church; but to suffer persecution is so: and that, that religion is not worth professing in time of peace, which is not worth owning in the time of the greatest trouble."

Having given this artless detail of their sufferings, they enter their protest against the doctrine of passive obedience; and the opinion that what religion soever is established by the governors of a nation is the true worship of God in their dominions.\*

The pious, active, and zealous Thomas Grantham was, throughout this trying season, a principal support of the general baptist interest in these parts. On all occasions he proved himself the undaunted champion of what he esteemed to be the cause of God and truth. No prospect of personal advantage could allure him to desert its interest; nor could the apprehension of the greatest danger or loss deter him from being its public advocate. During these two reigns, he was ten times thrown into prison; and was often confined for many successive months. He suffered the loss of friends and substance; yet he

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\* Crosby, Vol. III. pp. 83—90.

did not relax in his labours. In this interval, we shall find him, as we proceed, preaching the gospel, founding churches, nursing them up to maturity; and setting in order the things that were wanting, in London, at Norwich, at Lynn Regis, at Warboys, at Warwick, and various other distant places: but it was with the baptized churches in Lincolnshire that he was most closely connected.

Though thus actively employed in travelling, preaching, and watching over the churches; he was yet able to write much: and his works had the same object with all his other labours. He preached, he travelled, he suffered, and he wrote, to advance the cause of genuine christianity.—With this view, in 1678, he published “*Christianismus Primitivus*: or, the ancient Christian Religion, in its nature, certainty, excellency and beauty, (internal and external) particularly considered, asserted, and vindicated; from the many abuses which have invaded that sacred profession, by human innovation, or pretended religion,” &c.\* This may be considered as a body of

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\* As this Volume is becoming scarce, the following concise analysis of its contents will, it is presumed, be acceptable.—The Introduction defends the divine authority of the scriptures.—Book I. treats of the certainty and excellency of the christian religion.—Book II. exhibits the internal and external parts of christianity; including a detailed explanation and defence of the various doctrines, duties and precepts of the christian religion as they regard faith, practice or experience.—Book III. resolves divers cases of conscience: in which are discussed the duties incumbent on the christian from his connections with society, both civil and religious; especially the necessity and propriety of obedience to civil government.—Book IV. is a republication of six small Treatises which had been formerly published, by the same author, in defence of christianity against human innovations and pretended revelations: these are, 1. The Baptist against the Papist; 2. The Baptist against the Quaker. 3. The Pædo-

divinity, according to the views of the general baptists of that age; and contains a laboured exposition and defence of their doctrines and practices. The author does not confine himself to those points in which they differed from other denominations; but takes a systematic view of the whole of revealed religion. This work is a folio, of upwards of six hundred pages; and gives us a high idea of the number and zeal of that denomination which, in such discouraging circumstances, could countenance the publication of so expensive a book. The churches in Lincolnshire must have their share in this praise; for Mr. Grantham assures us, that he undertook the task of composing this treatise at their importunity, and by their encouragement.\* And when we consider his other engagements, and that he was, as he informs us,† one that “got his bread by the labour of his hands, and never saluted the schools to gain the knowledge of their arts,” it must have been a heavy task; and remains a strong proof of his ability, industry and perseverance.

In 1687, the same indefatigable author published two small treatises in quarto; which now lie before us. One is called, “Presumption no

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baptists' Apology for the Baptized churches. 4. The Querist examined: or Fifty Anti-queries seriously propounded to the Presbyterians. 5. The Fourth Principle of Christ's Doctrine (Imposition of hands) vindicated; with a defence of the Messenger's office. 6. Gospel Separation considered and limited according to Truth and Charity; lest, under a pretence to the latter, the former suffer injury. The work concludes with a defence of the Resurrection and Eternal Judgment; invectives (dissuasives) against atheism, idolatry, and superstition; and motives to engage all christians to endeavour to propagate pristine christianity, in all the nations of the world.”

\* Epistle Dedicatory, *ad finem*,

† Book IV. *Pref.*

proof:" and is a reply to two advocates for infant sprinkling; Mr. Petto and Mr. Firmin. The other is entitled, "Hear the Church: or an Appeal to the Mother of us all. Being an Epistle to all the baptized Believers in England, exhorting them to stedfastness in the Truth, according to the scriptures," &c. This is an attempt to trace out the doctrine and discipline of the first christian church at Jerusalem; and to prove the propriety of appealing to her, as the mother of all succeeding christian societies, for a standard of faith and practice. It is principally levelled against the papists; but occasionally enters into the general subjects of controversy with the pædobaptists.

Mr. James Marham, a respectable tradesman, and most probably a member of the general baptist church at Spalding, settled at Holbeach, in this county, about 1681. There were then no dissenters in the town; and this zealous man determined to endeavour to raise an interest. He invited several baptist ministers, both general and particular, to preach in his house, and a congregation was soon collected. This raised a violent opposition amongst his neighbours; and the laws were enforced against him and his assistants. In less than a year, levies were made upon him for fines to the amount of several scores of pounds: and he was frequently driven from one justice to another, for four days in the week; till he was compelled to forsake his business and his habitation. Still he persevered in his attempt. William Rix, the particular baptist minister at Wisbeach, and Samuel Phillips, a deacon of the church at Spalding, were both apprehended for preaching at his house. Mr. Marham boldly appeared for them, exerted himself successfully

in their behalf; and they were dismissed, for want of evidence. The magistrates, disappointed of their prey, and exasperated at the intrepidity of Mr. Marham's conduct, determined to wreak their vengeance on him. One of the bench addressed him thus: "Marham, I will send you to jail: and I will ruin the anabaptist meetings in this country, or they shall ruin me out of my house. The people of Holbeach were all of one religion till you had meetings in your house." To prison the good man was sent; and sustained great loss and charge before he regained his liberty. He was, afterwards, stript of all his goods, and obliged to board himself and his wife for more than a year. Yet he still persisted in exerting himself in behalf of those who were persecuted for conscience' sake, by instructing and defending them when brought before the magistrates; till his enemies were so enraged, that they threatened to "knock him on the head." He, however, was preserved from their fury, and lived to do much and suffer much for the good cause in other places.

Notwithstanding this storm, the baptist interest was supported at Holbeach, and a regular society soon formed, which, at the Revolution, consisted of thirty members. It is probable, that, for many years, it was considered as a branch of the church at Spalding: as Mr. Samuel Phillips, already mentioned, removed to Holbeach, and continued, for a long time, the regular preacher to this congregation. This appears to be the origin of the general baptist church that now exists at Fleet.\*

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\* B. M. S. S. from a scarce pamphlet, called "*The Lynn persecution*," printed in 1693. communicated by Mr. Richards of Lynn.

In the scarcity of information respecting the internal state of these churches, one pleasing exception offers itself. The Records of the general baptist church at Spalding are preserved, and contain an interesting and authentic document, entitled, "An Account of the officers and members appertaining to the church of Christ in Spalding, Bourn, and Hackenby\*, and the parts adjacent, taken the 31st day of the 6th month, 1688." This list, which occupies almost five folio pages, is fairly written, by one hand, in the front of the church-book. At the head stands the name of Thomas Grantham, messenger, followed by Thomas Lawson, and Joseph Hooke, elders; Luke Copeland, John Watson, and Samuel Phillips, deacons; and Israel Cave, Robert Booth, Robert Vellem, John Willey, Thomas Ives, and Thomas Maw, gifted brethren. These are succeeded by the names of such of their wives as were in fellowship; and a long catalogue of members, which amount in the whole to one hundred and fifty-three.† From this document it appears, that this church was then in a flourishing state; and plentifully supplied with labourers. How long it had existed, it is not easy to say; but, from the circumstances in which we find it, at this date, it evidently had been established a considerable time. Probably a society of baptists had existed here from the time that Mr. H. Denne preached at this place, in 1646.‡

How far the limits of this church extended is not easy to determine. Bourn lies twelve miles west of Spalding, and Heckingby four miles north of Bourn: and the members appear to have resided

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\* Now written Heckingby. † B. M. S. S. from the original.

‡ See page 106.

in places at considerable distances in other directions:—at Gosberton, a hamlet six miles north of Spalding; at Holbeach, a market-town eight miles east of it; at Fleet, a village two miles more eastward; and at Lutton, Gedney, and Moulton, places in the same neighbourhood.\*

We know but little of the officers of this church, previous to this date of the list. Mr. Grantham's name is probably inserted, merely as the president of the meeting of August 30th, at which the review of the members took place. When laxity of discipline, or want of zeal, had introduced confusion and irregularity into any society, it became the duty of the messenger to summon the officers and members of such a society to meet him, for the purpose of "setting in order the things that were wanting." This was most probably the case in this instance: as a new church-book was provided, and a new list of members made out. It is, however, possible, that Mr. Grantham might have removed his communion from the church in the South Marsh to Spalding, and thus have become a member of this church.

Thomas Lawson, the first elder mentioned, was, probably, advanced in years, and had sustained the office for some time. As he dwelt at Spalding, it may be concluded, that his labours in the ministry would be chiefly in that neighbourhood. Joseph Hooke was much younger than his colleague; having been baptized only eleven years, and ordained elder the September preceding. He resided at Heckingby, and was principally employed as a preacher and pastor at Bourn, and the places adjacent. Here he la-

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\* B. M. S. S. from Spalding Church Book.

boured diligently and successfully for nearly fifty years; and will frequently be introduced in the sequel of our narration :\* in which we shall also have occasion to advert to several other of the officers and ministers enumerated in this document.

Respecting the other general baptist churches in Lincolushire, which were mentioned in the last chapter, we have very little information, during this period. The society at Coningsby and Tattershall continued to flourish; and, in 1672, unanimously chose Charles Warwick to be their pastor.†

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SECT. 4.—*An Account of General Baptists, during this period, in the counties adjacent to Lincolnshire.*

THE Records of the church at Fenstanton, which furnished us with such copious materials for the last chapter, are wholly lost during this period: and we know little of the circumstances of that society, except what may be collected from accidental references. It appears, that it continued to flourish, under the pastoral care of Messrs. John Denne and Edmund Mayle: and there can be no doubt but it experienced a portion of the troubles which were felt by dissenters in general: though, probably, in a less degree than in some other parts of the kingdom. Mr. Crosby says, that Mr. John Denne was once fined for preaching; which, doubtless, happened before the Revolution.‡

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\* B. M. S. S. from Bourn Church Book. † C. C. B.

‡ Crosby, Vol. III. p. 115.

Of the neighbouring church at Warboys we have some documents, but in a very deranged and mutilated state. In 1661, a reconciliation took place between this church and William Dunn, their former pastor, which appears to have much strengthened their hands. There are only fragments of entries from this date, to 1676, when William Dunn appears to have been dead; and a remissness of discipline had crept into their proceedings. This produced its natural effects, in the decline of the cause; and arrested the attention of the friends of religion. August 29th. 1676, the subject was taken into serious consideration, at a meeting called for the purpose; when it was resolved to "look more strictly to the punishing of offenders, knowing that due exercise of judgment is pleasing in the sight of the Lord." In order to do this more effectually, they took an account of the members then in communion. The number amounted to seventy-one; and thirteen others were soon added. At the head of the list, stand the names of Edmund Mayle of Fenstanton, and John Denne of St. Ives. From this circumstance, and there being many of the members who dwelt at Fenstanton, we were led to suppose, that the two neighbouring churches had united; till we found them acting as separate societies a few years afterwards. At this time, there existed an unhappy difference between Mr. John Lacy, who was an elder in the church at Warboys, and Messrs. J. Denne and Edmund Mayle, which embroiled the church till 1687, when it was amicably settled. This must have greatly retarded the progress of the cause, and prevented the success which might have been the result of their united and friendly exertions.

In 1682 John Stoakley, who had for some time acted as teacher to this church, died: and the greatest part of the ministerial labour devolved on Thomas Ridman. The cause appearing to gain strength under his ministry, he was, in 1684, ordained elder of this congregation, by Messrs. J. Denne and E. Mayle. Several additions were made to the church, in the following two years; but in 1687, Mr. Ridman's labours were cut short by death. Yet they were not forsaken: "Blessed be God," they say, "he hath given light to others of his servants, that, according to his promise, his gospel may run and be glorified: and that the ministration of it may not cease." In the following year, Mr. T. Grantham laboured for some time amongst them; and administered the ordinances of baptism and imposition of hands.

It does not appear, from the imperfect records that have come to our hands, that any of the members of this church were imprisoned on account of their religion; though it is evident, they held themselves in readiness to suffer for its sake. Soon after the first declaration against conventicles, in 1661, we find them observing "The churches now break up their meetings, like men unwilling to bear the cross of Christ. This is too great an evil to be endured: for, if it be of God to meet together, it is not of God to break up; and, consequently, not lawful." And, at the close of the year, they say, "The church is in very good order, blessed be God: and uphold their meetings, through evil report and good report." In 1682, they remark, "We uphold our meetings together, through the blessing of God, although they are broken up in many places." On the following year, they have this memorandum: "This year presents us with great rumours of

troubles abroad: the meetings in London broken up, and brethren haled to prison: yet this noise doth not trouble us with fear: for we are all content to suffer for Christ; knowing it is the lot of the righteous, not only to believe, but to suffer for his sake." They were soon called, in some measure, to exemplify their principles. In 1684, they say, "Notwithstanding the aforesaid trouble, which rather increases than abates, the brethren are zealous for the faith, and increase in number: there being some added to the church, and continue in the apostles' doctrine, in breaking of bread and prayer; with preaching from house to house, not being permitted to preach in our meeting-houses." It was very natural, therefore, for them to rejoice at the prospect of the termination of these persecutions; and, at the close of the year 1687, they exclaim, "Blessed be God, we have now some prospects of peace, even when we looked for trouble: so that God has fulfilled his gracious promise, saying, 'You shall sit down under your own vine, and none shall make you afraid!' The Lord grant that we may improve it to his honour, and our souls' good."\*

In this period, probably towards the beginning of it, died Mr. Henry Denne; an indefatigable, zealous, and successful minister of the gospel; and a steady and active friend to the general baptist cause. When he was born, does not appear; but he joined the baptists about 1643. His labours for that denomination having been noticed in the course of this history †, it will be sufficient here to observe, that, in the former part of the

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\* W. C. B. under the various dates.

† See pp. 101—104, 107, 145, 149, 152, 162, and 172.

civil wars, his usefulness as a minister being frequently interrupted by persecution, he quitted his living at Elsley: and, being zealous for the liberties of his country, like many other pious ministers of different denominations, he went into the army; where he gained great reputation, both as a preacher and a soldier. When the contest was decided, he appears to have returned to his charge; as we find him labouring at Elsley, under the protectorate. It is not improbable, that he continued to enjoy this living, till the restoration forced him out. It has been generally supposed that he died soon afterwards: Mr. Crosby says about 1661. His character will be collected from the facts we have already recorded: and so highly did his cotemporaries esteem him, that his name alone was thought a sufficient panegyric.\*

Mr. H. Denne published several pieces, chiefly of a controversial nature: as, "The Doctrine and Conversation of John the Baptist," 1642. "The Foundation of Children's Baptism discovered, and rased:" in answer to Dr. Featley and Mr. Marshall, 1645. "The Man of Sin dis-

\* The Epitaph, written by a clergyman of his acquaintance, and put on his grave, was in these terms:

"To tell his wisdom, learning, goodness, unto men,  
I need to say no more; but, Here lies Henry Denne."

There is, indeed, a Mr. Denne mentioned, in Bunyan's *Peaceable Principles and True*, in terms of great disrespect; and insinuations are thrown out against his character. If this was our author, it is probable that he was living in 1670, when this piece appears to have been written. This attack, however, is made in so vague a manner, and there is evidently such a degree of asperity and irritation runs through the whole, that little can be built upon it. Yet it is plain, from Mr. Bunyan's work itself, that the most respectable particular baptist ministers did not esteem it any disgrace to shelter themselves under Mr. Denne's authority, even at the time when this author treats him with such sovereign contempt.—*Crosby*, Vol. I, pp. 297—307. Vol. III. p. 2.

covered," 1645: which last two he republished, in 1646, together with "The Drag Net of the Kingdom of Heaven: or, Christ drawing all men," in one small volume, under the title of "Antichrist unmasked." In 1658, he printed an account of his dispute with Dr. Gunning, which he called, "A Contention for Truth." He likewise wrote some small tracts against the levellers and quakers. Besides these works, which are usually enumerated, a small piece has fallen into our hands, which we have never seen mentioned. It is entitled, "Grace, Mercy, and Truth: containing, 1. God's Reconciliation to Man: and, 2. Man's Reconciliation to God. By Henry Denne, an unworthy servant of the church. Formerly printed for the benefit of the city of Rochester: reprinted 1696."

In the adjoining county of Cambridge, the general baptist cause gained ground during this period. It has generally been supposed, that the churches at Great Wilbraham and Milbourn were founded in the year 1675: the former by Mr. John Denne, who is said to have opened a meeting at his own house in that town, and the latter by Mr. Benjamin Medcalf. But we have seen, in the last chapter, that there were societies of general baptists at both places, during the protectorate: and it is plain, from the records of Warboys church, that Mr. J. Denne resided, in 1676, at St. Ives; and, in 1684, was an elder of the church at Fenstanton. Mr. Medcalf appears to have settled with the friends at Milbourn, probably about 1676; and continued to labour amongst them till his death in 1689. John Lacy, Solomon Hook, Thomas Clack, and Lewis Adley were actively employed as preachers amongst the Cambridgeshire general baptists, at this time;

but we have not been able to collect much information respecting them.

In Norfolk, that laborious messenger of the churches, Thomas Grantham, laboured with great success. About the year 1686, he resided for some time at Norwich; where he founded the general baptist church in White Friar's-yard in that city, which still exists. Having nursed that interest to a state of considerable maturity, he removed, towards the close of this period, to Yarmouth; in which populous town he likewise raised a church, which soon became numerous.

Mr. James Marham, who was the instrument of raising the church at Holbeach, about 1686, removed his residence to a village in Norfolk, not far from Wisbeach, called Walpole or Wapool-Bell, where the baptists appear to have been unknown. He had not been settled in this place three weeks, before his non-attendance at the established worship caused the parish officers to wait upon him, and require him either to frequent the parish church, or appear before the justice and rector, to answer for his neglect. Mr. Marham, without hesitation, complied with the latter requisition; and was closely examined by the magistrate and clergyman for upwards of four hours. At the conclusion, the latter declared himself dissatisfied with his reasons, and appointed another day for resuming the conference. But a proclamation for liberty of conscience being issued in the interim, the rector declined engaging any further. Mr. Marham, the same week, opened a meeting at his own house, which was soon attended by several of his neighbours: and it pleased God so to prosper this undertaking, that, in a few years, a general baptist church was formed at this place. This society was, for a

considerable time, under the care of Mr. Robert Booth, who appears to have removed from Spalding to take the oversight of it.\*

There were many general baptists, at this time, in *Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire*, and the counties adjacent. We have not the means of giving an account of the several churches and ministers; but Mr. Hooke has recorded a fact, which gives us a high idea of their numbers and principles. The Confession of Faith which had been presented to King Charles II., by Mr. Grantham, in 1660, having been drawn up hastily for the occasion, was thought by some neither sufficiently explicit nor comprehensive. Probably with a view to remedy these defects, and to declare more distinctly their own sentiments on certain important points of doctrine and discipline, as well as to guard against the increase of popery which was then justly dreaded by every friend to religion and his country, the general baptists, in the counties of Bucks, Hertford, Bedford and Oxford, published, in 1678, another declaration of their tenets. This was called "*An Orthodox Creed, or a Protestant Confession of Faith: being an essay to unite and confirm all true protestants in the fundamental articles of the christian religion, against the errors and heresies of the church of Rome.*" This Creed contained fifty articles, and was signed by "fifty four messengers, elders and brethren of the baptized churches, in behalf of themselves and others to whom they did belong." It is to be lamented, that neither

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\* Theol. Mag. for 1805, page 113.—B. M. S. S.—This has been thought the original of the general baptist church at Wisbeach; but, as we have seen, that church was formed before the Restoration. Probably the two societies afterwards united.

Hooke nor yet Crosby who has preserved a copy of this creed, has recorded the names of the subscribers.\*

One of the most ancient of these churches assembled at Aylesbury in the county of Bucks. It had most probably been gathered during the civil wars, as Edwards, in 1646, mentions the pastor: and after the restoration, was numerous and regularly organized. This town and neighbourhood drank deep of the cup of persecution; many of the magistrates distinguishing themselves by their zeal against nonconformists. In 1664, having filled the county jail with dissenters, they hired two large houses, which they turned into prisons for their reception. And, not contented with daily imprisoning their persons and confiscating their goods, they attempted also to take away their lives. Among others, twelve general baptists were apprehended, when assembled for divine worship. These were Stephen Dagnall, their minister,——Ellit, a teacher; Wm. Whitchurch, a glover and deacon; Thos. Hill, a linen-draper; Thos. Monk, a farmer;——Brandon, a shoemaker; with three other men whose names

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\* *Hooke's Necessary Apology*, p. 39. *Crosby Vol. II.* p. 345.—*Vol. III. Ap. No. I.*—As some late writers have asserted this Confession of Faith to be Calvinistical, and ascribed it to the particular baptists, it may be necessary to state the reasons that have induced us to claim it. Mr Hooke, who was contemporary with Publishers, reckons it, with the Confession of 1660, as general baptist Creeds, in opposition to the particular baptist confession of 1688.—We know of no particular baptist churches, at this time, in these parts; but the general baptists were numerous.—This Creed asserts the necessity of the Messengers' Office, which probably was never acknowledged by the particular baptists. It also enjoins the laying on of hands, as one of the principles of Christ's doctrine, Heb. vi. 2, which many of the general baptists, at that time, practised.—But the Creed itself is decisive. These baptists held an election and reprobation of characters, not of

have not been preserved; Mary Jackman, a widow with six children; and Ann Turner, spinster. Having been regularly convicted under the conventicle act, they were confined three months in prison, and then brought before the quarter sessions. The magistrates required them either to conform to the church of England and take the oaths, or to abjure the realm; and assured them, that if they refused to do one of these, sentence of death should be passed on them: according to the act of the thirty fifth of Elizabeth, which the Conventicle act had lately declared to be in full force. To give a colour of mercy to their proceedings, the prisoners were remanded till the afternoon to consider of their answer. When brought up again, they unanimously declared that they could neither conform to the church nor abjure their native country and relations, and must therefore throw themselves on the mercy of the court. They were instantly declared guilty of felony, and sentence of death passed upon them. Officers were sent to their houses to sieze that little property they possessed, as forfeited to the crown; and these orders were executed in the most wanton and unfeeling manner.

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individuals. "God has," they say "elected all that do or shall believe in Christ." And "hath decreed to punish all those wicked or ungodly, disobedient, and unbelieving or impenitent sinners that have or shall despise grace." Respecting the extent of the death of Christ they assert, that, "Christ died for all men, and there is a sufficiency in his death and merits for the sins of the whole world; and hath appointed the gospel to be preached unto all; and hath sent forth his Spirit to accompany the word, in order to beget repentance and faith: so that if any do perish, it is not for want of the means of grace manifested by Christ to them, but for the non-improvement of the grace of God, offered freely to them through Christ in the gospel." *Orthodox Creed,* Art. ix. x. xviii.

The dissenters of every denomination in the town were justly alarmed at these violent and sanguinary proceedings, and immediately shut up all their shops; which, as they were a great majority of the inhabitants, spread terror and dismay through the place. One of the condemned persons, subdued by the tears and intreaties of his wife, promised to conform, and was accordingly set at liberty; but he felt such distress of mind for his apostacy, that he voluntarily returned to prison, and waited with his companions the solemn event.

Thomas Monk, son to the prisoner of that name, immediately on passing the sentence, rode up to London; and waited on Mr. W. Kiffin, a particular baptist minister, of independent fortune, who had considerable influence at court.\* After he had explained the alarming circumstances to that worthy man, they hastened together to the lord chancellor Hyde. This nobleman readily undertook to introduce them to the king; to whom they related the whole affair. That careless monarch seemed much surprized that any of his subjects should be condemned to death on account of religion; and, though he had, only a few months before, given his consent to the very act under which they

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\* Mr. Kiffin probably owed part of his influence at court to his property. King Charles once condescended to ask him for the loan of forty thousand pounds. Mr. K. apologized to the messenger for not being able to advance so large a sum; but desired him to inform his Majesty, that, if ten thousand pounds would be of any service, he would make him a present of it. This offer was graciously accepted: and the old man had such opinion of that monarch's punctuality in paying his debts, that he used jocosely to observe to his friends, he had saved thirty thousand pounds by his liberality. *Crosby*, Vol. III. 4.

were convicted, eagerly enquired whether there was any law in force that could authorize such a procedure. Being satisfied that there was, he promised a pardon, and gave, immediately, the proper orders to the chancellor. But the applicants, reflecting that the passing of a regular pardon through all the necessary forms would require time, and that those who had shown such a readiness in pronouncing the sentence of death might be as precipitate in the execution, besought his majesty to grant them a reprieve. This was at once drawn up, signed, and delivered to Thomas Monk; who instantly returned with all expedition to Aylesbury. On his arrival, the news of his success diffused a general joy among the nonconformists; filled their persecutors with consternation and dismay; and, for some time, checked the violence of their proceedings. The prisoners were confined till the next assizes, when the judge brought down his majesty's pardon, and they were all released.\*

Another large and ancient general baptist church in these parts, which flourished during the period which we are now reviewing, included Chesham in Buckinghamshire, and Berkhamstead in Hertfordshire, with various villages adjacent to these towns. We are not able to state the time of its formation, the original church-

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\* *Crosby, Vol. II p. 180.* This Author, as usual, calls these sufferers only *baptists*; but we conclude that they were *general baptists*, because S. Dagnall joined with F. Smith, 1659, in publishing *W. Jeffery's Whole Faith of Man*—because Thos. Monk signed the G. B. Confession of Faith, in 1660; and a Thos. Monck, probably the son, was elder of a G. B. church at Berkhamstead, in 1675—and because several of these names appear in the records of G. B. churches in those parts, prior to the Revolution.—*Jeffery's Whole Faith of Man, Title, 2d. Edit. Crosby, Vol. II. App. p. 90.—A. C. B. 1675.*

books being, most probably, long since lost. Its present records, which are now lying before us, commence the 9th day of the 9th month (Nov. 9th) 1676. This society was then in a flourishing state; and consisted of at least one hundred members, under the care of Mr. John Russell, elder, and five or six deacons. It must, therefore, have existed a considerable time before this date; probably it was first gathered during the protectorate.

It is painful to record the contentions of good men; yet, in an impartial account of their actions, it is necessary to notice them. It is evident that, at the time when these records commence, there existed an unhappy difference between Mr. Russell and Nehemiah Neale, who appears to have been a leading man among them. What was the object of contention does not very plainly appear; but it is probable that it arose from some difference of opinion respecting the maintenance of ministers. It produced a division in the society; the majority adhering to the pastor, Mr. Russell, and, May 25th, 1677, withdrawing from twenty-six of the disaffected, who favoured Mr. Neale. The minority formed themselves into a distinct church: and afterwards chose Daniel Field for their pastor. For some time, an unhappy distance was maintained between these two congregations; but at length a reconciliation was effected, and they treated each other as sister churches.

The members of this congregation appear to have suffered greater persecution than some of the neighbouring churches. In order to assist each other in bearing the weight of these oppressions, nine of the principal members, in 1682, entered into an agreement, to bear each an equal

portion of any fine that might be levied on any of the society on account of religion: a liberal undertaking, that proved, at once, their zeal for God, and their love to the brethren. The names of these worthy men were, Richard Young, John Russell, John Garrett, F. Lewin, George Catherall, Henry Baldwin, Charles Edge, Robert Catlin, and T. Laird.\*—As this church now belongs to the New Connection, we shall have occasion to trace it through the several succeeding periods to the present time.

Another general baptist church, closely connected with this, was formed at Amersham, Buckinghamshire, in 1675, by about twenty persons, who had been members of another society of the same faith, of which we have no account. These seceders became convinced that the laying on of hands on all baptized believers was a scriptural practice, which the church with which they had stood connected not only neglected but opposed. After some fruitless attempts to procure an amicable dismissal, they withdrew; and sent to the church in Dunning's-alley, London, for assistance. That congregation sent down their elder, John Griffith, to form them into a separate church. Dec. 14th. 1675, Mr. Griffith laid hands on eighteen persons, who immediately formed themselves into a church state, drew up and signed articles of agreement which they desired to observe as a society; and, on Mar. 12th following, sat down together, for the first time, at the Lord's table.

Their first church act appears to have been the chusing of David Jameson for their elder, and Edward Rudrup deacon. In the following year,

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\* B. C. B.

they purchased a piece of freehold ground for a burying-ground ; and appear to have proceeded with zeal and alacrity in the cause : many being added to them in the course of a few years. They were liberal in their contributions for the support of their poor members ; and especially for the relief of those who were prisoners for the truth. They cherished an affectionate regard for Mr. Griffith ; and during his long imprisonment, which commenced soon after his visit to them, they frequently sent their messengers to Newgate with tokens of their sympathy and esteem.

In less than a year several of their own members were apprehended, and fined for being at a meeting : and some suffered under false accusations. The leading men in the neighbourhood countenanced the informers, which spread a general consternation and dismay : insomuch that the person of whom they rented the room in which they held their meetings for worship, though a member of the church, refused to permit them to assemble upon his premises, unless they would give him a bond to bear him harmless against the consequences. This the church declined ; and chose rather to build a meeting-house on their own ground. Discouraging as the times were, they prosecuted this undertaking with so much zeal, that, in less than two months, it was ready for use : being opened Dec. 30th. 1677. The whole expence was twenty-six pounds, of which seventeen pounds were subscribed at one meeting.

So early as 1678, this society found it prudent to have another elder, to assist Mr. Jameson in the ministry and oversight of the church ; and elected Mr. Nicholas Bennett ; who was ordained to that office, Dec. 8th, by Mr. Jameson, assisted

by Mr. Fell, at that time elder of the church at Berkhamstead. It is evident, a spirit of zeal for the cause of God pervaded all the members; of which their records furnish many pleasing instances. One may suffice as a specimen. When the deacons gave in their accounts, in Oct. 1686, there was a considerable balance against the church, which was immediately discharged by a sister Hill.\*

The churches of which we have just been speaking appear, through the whole of this period, to have maintained a mutual correspondence with each other, by means of associations of their ministers and representatives. But, when we consider the severity of the laws then in force, we shall not expect that such meetings could be either regular or frequent. We have traces of an association at Aylesbury, Mar. 20th. 1678, to which the Berkhamstead church sent two representatives: as they did, the preceding Whitsuntide, to the general assembly in London.†

We have only very slight notices of any other general baptists, during this period, on the north of London; though there is sufficient reason to conclude that, in several counties besides those already mentioned, they were numerous and flourishing. This appears to have been peculiarly the case in Northamptonshire, where those active and able ministers, Francis Stanley, of East Haddon, and Benjamin Morley, of Ravenshorpe, sustained the office of messengers. They were successfully supported by the labours of John Ieas, of East Haddon, William Smith and William Bliss of Welton, John Gilby, of Long Buckby; J. Grunden, of Cocket, John Stauton, of

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\* B C. B. at the various dates. † Ibid. 1677. 1678.

Blissworth, Stephen Curtis, of Harringworth, Joseph Slater, William Stanger, and Robert Bringhurst, who all appear to have been employed in preaching the gospel, and all suffered for their conscientious attachment to what they esteemed truth. A few particulars of their sufferings have been preserved, and ought to be recorded.

William Smith, the pastor of a general baptist church at Welton, was a man of excellent parts and learning, an useful and faithful minister, and much respected even by many members of the established church. Being once engaged in preaching, on a Lord's-day, a military officer, attended by several soldiers, entered the place; and, commanding him to be silent, informed him that he was his prisoner. On Mr. Smith's asking the officer for his warrant, he put his hand to his sword, and said, 'This is my commission!'—"That is a highwayman's commission," replied Mr. Smith; "and if you have no other I shall not regard it," and went on with his discourse. The leader, feeling the illegality of his proceedings, placed his men at the door, to prevent the escape of the conventiclers, and went to procure a warrant. During his absence, Mr. Smith finished his sermon; and, joining his hearers, they pressed by the soldiers, and retired to their own habitations. When the officer returned, he was highly incensed against the soldiers; but they pleaded their inability to prevent their passing.

On another occasion, the constable of Welton was obliged to seize Mr. Smith's goods, in consequence of a warrant brought to him by a greedy informer; who hoped to purchase them, at a low rate, for his own use. But the constable,

in order to disappoint his unjust designs, had them cried, at Daventry-market, to be sold wholesale, and not retail; and fixed a very high price upon them. This prevented the informer from bidding; and, no other purchaser appearing, the constable sold them, for thirty shillings, to a friend of Mr. Smith's, who immediately restored them to their proper owner. Into his hands, also, the constable put the purchase-money, on his promise to repay it when demanded; which never happening, Mr. Smith recovered all his property without any expence:—so highly was he esteemed by his neighbours. He did not, however, always escape so easily. He was once committed to Northampton jail for preaching: but we have no particulars of his imprisonment or release. We are, also, unacquainted with the time of his death; which probably happened near the Revolution. He published a work on the personal reign of Christ, another on George Keith's Sermons, and a third, in answer to Mr. Hunt's piece on infant baptism. His name was affixed to the general baptist Confession of Faith, of 1660, after it had been presented to the king.\*

John Grunden and John Stauton were likewise committed to prison by a bishop's writ, and laid there for a long time, tradition says for three years and a half, till they were released by king James's proclamation for liberty of conscience. They were, besides, stript of their goods and cattle, for their nonconformity. Stephen Curtis, another useful minister in this county, suffered, on the same account, imprisonment for several years, and great loss of property. His associates, Joseph Slater, William

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\* Crosby, Vol. III. p. 141. Whiston's Memoirs, Vol. II. p. 575.

Stanger, and Robert Bringhurst, for some time, avoided confinement, by fleeing into another county. Their goods and cattle were seized and sold; but redeemed by some of their friendly neighbours. At length, being pursued by a legal process, they were apprehended in their retreat, and obliged to pay exorbitant fees to regain their liberty.\*

During this period, William Reeve was messenger of the baptized churches in Nottinghamshire, and resided at Rempston. He baptized Joseph Hooke, in 1676.† There is reason to conclude that, at this time, several general baptist churches existed in this county. Aaron Jeffery, who afterwards introduced the cause into Gamston and Retford, was connected with two societies, which assembled at Collingham and Misterton, and appear to have been of some standing. We are sorry that no particulars respecting them have come to hand.‡

There were, also, in 1688, general baptist churches at Leominster, Worcester, and Litchfield. This is evident, from a work published, in that year, by William Pardoe; which he dedicated to his much esteemed friends of those three societies. The author was a worthy, pious, humble, and successful general baptist minister; and a great sufferer on account of his religion. His usual residence was near Worcester; but he laboured in various parts of Leicestershire and Yorkshire; and was pastor of the church at Litchfield, in 1688. He died August 1692. He wrote part of his "Ancient Christianity revived," or "Bethania," the work just mentioned, in

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\* Crosby, Vol. III. p. 128. Ivimey, Vol. II. pp. 510—514.

† B. M. S. S.

‡ Private Information.

Leicester prison, and part of it in Worcester jail. His name appears to the Confession, of 1660.\*

It is probable, from the last article, that there were general baptists, in Leicestershire, between the Restoration and the Revolution; though we have been able to collect little information respecting them. Mr. John Smith, who was ejected from Wanlip, in this county, and afterwards occupied a farm in Charley-forest, where he preached frequently, seems to have been of this persuasion. He was a worthy man; and his funeral sermon was preached, by Mr. Ogle, at Diseworth. A baptist church also was collected, during this period, at Mountsorrell, by Mr. R. Adams, who had been ejected from Humberstone. He suffered much for his religion in the country; and, removing to London, became, for a short time, the pastor of the general baptist church at Shad Thames. He soon joined the particular baptists; and took the charge of a church of that denomination, in Devonshire-square. We have seen, however, that there were general baptist churches at Leicester, Eccleshelton, and Mountsorrell, previous to the Restoration: and the inscriptions, in the burying-ground belonging to the old general baptist meeting-house in the last place, would lead us to suppose that, at this time, the society there was respectable; as several persons from a distance were interred in their cemetery.†

There is some reason to believe that general baptists existed in Yorkshire, during this and

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\* Crosby, Vol. III. p. 114. Ivimey, Vol. II. p. 580. Whiston's Memoirs, Vol. II. p. 375.

† Crosby, Vol. III. pp. 35, 37. Wilson, Vol. IV. 257, 352.—Supra, p. 160.

the preceding periods. Edwards informs us that the itinerants from Mr. Lamb's church went into Yorkshire: and elsewhere the same author mentions certain anabaptists about Sowerby, near Halifax. Francis Smith, an eminent general baptist in London, published a work, probably towards the close of the Protectorate, which he dedicated to "all that are called to be saints, especially my dear friends in the West Riding of Yorkshire." These he styles, "fellow-travellers;" and addresses them as such as "through the rich grace of God, with their might had rendered themselves to Christ as their Saviour: and with all free affection, and humble submission, chosen him to be their king, to rule them; their priest, to make atonement for them; and their prophet, to teach them: in a word, their all in all." When we consider the importance which these good men attached to their distinguishing sentiments, it is highly probable that those whom they addressed, in language like this, were of their own denomination. This is rendered still more probable, when it is recollected that part of William Pardoe's successful ministry was, as we have just seen, partly exercised in Yorkshire.\* We should be highly gratified in any documents to confirm these conjectures.

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\* Edwards' *Gangræna*, Part I: pp. 65, 125. Smith's *Signs of a Dying Christian*. Ded. first Edition. Crosby, Vol. III. p. 114.— That there were baptists at Sowerby, previous to the civil wars, is probable, because, Mr. Robert Tillotson, a respectable clothier of that place, is said to have become a baptist soon after the birth of his son John, afterwards archbishop of Canterbury, in 1630. This gave occasion to the enemies of that prelate to reproach him with being unbaptized; and to say, that, "there were fathers of the church who never were her sons." *Birch's Life of Tillotson*, prefixed to his works, pp. i. and cxii.

SECT. 5.—*The History of the General Baptists in London and its vicinity, from the Restoration to the Revolution.*

THE general baptist church in Bell-alley continued to flourish after the Restoration, under the care of its founder, Mr. Thomas Lamb; who appears to have been assisted in his ministerial labours by Mr. John Batty, and, occasionally, by Mr. H. Denne. It early felt the scourge of persecution, and found it necessary to take every lawful method to abate its fury. Mr. Lamb and his colleagues, therefore, joined with the London baptists, in a vindication of themselves; which they published, on account of Venner's insurrection, under the title of "An Apology for some called Anabaptists, in and about the city of London, in behalf of themselves and others of the same judgment with them." It contains a strong appeal to their former declarations, in proof of their uniform acknowledgment of the duty of obedience to civil government; not as a matter of policy or necessity, but from a conscience not daring to disobey. They make an earnest claim of protection, by the magistrate, from all violence and injury on account of their conscientious differing in some points purely religious; and conclude thus: "We desire and endeavour to behave ourselves in all good conscience towards God and man: remembering that rule of our Lord, that we are to render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's: and that we, as well as our rulers, must certainly, at the great day, be accountable to the great and righteous Judge of all the earth for all our doings." This was a well-timed and necessary measure; and appears

to have been sanctioned by the whole body of baptists in the metropolis, both general and particular. Indeed it is evident, that, at this time and for many years afterwards, on all public occasions in which their distinguishing tenets were not interested, the leading men of both parties, in London, frequently acted in concert.\*

Mr. Samuel Oates† continued connected with this church, though he was chiefly employed in itinerating in various parts of the country. Crosby says that he was minister of a baptist church in Lincolnshire: and mentions a public dispute which he maintained, in Leicester castle, against infant baptism, with Mr. Sheffield, in the presence of Sir Thomas Beaumont, and several other magistrates. This dispute was conducted with great fairness and temper, and lasted three hours. If we credit Dr. Calamy, from whom our author copies the account, it ended in Mr. Oates being gravelled with an argument of Mr. Sheffield's; and confessing that he could not at the moment answer it. Such, however, was the respect which even his enemies had for his character and abilities, that, some time after the Restoration, he was offered "a great place," by the Duke of York, on condition of his conforming to the church of Eng-

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\* Grantham's *Christ. Prim.* Book III. pp. 10—12. The reader will see, in the note, p. 191, the reasons which lead us to suppose that the signatures, on p. 9, in Grantham, belong to this apology. That the ministers of both parties united on this occasion, is obvious from an inspection of the signatures. For while we have the names of Kiffin, Spilsbury, &c. heads of the particular baptists; we have, also, Lamb, Batty, H. Denne, Gosnold, F. Smith, Thomas Lathwell, and John Clayton, leaders of the general baptists: the last three of whom had signed the general baptist Confession of Faith, which had been presented to the king, a few months before, by Messrs. Grantham and Wright.

† See above p. 116.

land. In an evil hour the temptation prevailed : he conformed ; and was presented to the benefice of Hastings, in Sussex. But neither the dignities nor the emoluments of his new situation could stifle the voice of conscience. He felt that he had acted wrong, and resolved to retrace his steps. He, accordingly, resigned his preferments in the establishment, and returned to Mr. Lamb's church, in which he continued, probably as a private member, for five or six years, till his death.\*

We have no further account of Mr. Lamb.—His death is placed in 1672, when he must have been far advanced in years. He had eight children in the time of archbishop Laud, who was beheaded in 1645 : so that Mr. Lamb must have been upwards of seventy in 1672. When we consider the various sufferings, severe fatigues, and incessant labours of his long life, it is not improbable, that, in his old age, he was infirm and incapable of much exertion : and this may account for the little information which we have of him in the last years of his life. He was a zealous and active minister of the gospel ; a very diligent and acceptable preacher ; and an intrepid and steady friend of religious liberty. His character stood high among his cotemporaries, and his success was great. In 1644, he was styled, by an opponent, a “ principal baptizer, and an apostle in the account of his party :” in 1647, another assures us that “ his congregation was by far the largest and most fruitful of all the anabaptist churches :” and there is sufficient evidence in the preceding pages of this history of the truth of this account.†

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\* Crosby, Vol. III. pp. 59—61.

† See above, pp. 98—101, 113—115.

Mr. Lamb was the author of several works. So early as 1642, he published a quarto, on Particular Predestination: and another, in 1656, dedicated to his highness, the Protector, under the title of "Absolute freedom from Sin by Christ's death for the world." He likewise printed a pamphlet, intituled "The Fountain of free Grace opened." We have not been able to procure a sight of any of these books; but Mr. Crosby, who appears to have read them, informs us, that the object of the author was to reconcile particular election with universal redemption; in opposition to the scheme of conditional election, espoused by the famous John Goodwin.\*

Who succeeded Mr. Lamb in the charge of the church in Coleman-street, we have no information: nor, indeed, is the church itself mentioned afterwards in any records that have fallen under

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\* *Crosby*, Vol. III. pp. 54—56. *Ivimey*, Vol. II. p. 386. The *Anabaptists' Groundwork found false*: 1644, Title.—Towards the close of the Protectorate, a Thomas Lamb, who was, as Mr. Baxter phrases it, a pastor of "an anabaptist Arminian church" in Lothbury, began to incline to an union with the Pædobaptists. While he was in suspense, his wife, unknown to him, informed Mr. Baxter, by letter, of her husband's state of mind, and requested that divine to write to him on the subject of his doubts. Mr. B. generously complied, and a correspondence ensued; the result of which was, that Mr. Lamb renounced his principles as a baptist; and, soon after conforming to the establishment, wrote violently against the separatists. Several authors have insinuated that this was the same person as the pastor of the church in Bell-Alley, of whom we have been writing; and Mr. Crosby has endeavoured to repel this insinuation. That writer, however, appears to have overlooked the most decisive circumstances. The letters that passed on this occasion are preserved in the appendix to Sylvester's Life of Baxter; and the account which Mrs. Lamb gives of her husband, completely removes any suspicion of identity which might arise from the similarity of the name, or proximity of the meeting-houses.—Mrs. Lamb's husband was "nourished and bred up," under Mr. J. Goodwin's

our notice. Mr. Wilson informs us that he has seen a manuscript, under the date of 1705, which speaks of the baptist church "formerly meeting in Coleman-street:" from which it is probable, that it was dissolved towards the end of the seventeenth century.\*

During the whole of these troublous times, Mr. John Griffith, was pastor of the general baptist church in Dunning's-alley.† This faithful minister, suffered great persecution and frequent confinement. It was asserted in his funeral sermon, that he spent, in the whole, "fourteen years, in sufferings, bonds and imprisonment, for his Lord, and the testimony of a good conscience."

In 1661, he published a small pamphlet, which

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ministry, for twelve or fourteen years; and was a member, and afterwards an elder in that church, till 1653. But our Mr. Lamb had no connection with Mr Goodwin, opposed many of his opinions, and published against them, at the time that Mr. Baxter's convert was an elder in his church.—Again: Mrs. Lamb's husband first began to favour the opinion of the baptists in 1653, and after some time left Mr. Goodwin's church, and raised a society of baptists which, at the commencement, did not consist of twenty members, and never appears to have exceeded one hundred. But our Mr. Lamb was a native of Essex, espoused the principles of the baptists in that county, was brought up to London a prisoner for preaching them, at least twelve years, probably twenty, before Mr. Baxter's convert turned baptist: and nine years before that event, our Mr. Lamb was the pastor of a numerous and flourishing baptist church in London. Lastly. Mrs. Lamb's husband began to waver, in 1657, and in a few months afterwards, renounced the principles of the baptists, left their connection, and dissolved his church. But Mr. Lamb of Bell-alley was a baptist in 1661, and his church continued for thirty or forty years after the dissolution of the other.—They could not, therefore, be the same person. *Sylvester's Life of Baxter*, Part II. p. 180. Part III p. 180. *Appendix No. III.* pp. 51—66. *Edit.* 1696.

\* Vol. II. p. 443.

† See before pp. 119. 168.

he called, "A Complaint of the oppressed, against the oppressor;" which gives a very affecting detail of the treatment endured at that time, by "godly men whom their adversaries could not justly blemish with the least fault." Some, he tells us, were apprehended in the streets, as they were going about their lawful concerns; others, at their peaceable and public meetings; and others, dragged out of their beds, at midnight, by armed soldiers, to the great terror of their families. And all this violence was often committed without any legal authority, not so much as a warrant from any magistrate, by the military, who paraded the streets, seized whom they pleased, "and carried them before some men called justices; but such only in name and title, nothing so in truth."—Not long after the publication of this Complaint, the author himself was apprehended, and committed to Newgate, where he lay seventeen months. After his release, he doubtless resumed his ministerial duties with his usual diligence and boldness; and he must have been, on many other occasions, in afflictions and bonds. We are not, however, in possession of any account of his proceedings previous to his last imprisonment; except that he was sent by his church, in 1675, at the request of a number of baptists at Amersham, to form them into a church state. His conduct on this occasion gained him the affectionate regard of that people; which they manifested towards him, during the whole course of his subsequent troubles.

In 1683 he was again seized for preaching, and, after having lain some time in confinement, was brought to the bar, at the Old Bailey sessions, April 18, in company with Mr. Bampfield, a worthy particular baptist minister; and a fellow

prisoner for the truth. Mr. Bampfield being first required to take the oath of allegiance and refusing it, was remanded back to prison. The same oath was then tendered to Mr. Griffith; but he begged permission of the court, to state his reasons for declining it. The court not forbidding him, he spake at some length; and declared, that he could not take the oath of allegiance, because it bound him to the performance of things of which he was wholly ignorant, because they were not in existence; and of things, contrary to his conscience. For this oath required him to obey, not only the present king, but his successors, whose character he could not know, and who might be papists: and to observe, not only the laws now in force, but all that might in future be enacted, of the tendency of which he must be ignorant. Besides, this oath engaged him to comply with all the laws now in being, without exception; and, therefore, to conform to the rites and ceremonies of the church of England as by law established, and not to frequent any private meetings, as they were forbidden by the present statutes. He then appealed to the judges, whether he had correctly stated the obligations of this oath; and they unanimously declared that his ideas of its extent were accurate. After thanking them for their opinion, he resolutely said, "I am well satisfied and settled in my religion; and the more so by what you have said: and, if it be so, do with me what you please: come life, come death, the Lord assisting me, I will never take the oath of allegiance." After this explicit declaration, he was ordered to his former prison, the press-yard of Newgate: and soon afterwards published an account of his case, which he concludes thus: "Here I remain the

Lord's prisoner, and am ready further to bear my testimony for him—as one made willing through the free mercy and rich grace of God my heavenly Father, to forsake all for Christ, who hath loved me, and given himself for me: not counting my life dear to myself, so I may finish my course with joy, and the ministry I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.”

Such were the sentiments with which this worthy christian entered on this imprisonment; and his faith, patience, and resignation were fully exercised before its termination. We have no direct account of his release; but, from the records of the church at Amersham, it appears that he was in Newgate, Jan. 1686: so that he must, on this occasion, have been in confinement for nearly three years. It is probable that he did not obtain his freedom till a few months afterwards, when king James issued his proclamation for liberty of conscience.

Mr. Griffith was not without companions in tribulation. In the same prison were confined two pious ministers of the particular baptist denomination; Mr. Hercules Collins, and Mr. F. Bampfield: the latter of whom sunk under his sufferings, and died in Newgate, Feb. 16, 1684. Mr. Lawrence Wise, also, a general baptist, appears to have been his partner, through the whole of his last imprisonment. He had been a clergyman, and, in Oliver's time, preached in Aldgate church. Afterwards he obtained the living of Chatham-dock, in Kent, from which he was ejected at the Restoration. Having embraced the tenets of the baptists, he became pastor of a church in Goodman's-fields: and endured great sufferings for a good conscience. He was a per-

son of learning and piety, and highly esteemed by his brethren. When king Charles wished to bribe the dissenters, to countenance his measures, by granting a general toleration, and sent for five of the principal ministers to sound the disposition of the party, Mr. Wise was one for whom he sent. He died in 1692. There was, also, a Mr. Daniel, or Vannell, who was a fellow prisoner with Mr. Griffith, and shared with him in the bounty of the Amersham church. For it was the practice of the churches, in those trying times, to make regular collections for the support of those who were prisoners for religion; and distribute the amounts according to their circumstances: sending, at the same time, special messengers, to comfort and strengthen them, in the name of the church. Thus, the general baptists in White's-alley, in April, 1683, collected ten pounds for this purpose; and sent brethren Bellson and Taylor, with four pounds ten shillings of it, to the New Prison, to six prisoners;—brethren Brooks, Martin, and Spillet, to the Counter, with three pounds, to brethren Smith and Jones; and brethren Tory, Martin, and Randall to Newgate, with two pounds ten shillings, to brethren Griffith and Wise. This last, indeed, had but a small portion, as his own friends had raised him fifty pounds.\*

The church in Paul's-alley, Barbican, flourished† remarkably during the period of which we are writing. Its pious and diligent founder, Mr. J. Gosnold was highly esteemed by many persons

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\* Crosby, Vol. II. pp. 145, 361.—Vol. III. p. 32. Wilson, Vol. II. pp. 175—177. Ivimey. W. A. C. B. April 16th. 1683. A. C. B. 1683, 1684, 1686.

† Supra, pp. 119, 166.

of rank and influence : and perhaps this, joined to his modest and unobtrusive deportment, might, in some measure, preserve him and his friends from the fury of persecution. Yet his congregation was frequently disturbed, and he was sometimes obliged to conceal himself, to avoid the informers. He was, however, much followed ; and his meeting-house, which was computed to hold three thousand, was generally crowded with highly respectable hearers. Six or seven clergymen regularly attended his lectures ; and had a pew fitted up for their use, which screened them from observation. After the city had been destroyed by fire, in 1666, the overseers of Cripplegate parish, in which the meeting-house stood, observing the number and figure of the congregation, applied to them to make a collection for the poor. With this request they cheerfully complied, and collected upwards of fifty pounds : and, to shew their readiness to do good, they voluntarily repeated this collection annually for more than twenty years.—But Mr. Gosnold was called from his labours in the midst of his usefulness: he died Oct. 3rd. 1678, in the fifty-third year of his age : and was interred in Bunhill-fields burying-ground.

Mr. Gosnold was educated at Charter-house school ; and from thence removed to Pembroke college. In early life he became chaplain to lord Gray. During the civil wars, he embraced the principles of the baptists, and gathered the church in Paul's-alley. Yet, though he left the establishment, he retained the friendship of many of his former associates, especially of Dr. Tillotson, with whom he maintained great intimacy. Mr. Gosnold was a pious and practical preacher ; a man of singular moderation and candour, and

had little concern with the disputes of the times. He did not, however, shrink from the defence of what he esteemed the truth ; as the titles of two small treatises which he published evince: one was, " The Doctrine of Baptisms ;" and the other, " On Laying on of Hands."

In 1678, Mr. Thomas Plant succeeded Mr. Gosnold, as pastor of the church in Barbican. His zeal and popularity excited the rage of his enemies to such a degree, that, on one occasion, nine warrants were out against him at the same time: yet so highly was he esteemed, that all the constables employed to execute the warrants sent him private intimation, which enabled him to escape the danger. But his meeting-house was attacked, and the seats destroyed, by order of lord Bridgewater; whose house then stood near Paul's-alley. His lordship's house, however, was soon afterwards burnt to the ground; and several of his children, and the agent whom he used to employ in the work of persecution, were consumed in the flames. Yet this did not stop the rage of the informers: and Mr. Plant was often forced to walk the streets in such complete disguise, that the members of his own church could not recognize their pastor.

Mr. Plant had been a minister in London, for some time previous to his settlement at Barbican; and had taken an active part in the disputes with the quakers, in 1674: of which he published an account the same year. In 1688, he joined with Mr. Dennis in printing the narrative of the deplorable death of Mr. John Child.\*

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\* Crosby, Vol. III. pp. 61—63, 113.—Both Mr. Gosnold and Mr. Plant have been reckoned amongst the particular baptists, chiefly because their signatures are found, among the particular

The church in the Spital, Bishopsgate-street, gathered by Mr. Edward Barber,\* increased in numbers and respectability during this period. Its worthy founder continued to preside over it for a considerable time, and appears to have escaped persecution. The exact date of his decease is not known: but, in 1674, he was succeeded, in the care of the church, by Jonathan Jennings: and, probably, about that time, the congregation removed from the Spital to White's-alley, Moorfields.

We know not with what church Mr. Jennings had been united, previous to his ordination over the people at White's-alley; but he was a general baptist at the Restoration, and signed the Confession of that party presented to the king, in 1660. Crosby informs us, that "he was a very able preacher, who, first and last, suffered twelve years' imprisonment." Many of his sufferings, therefore, must have been previous to his last settlement.

His labours among this people appear to have been greatly blessed. In 1682, the church had extended itself so widely, that it was thought expedient to separate it into four divisions; and to appoint persons to superintend the conduct and conversation of the members in each division. The church-books, which now lie before us, contain a list of the names of the members in two

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baptists, to the Apology occasioned by Venner's insurrection, and to the vindication of Thomas Hicks against the quakers. But this argument is by no means conclusive; as both those pieces are signed by persons whose names appear to the Confession of 1660, and who must, therefore, be general baptists. The Barbican church was, doubtless, a general baptist church; and all its ministers, with the exception of Mr. Stennett, were, there is sufficient evidence, of the same principles.

\* Supra, p. 119.

of these divisions, the north and the east, amounting to one hundred and ninety-four: so that this church then probably consisted of upwards of three hundred members. About this time, Mr. Richard Allen, afterwards pastor of the congregation in Paul's-alley, was called to the ministry by this church, of which he was a member; and was frequently employed in assisting Mr. Jennings.

Two instances are recorded of the interruptions experienced by this flourishing society. Mr. Allen being preaching, at White's-alley, at five o'clock in the morning, to avoid observation, several soldiers rushed in, abused the hearers most grossly; threw one of the forms at Mr. Allen in the pulpit, broke down the galleries, and did more than forty pounds' damage to the building. On another occasion, as the same minister was delivering a lecture on a Thursday evening, he, and ten others, were seized, and sent to Newgate. He was fined ten pounds, and the rest several marks: but his friends obtained his release, and a remission of his fine, after he had been confined six or seven weeks; when his associates were also discharged, upon paying their fines.\*

Mr. S. Loveday, † who signed the Confession of Faith of 1660, continued the faithful pastor of the church on Tower-hill for the greatest part of this period; and, doubtless, sustained his share of the afflictions which all nonconformists, but especially the baptists, were then called to endure: though no account of his personal sufferings has fallen under our notice. A specimen of

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\* Crosby, Vol. III. pp. 116, 161. Vol. IV. pp. 346, 405.—  
Ivimey, Vol. II. p. 190. W. A. C. B. 1682, &c.

† Supra, p. 168.

the treatment which his people received, will give us some idea of the spirit of the times. One Lord's-day, when Mr. Jennings was preaching for this congregation, the officers entered, and placed a guard at each door of the meeting-house. Mr. Jennings escaped in the confusion occasioned by this intrusion ; but many of the hearers were beaten by the constables with their staves, and their names taken down. About seventy were apprehended, and carried before justice Smith, of Stepney : fifty of whom compromised the matter, by bribing the officers, and the rest were committed to the New Prison. There they were crowded together, forced to lie on the ground, and used so barbarously, that several of them died. Their enemies carried their cruelty still further. A number of felons being removed out of a filthy cell, these conscientious men were thrust into it. At length, they were obliged to pay three pounds a week for two rooms, and permission to have their own beds. They were detained in prison, under these disadvantages, for four months : and, at last, fined each ten marks.

Mr. Loveday died, probably, in 1685, when he must have been very considerably advanced in years. He was a valuable man, a pious christian, and a useful preacher. His moderation was exemplary, and he seldom concerned himself with points of controversy. The most usual subjects of his public ministrations were such as had a tendency to stir up his hearers to live as christians, to watch against temptation, to be diligent in duty, and to aim at experimental communion with God ; not to rest contented with external obedience, or a mere submission to ordinances. His daily conversation was a practical comment on his public discourses ; for, in all his conduct,

he was an example of humility, piety, and morality. When he reproved, even his inferiors, it was without anger; and in such an affectionate manner as usually disarmed the offender.\*

In 1686, Mr. Loveday was succeeded by Mr. John Maulden, a pious and worthy minister, and a steady nonconformist. He was prosecuted for absenting himself from the established worship, and fined twenty pounds a month. To satisfy this fine, his goods were seized, and he was committed to the New Prison, where he was confined amongst the felons. After some time, he, and several others, who were in custody on similar charges, were removed into a chamber in the prison, till set at liberty by the proclamation of liberty of conscience, in 1687.

On his release, he returned to his ministerial labours, and appears to have been very successful. The people were zealous and active; and, when persecution forbad them to assemble at their public meeting-house, they met together privately, at each others' houses. Soon after the Restoration, they removed their assemblies from Tower-hill to a new meeting-house, built by themselves, in Goodman's-fields.†

We have already mentioned Jeremiah Ives, the pastor of a general baptist church in the Old Jewry. He was a person of good natural parts, and of considerable learning, acquired by his own

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\* Crosby, Vol. III. p. 115. Vol. IV. p. 250.

† Crosby, Vol. III. p. 138, *P I*.—It may, perhaps, be proper to remark, that the precise situation of neither of these meeting-houses can be ascertained. The former is said, by some, to have been on Tower-hill; by others, in East Smithfield; and by others, in Looking-glass-alley, East Smithfield. Now as the dissenters, in these dangerous times, thought it prudent to build their places of worship in alleys and obscure streets, to avoid

application. We know little of him, except from the controversies with the pædobaptists, the sabbatarians, and the quakers, in which he appears to have been almost incessantly engaged, from 1655 to his death. In 1674, Thomas Hicks, a baptist minister, having published some severe things against the quakers, they took great offence; and called upon the baptists, as a body, to do them justice against his calumnies and forgeries, as they styled his representations of their tenets and practices. Many books were published, and meetings held on this subject, which it would be tedious to enumerate. In this contest, Jeremiah Ives took a very active part, and was considered as the champion of Mr. Hicks; which caused the quakers to treat his character and memory with great severity.

These engagements raised Mr. Ives's fame so much, that king Charles II. determined to be a witness of his skill. He, therefore sent for this renowned baptist; and, desiring him to disguise himself in the habit of a clergyman, he introduced a romish priest; commanding them to dispute the merits of their respective churches in his presence. Though Mr. Ives humoured his majesty in putting on a disguise, yet he retained his integrity. The priest opened the debate with a panegyric on the antiquity of the church of Rome. Mr. Ives replied at large; and argued, that, whatever antiquity the papists might claim,

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observation, it is not impossible, that Looking-glass-alley might then form a communication between Tower-hill and East Smithfield, and this meeting-house be situated in it. Thus, also, the meeting-house in Goodman's-fields is stated in some accounts to have been in Rupert-street, and in others, in Lambert street: probably in some alley running between these streets, which are contiguous.

yet, as their doctrines and practices could not be found in the New Testament, they could not be apostolical, or of divine origin. The priest, unable to answer his reasoning, thought to silence him, by an appeal to his own practice; and told him that his argument would apply with equal force to infant baptism as to any of the catholic tenets. To this Mr. Ives replied, that the observation was just; and, therefore, infant baptism was as groundless as they. At hearing this, the priest broke up the conference, with no small indignation at the trick which had been played upon him; as he now discovered, that, instead of a clergyman of the church of England, as he supposed, he had been disputing with an anabaptist teacher. The rage of the champion for popery, and, probably, the anabaptist in disguise, afforded the merry king and his courtiers no small diversion.

But Mr. Ives not only defended the truth against opposers, but suffered much for its sake; being imprisoned fourteen years for refusing to take the oaths which were then tendered to non-conformists. It seems, if we credit his adversaries, that his judgment changed during his confinement; and that, by taking the oath of allegiance, he obtained his liberty. We, however, know nothing further of him; nor does it appear what became of the church of which he was the pastor between thirty and forty years. Mr. Crosby says, "he was well beloved, and bore a fair character to his dying day;" which happened, probably, in 1675.\*

There was another general baptist church,

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\* Supra, p. 168. Crosby, Vol. II. p. 308. Vol. IV. p. 247.—  
Ivimey, Vol. II. p. 603. Ellwood's, Life, p. 183.

which, towards the close of this period, assembled at High Hall, near West Smithfield. Where its place of worship was, previously, we have no information; but its pastor was Dr. William Russell: who, like Mr. Ives, is best known by the disputes in which he was engaged. He signed the Confession, presented to the king, in 1660: in 1663, he published a piece against the sabbatarians; and, in 1676, an epistle concerning baptism. This is almost all we know of him during this period.†

From the æra of the civil wars to the present time, there always have been a few baptists, both general and particular, who have maintained that the seventh day is the only sabbath instituted by divine authority: and, therefore, have held their assemblies for public worship on the Saturday. This peculiarity procured them the name of Sabbatarians. Two general baptists in London, of these sentiments, suffered severely during the period of which we are treating; and it may be proper to mention them.

Soon after the Restoration, a small society of sabbatarian baptists assembled for worship in Bull-stake-alley, Whitechapel, the pastor of which was John James. As he was preaching here, on the afternoon of Oct. 19th. 1661, a justice of the peace entered, accompanied by a constable; and ordered him to come down, for he had spoken treason against the king. On J. James refusing to comply, the constable pulled him out of the pulpit, and led him away, under a strong guard of the police. The auditors, amounting in all to about thirty persons, were carried, seven at a time, before a bench of jus-

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\* Crosby, Vol. IV, p. 259.

tices, who happened to be sitting at a neighbouring tavern. The oath of allegiance was tendered to each; and as many as refused it, both men and women, were committed to Newgate. The magistrates then adjourned to the meeting-house; and, taking their seats at the table, sent for John James. He was charged, on the oath of several profligate witnesses, with having used seditious language in his sermon; and, though he denied the charge in the most explicit manner, and it was solemnly contradicted by many who had heard the discourse, yet he was fully committed to Newgate. After his commitment, one of the witnesses, struck with remorse for what he had done, went to sea, to avoid being called upon at the trial; but was fetched back by the magistrate's warrant, and kept in custody till the sessions. Nov. 14th. J. James was arraigned—for compassing the death of the king, endeavouring to levy war against him, and for attempting to change the government. To this indictment he pleaded not guilty, either in matter or form: and was remanded to prison, till the 18th, when he was brought up for trial. The evidence given on the examination was confirmed by the same witnesses; but J. James brought four credible persons, who deposed, on oath, that these witnesses had declared to them, that they had sworn against him they knew not what; and that they had been frightened and persuaded to say what they had. Several also, who knew their characters, offered to make oath that they were not to be credited: and four persons, who were present at the time when these treasonable words were said to be uttered, swore that no such words had been spoken by the prisoner. A verdict of guilty was, however, given. On the Friday following,

he was brought to the bar, and asked what he had to say for himself, why sentence of death should not be passed upon him. He replied, "I have not much to say; only shall leave two or three scriptures with you. One is, 'As for me, do as seemeth good unto you: but know ye for certain, that if you put me to death, you shall surely bring innocent blood upon yourselves, and upon this city, and upon the inhabitants thereof.'\* Another is, 'Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints:† and the last is, 'He that toucheth the Lord's people, toucheth the apple of his eye.‡ And now I have no more to say for myself; only one word for the Lord, and I have done. The Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is King of England, Scotland, and Ireland, and of all the kingdoms of this world." He was here interrupted by the court; and condemned to be hanged, drawn, and quartered. This awful sentence did not dismay him: he calmly said, "Blessed be God! whom man condemneth God justifieth."

Between the sentence and the execution, he was remarkably supported. On the Saturday, several of his friends calling upon him, he proposed to finish the discourse which he was delivering when the officers apprehended him: and, having read the text,§ he recapitulated what had been said, and concluded the subject with admirable composure and self-possession. While he lay under sentence of death, several persons of distinction, of both sexes, visited him; and were much affected with his piety and resignation. His wife applied personally to king Charles, to

\* Jer. xxvi. 14, 15.

† Psal. cxvi. 15.

‡ Zech. ii. 8.

§ 1 Cor. vi. 20.

solicit a pardon ; but was repulsed with scoffs and insult.

Nov. 26th. he was brought to the scaffold, when he addressed the spectators : assuring them that he was no jesuit, as had been slanderously reported ; but an Englishman, of a poor and pious family, his aged mother being still living ;—that he was a baptized believer, holding the principles of Christ's doctrine, mentioned Heb. vi. 1, 2, and endeavouring to keep all the ten commandments, but especially the fourth ;—and that, though he believed that Christ must govern the world by his saints, when the time appointed was come, yet he was innocent of treason ; and had never, by word or by deed, endeavoured to disturb the government. He concluded, by exhorting the people of God not to be discouraged by his sufferings ; but to remember the advice of the apostle, Heb. x. 25. Then, kneeling down, he thanked God for covenant mercies, and for conscious innocence : and prayed for the witnesses, for the executioner, for the people of God, for a removal of divisions, for the coming of Christ, for the spectators ; and for himself, that he might enjoy a sense of God's favour and presence, and an entrance into glory. When he had finished, the executioner said, ' The Lord receive your soul ; ' To which he replied, " I thank thee." A friend observing to him, ' This is a happy day,' J. James answered, " I bless God, it is." Then, thanking the sheriff for his courtesy, he said, " Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit ;" and was immediately launched into eternity.—When he was dead, his heart was taken out and burnt, his quarters affixed to the gates of the city, and his head set up in Whitechapel, on a pole, opposite the alley in which his meeting-house stood.

Thus closed this affecting scene. And, whatsoever may be the opinion of the reader respecting the peculiar sentiments of this honest sufferer, or the frankness with which he avowed them, even in the face of death itself; he will perceive, that the evidence of any disloyalty to the king, or design of disturbing the government, was extremely defective, and procured by means the most destructive of the liberty of the subject. He was, probably, selected as a proper example to strike terror into the party; and thus made a sacrifice to the dastardly policy of a weak administration.\*

Another general baptist, of sabbatarian principles, was Joseph Davis, the worthy member of the church at Coventry, already mentioned.† About the time when king Charles II. entered London, he was seized, and detained two days a prisoner. After Venner's insurrection, he was again apprehended: and, though he took the

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\* *Narrative of the Apprehending, &c of John James*, quarto, 1662.—Nothing in this affecting account outrages humanity more violently, than the unfeeling manner in which the officers of justice were permitted, perhaps encouraged, to treat this poor man. Though he was known to be in low circumstances, extravagant fees were extorted from him. No sooner was the sentence past, than the tipstaff men seized his cloke, and demanded money from him for permission to wear it till his execution: but he replied, "I have but a short time to live, and these clothes will serve me." The day previous to his death, the hangman came, and required a bribe, that he might be favourable to him at his death. He at first asked twenty pounds; but, afterwards, fell to ten. At last, he told the prisoner, that if he did not give him five pounds, he would torture him exceedingly: to which J. James calmly replied, "I must leave that to your mercy: for I have nothing to give you." From the account of the execution, it is to be hoped, that the piety and prayers of the sufferer softened the heart even of this savage.

† *Supra*, p. 118.

oath of allegiance, was confined in Oxford-castle till the assizes, when he was privately released. In the year following, he lay six months in prison: and, in 1663, was again committed. After he had been confined for about two years, he was brought into court, and the oath of allegiance again tendered to him. This he refused; lest, by repeating the same oath, he should incur the guilt of vain swearing: and, for this offence, he was remanded to his prison, and detained in custody ten years.

In this interval he lost his wife, which appears to have greatly affected him. "Now," says he, "the proud waves went over my soul. My dear wife, who having had the incumbrance of my shop and three children lying upon her hands, despaired of my liberty, and of enjoying the assistance and comfort of a husband whom she entirely loved, fell into a deep consumption, of which she languished above two years, which much heightened my affliction. During this time, her affection carried her sometimes beyond her ability to come and see me; when she was so weak, that I was forced to carry her up-stairs in my arms. But when she was near her death, I obtained liberty, in the year 1665, to see her last end. I then disposed of my house and goods, and put out my children to nurse: after which, I returned again to my prison, as ordered." It was, also, in this imprisonment, that he embraced the principles of the sabbatarians.

He obtained his release, in consequence of the royal indulgence, probably about 1673: and soon after removed to London. Here he commenced business a linen-draper, at first in a low way, but Providence blessed his endeavours, and he soon had a respectable shop in the Minories.

In less than eight years, however, a more violent storm of persecution arose : and this good man was fined twenty pounds a month for absenting himself from the church. His shop was attacked, while he was engaged in family worship ; but his neighbours had so well secured the doors and windows, that the assailants could not enter. He took the first opportunity of removing his goods, and forsaking his business ; and was obliged to conceal himself and family in lodgings for several years.

At the Revolution he opened shop again ; and, like Job, the Lord blessed his latter end. He lived twenty years in comfort, and was enabled, not only to provide handsomely for his own family, but “ to do something for the cause of religion at present and for the future.” He died, Feb. 16th. 1707, when he had almost completed his eightieth year ; and left an interesting account of his trials and supports as a legacy for his friends and descendants.\*

It is probable, that there were general baptists in the borough of Southwark, long before this period. Dr. Featley informs us, that the baptists, against whom he engaged so zealously, in 1644, had appeared in his neighbourhood twenty years before he wrote : and that two of their errors were, that “ Christ died indifferently for all ;” and that “ God giveth to all men sufficient grace to be saved.” In his time, as he pathetically complains, they were grown insolent, discovered themselves with open face, and demanded something more than a toleration. They preached, printed, and practised their impieties openly ; held their conventicles weekly ; they flocked, in

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\* Davis's Last Legacy, *passim*, 1720.

great multitudes, to their Jordans, and were dipt: they defiled the rivers with their impure washings, the pulpits with their false doctrines, and the press groaned under the load of their blasphemies. From this lamentable outcry, it is evident, that the baptists were numerous and zealous in Southwark, during the time of the civil wars; though no particular account of their churches has come to our hands.

There is reason to believe that the general baptist church at Shad Thames, Southwark, was gathered, during the protectorate, by Mr. John Clayton, who signed the Confession of 1660, and the apology published after Venner's insurrection. The earliest records of this society that have been preserved, commence in 1674; with the loan of which we have been kindly favoured. Some time previous to this date, a number of the members of this church, whose residence rendered their attending public worship at Shad Thames inconvenient, had built a meeting-house in the Park, Southwark; and this year, a division took place, by mutual consent, and the friends at the park became a distinct church. As upwards of one hundred and fifty members remained at Shad Thames, after this separation, the original society must have been numerous. Mr. J. Clayton was, at this time, their pastor; assisted by several preachers, who had been raised up in the church: which, it appears, was then active and zealous, and particularly careful to maintain purity of doctrine.

Mr. Clayton, and his friends, suffered much persecution. In 1683, Mr. Clayton was imprisoned for several months, and divers of his hearers fined: and, in the beginning of 1687, they were driven from their meeting-house, and

obliged to assemble at a private house. But, soon afterwards, when king James II. issued his proclamation for liberty of conscience, they took the barge-house at Dockhead, in the same neighbourhood ; which they fitted up for a meeting-house, and thenceforwards were called the church at Dockhead.

In this year, also, some unhappy disputes, principally respecting the laying on of hands, which had long disturbed this church, were terminated, by the friendly interposition of an assembly of messengers, elders, and brethren, held in London ; who advised mutual concessions and forbearance, and the exercise of brotherly love, and christian compassion one towards another. With this excellent advice the contending parties acquiesced ; and agreed to forgive each other, to pray to God to forgive the offence offered to his Majesty by their divisions ; and to strive together, as formerly, for the faith of the gospel.

In the following year, Mr. George White, formerly the pastor of a general baptist church at Stonehouse, in Staffordshire, was invited to assist Mr. Clayton, whom age and infirmities had, probably, incapacitated for the labours of his office. The church agreed to support their infirm elder ; but, as his name appears no more in their records, we may conclude that he died soon afterwards : perhaps in the commencement of 1689.\*

It was, as we have just seen, in the year 1674, that a general baptist church was formed in Winchester Park, Southwark, by a number of the members of the church at Shad Thames. This church has existed to the present day, and now

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\* Featley's Dippers dipt, Ded. and Pref. p. 24. S. T. C. B. at the various dates.

assembles in Great Suffolk-street; but its records are, it is to be feared, irrecoverably lost; and we shall be able to give but a very slight account of its progress.

The persons who formed this church had, some time previous to the division, built themselves a meeting-house, in the Park, and met there as a branch of Mr. Clayton's church. The separation appears to have been made in the most amicable manner, merely as a measure of convenience. It was mutually agreed, that each party should exercise all their church discipline, choose their own officers, and maintain their poor. But, as there was but one pastor, Mr. John Clayton, it was resolved, for mutual accommodation, that "he should continue an elder to both parties, and yield his assistance as pastor, as need should require, indifferently to both."

The cause was supported, for some years, with great harmony, by these two churches, under one pastor. They lent each other assistance, both ministerial and pecuniary; and united in observing stated seasons of fasting and prayer, which were held, alternately, at both the meeting-houses. After some time, probably when Mr. Clayton became less able to labour, the friends at the Park began to seek for other assistance; and invited Mr. William Marnor to help them. When he was ordained over them, we cannot learn; but he was preaching among them in 1683: and, before the Revolution, was settled over them. We have no information respecting him; except that his name was affixed to the confession of 1660; though, probably, long after its presentation.\*

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\* S. T. C. B. Wilson, iv. p. 178. Whiston Memoirs, ii. p. 575

There were several general baptist churches during this period, in and near London, of which we have little information, except their names : and, probably some of which even the names are not preserved. Two of these churches ought to be noticed, as they will frequently occur in the course of this history.

The church at *Deptford* was gathered, probably, during the protectorate ; though the first mention that we have of it is under the date 1679. It then was a regular organized church, and apparently numerous and flourishing : and it must have been of some standing, as its meeting-house was, soon afterwards, in a state of decay.

There was, also, a respectable general baptist church on the other side of the metropolis, which met in *Glass-house-yard, Goswell-street* ; of which, after considerable labour, we have been able to collect only the few notices that follow. It is first mentioned, in the church-books belonging to *White's-alley*, in 1681 : but it must have existed long before this date, as a person is mentioned, as applying to that church for communion, who "some years past" had been in fellowship with the friends in *Goswell-street*. On this occasion, Thomas Kirby, an active member of *White's-alley* church, and afterwards pastor of the society in *Goswell-street*, was sent to them, with another brother, to make enquiries. It appears, from the same records, that, in 1686, this church had removed their place of worship. At this time, Thomas Kirby, with several others, were deputed from their church, to assist the friends "*late of Goswell-street*" in the election of deacons. They must, however, have returned to their former situation in 1688, as they then sent to the church at *White's-alley*, to request their consent

to ordain Thomas Kirby to the office of elder. This request was readily granted, provided that the ancient agreement was observed by all the parties.\*

This proviso refers to a very close union which then subsisted among several general baptist churches in and near London, which continued till towards the middle of the eighteenth century, and is not yet wholly dissolved. When it was formed does not appear; but, as we have just seen, it was called an "ancient agreement," in 1688. It is not improbable that these churches had a common origin, and were derived one from another: though it may not be easy to determine which was the parent stock; perhaps either Mr. Barber's, or Mr. Loveday's congregation. At the close of the period which we are now reviewing, the churches thus united were those of White's-alley, Goodman's-fields, Dunning's-alley, Goswell-street, Dockhead, and the Park. All important affairs were transacted in concert, at meetings of the elders and representatives of the respective societies: the pastors and deacons were chosen by common suffrage, and ordained to the service of the whole union, though more particularly attached to one of the churches. In some respect, they appear to have formed one church, as it is not uncommon, in their church-books, to designate the different societies, by "that part of the church" meeting in such a place. This association was for many years maintained with spirit; and contributed much to the prosperity of the general baptist cause. It has been said, that its object was to support the practice of laying on of hands; but this is taking

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\* W. A. C. B. at the respective dates.

too confined a view of the subject. The professed design of these associated churches was, to maintain all the principles of Christ's doctrine, enumerated by the apostle, Heb. vi. 1, 2.\*

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SECT. 6.—*The Transactions of the General Baptists in Kent, during the period between the Restoration and the Revolution.*

THE general baptists were numerous and flourishing in Kent, at the period of the Restoration ;† but were soon called to drink deep of the cup of persecution. In 1660, several of their most active ministers, and many of their pious brethren were imprisoned, in Maidstone jail. Towards the close of that year, they published “The humble Petition and Representation of the sufferings of several peaceable and innocent subjects, called by the name of Anabaptists, inhabitants of the county of Kent, and prisoners in the gaol of Maidstone, for the testimony of a good conscience.” In this piece, which they addressed to king Charles, they appeal to the Confession, which had lately been presented to his majesty, for evidence of their loyalty and allegiance; and take occasion to state more explicitly their free and full acknowledgment of the king's authority and dignity. They then draw this affecting picture of the hardships which they endured: “We, thy imprisoned subjects, have some of us had our houses broken open, in the dead of the night, without producing any authority from thee, or any inferior minister under

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\* W. A. C. B. 1688, &c. — S. T. C. B. &c.

† Supra, pp. 162, 166.

thee: our goods and cattle taken away from some others, and yet detained from us: our bodies, some taken from our own dwellings, and others from our peaceable meetings." They state their claims to the protection of government, in their civil and religious rights; and declare that they decline the oath of supremacy only because it binds to obedience in religious and spiritual concerns, as well as in temporal. For, they frankly confess, that though they sincerely acknowledge the king to be the supreme governor of all persons within his dominions, both ecclesiastical and civil, yet it is only in temporal causes and things. "And now," they conclude, "having faithfully laid before thee our condition and principles, as far as they relate to magistrates or government; we, therefore, beseech thee, O king, that liberty may be given us to worship our God; and such bowels of compassion be in thee, as to give us such speedy relief as may be agreeable to the mind of God, which made the heaven and earth, which executeth judgment for the oppressed; which giveth food to the hungry: the Lord looseth the prisoners." Signed, in the name of the baptists, prisoners in Maidstone jail, by William Jeffery, George Hammon, John Reeve, and James Blackmore." What effect this sensible remonstrance had we have no information; nor do we know when the pious remonstrants obtained their liberty.\*

Having mentioned this transaction, in which the ministers of several societies were engaged; we proceed to collect such particulars as have been preserved, respecting the various general baptist churches in Kent, during this period.

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\* Crosby, Vol. II. pp. 22—26.

There was a numerous and respectable society of this persuasion at *Chatham*, which had several active and acceptable ministers, and suffered much persecution. The facts are interesting, though we are not able to assign to each its exact date. On one occasion, several of the members of this church were apprehended, by means of a person named Stowell, a very officious man in affairs of this nature. They were put on board of a ship, with a design to transport them to America: but the wind shifted, and detained them in port so long, that the captain began to suspect that he should not be able to proceed on his voyage as long as they continued on board.— He, therefore, landed the baptists: and the wind immediately changing in his favour, made sail and left them.

As Mr. Gamman, a minister in this church, was preaching to them one Lord's-day, he and his congregation were seized, and driven, like beasts, through the streets of Chatham to Rochester; where the men were confined, and the women and children left weeping about the streets. Mr. Gamman, opening a window of his prison, exhorted them to stand fast and be steadfast in the faith; and God would reward them at the great day.

Through the greatest part of this period, Mr. Morecock, a man of considerable eminence, was pastor of the general baptist church at Chatham. In his youth he had been in the navy, and was captain of a man of war during the protectorate, and for some time after the Restoration. In this capacity, he was so highly respected as an officer, and so well beloved by his crew, that a present of ten thousand pounds was offered him to continue in his station: but, disgusted with the

arbitrary proceedings of government, he resigned his commission, and stedfastly refused to have any connection with the court. After the Dutch war, he was successfully employed in raising the ships which had been sunk in the rivers Thames and Medway, to prevent the approach of the enemy to London and Chatham. He was offered very advantageous terms, to undertake the raising of some vessels that had foundered at sea; but he refused to leave his pastoral duties so long as that business would have required. When James II. ascended the throne, that monarch, knowing Mr. Morecock's influence among the dissenters, paid him great attention; and offered him any post that he pleased to accept: but he declined all his offers; observing, to his friends, that the favours shewn by the king to the dissenters were designed only to lead them into a snare.

Mr. Morecock commenced preaching before he resigned his commission as captain of a man of war; and frequently ascended the pulpit at Chatham in his scarlet roquelaure. He suffered much persecution: but his influence, and the esteem in which he was held, greatly befriended him. When any of the neighbouring magistrates, as it often happened, was forced, by the officiousness of informers, to issue a warrant for his apprehension, he would privately send his own servant to apprize the accused of his danger: on which Mr. Morecock withdrew across the river to the house of one of his daughters in Essex. He was, however, fined twenty pounds monthly for not going to church; till he was exchequered for upwards of eight hundred pounds. His house was repeatedly plundered; and his goods carried off. To secure some provision for a family of nearly twenty children, he

made over his remaining property to an intimate friend, who restored it honourably when the danger was past. The informers, exasperated by their disappointments, were highly incensed against him. One of them, named Hinton, often threatened, that he would send him to prison, and possess himself of his goods: which he impudently swore he would bestow on a loose woman, with whom he associated. Mr. Morecock, however, was preserved from confinement, though many of his esteemed friends were imprisoned; whom he frequently visited and encouraged. Going once, to see some of these sufferers for truth, in Rochester jail, he observed this Hinton confined there; and jocosely said to him, "Friend, I see that you are got hither before me."

After the suppression of duke Monmouth's rebellion, the court, irritated at Mr. Morecock's firmness in refusing the advances made to him, procured two witnesses, to swear that he had been an officer in the rebel army: but he proved, by unexceptionable evidence, the falsity of this charge; and thus escaped this base design against his life. He lived to witness the happy Revolution, dying August, 1693: and was interred in the general baptist burying-ground at Chatham.

Towards the close of his ministry, Mr. Morecock was assisted, in his ministerial labours, by Mr. George Saunders. He was fined for preaching; but survived the Revolution many years, and succeeded Mr. Morecock as pastor of the church. There is, also, mention made of Mr. Baker, another minister of this church during this period; but no certain account of him has come to hand.\*

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\* Crosby, Vol. III. pp. 119—120, 109—112, 137, 35. Protestant Dissenters' Mag.

In 1655, we left Mr. H. Denne at *Canterbury*, employed in "setting in order the things that were wanting" in the general baptist church in that place. Probably he resided there for several years: but we have no further intelligence of this society, till 1663. At that date, it was prosperous; consisting of upwards of one hundred members, zealous for the truth, and strictly attentive to discipline. During the period now under consideration, this church was grievously persecuted. Driven from their usual place of meeting, they were obliged to assemble for social worship in the recesses of the adjacent woods. But even there they were interrupted by the constables, who took about thirty of them before a justice of the peace. The magistrate, observing among them a woman who had been his servant, said, "Mary, what are you among the prisoners? There—you may go." 'No,' replied Mary, 'I will take my lot with them:' and they were all committed to prison.

Notwithstanding these afflictions, the church continued to prosper. We have, however, no account of its pastors till 1681; when Daniel Saffery and Thomas Beacham were ordained elders: and Vincent Marsh, W. Huggett, and John Nutt, deacons.\*

An extensive general baptist church was formed, during the protectorate, on the coast of Kent, which included *Dover, Deal, Sandwich, Folkstone, and Hythe*. Its pastor, and, probably, its founder, was Richard Hobbs, a worthy, pious, good man. About the time of the Restoration, Edward Prescott, of Gunston near Dover, was associated with Mr. Hobbs in the eldership. The

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\* Ivimey, Vol. II. p. 221, and P. I.

members were then numerous, and the cause flourishing : but the return of the king plunged them into deep distress ; as they knew that the mayor and magistrates of Dover were eager to seize any opportunity of harassing the dissenters. The baptists foresaw the storm ; and endeavoured to avert it, by a respectful address to their rulers ; assuring them of their willingness to obey them in all temporal things ; but declaring their resolution to obey God alone in all religious concerns. Perhaps this step accelerated their sufferings.

In 1660, several of the baptists were seized, in their meeting-house, and sent to prison : but, after twenty-four days' confinement, were admitted to bail. At the next sessions, they were forbidden to hold any more meetings in their own place of worship ; but permitted to assemble, at stated times, in one of the parish churches. They availed themselves of this privilege, for five months ; meeting every Lord's-day at eleven in the morning, and continuing their worship to three in the afternoon ; till the succeeding mayor revoked this indulgence. The baptists, convinced that they ought not to forsake the assembling of themselves together, ventured again to meet at their own place : but, on the first Lord's-day their worship was disturbed by the mayor, who committed four of them to prison. They thought it their duty to persevere ; and, on the following Lord's-day, six more were apprehended, and sent to their companions. On the third sabbath, only ten ventured to assemble, when the mayor came : and, ordering them all to prison, put a padlock on the door of the meeting-house. The next morning the lock was found knocked off, and thrown into the porch of the mayor's house. But, notwithstanding this bravado, the baptists

judged it prudent to use every lawful means to avoid danger. "They met," says a cotemporary writer, "with so much secrecy, that it was hard to know either time or place: sometimes, at one part of the town; sometimes at another; and sometimes in the country; one while at five o'clock in the morning; and another while in the evening; and at uncertain hours of the day." So earnestly did these zealous christians labour to enjoy those means of grace, which we are ready to slight and neglect.

The persons who had been sent to prison were, at length, brought before the quarter sessions, and a true bill of indictment was found against them all. A few submitted to the court, several traversed the indictment, and the rest were remanded into confinement. Seeing no prospect of relief from their own magistrates, they addressed a petition to the king; in which, after stating their case, and reminding Charles of his declaration from Breda, they pray that they may not be interrupted in their worshipping of the God of heaven, as they were taught in his holy word: a privilege which they prized above all the world. They then conclude thus: "But if, notwithstanding what hath been and is desired, we shall be denied that which we humbly conceive the laws of God and nature do allow us; yet we shall, in the name of the Lord, patiently suffer what shall be inflicted on us. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal; but spiritual, and mighty, to the pulling down of strong holds."

Soon after, the Duke of York was sent to Dover, probably as governor; and these good people thought it prudent to present another address to him: which, as it is short, and exhibits some

interesting traits of character, we venture to insert in the margin.\* What effects these appeals to the higher powers produced, we are not able to say ; as we have no further information respecting these sufferers.

Mr. Hobbs, the pastor of this church, was soon afterwards sent to prison ; but, his piety and good character procuring him favour with the jailor, he was permitted, occasionally, to visit his friends. Care, however, was taken, to confine

\* *“ To His Highness the Duke of York :*

*“ Forasmuch as the all-disposing hand of God’s providence hath brought your highness into this place ; we hope it is, that by you, as a fit instrument to so good a work, to deliver us his harmless people, and peaceable subjects to the king. And, inasmuch as what is done unto us is done in your name, we humbly lay before you, that many of us, inhabitants of this town, for the space of six weeks have been imprisoned, for no other cause but our peaceable meeting to worship our God ; and thereby are brought into great straits. Some of our families being numerous, and their daily supply depending on our labours, our wants and straits are like to be very great, by reason of our present sufferings. And forasmuch as the like is not done to our friends in other places, but the King is pleased to protect them as his peaceable subjects ; we think it hard measure to be thus dealt withal, our offences being no more criminal than theirs.*

*The premises considered, we humbly intreat your highness to shew mercy to us, your peaceable yet oppressed subjects, in setting us at liberty ; that the cries of our little ones and families by reason of our sufferings, do not provoke the great God of mercy and truth against this land of our nativity. And, if you please to answer our desires, we are sure God will reward you an hundred fold ; since he hath promised, that he that giveth but a cup of cold water to any of his suffering people, shall not lose his reward. And you will engage us so much the more both to speak well of, and pray for you. In this resolution, we subscribe ourselves, in the innocency of our hearts, in the sight of God,*

<i>From the prison in</i>	<i>James Houson,</i>	<i>John Finis,</i>
<i>Dover, the 17th day</i>	<i>Simon Loveless,</i>	<i>T. Partridge,</i>
<i>of the 9th month, 1661.</i>	<i>John Hales,</i>	<i>T. Williams.</i>

him closely on a Lord's-day, lest he should aggravate his offence by preaching. When he was first committed, a gentleman, probably esteeming him an honest though erring christian, offered to procure him a conference with Dr. Hind, a clergyman. The doctor not being forward to visit the prisoner, Mr. Hobbs wrote him a very respectful letter; in which he proposed two queries for his solution: one respected infant baptism; and the other the forcing and receiving all persons, of every character, into the church; accompanied with his reasons for believing both to be contrary to scripture. Dr. Hind, probably not finding it easy to return a satisfactory answer, went to the magistrates, and incensed them against Mr. Hobbs. They, learning the indulgence enjoyed by the prisoner, were highly displeased; and, sending the jailor to fetch him from his house, strictly charged that he should, for the future, be kept a close prisoner.

The church continued to increase; though several of the members forsook the baptists, and joined the quakers. This caused considerable jealousy between the two parties, and frequent literary altercations; in which Mr. Hobbs was often engaged, till 1673. It is probable that he died soon after that year, as we have no farther account of him.

But many years before his death, an event took place, which had a very happy influence on the general baptist cause at Dover. Captain Samuel Taverner, a respectable gentleman from Essex, had been appointed by Oliver Cromwell, in 1653, governor of Deal castle. While attending the duties of his station, he formed an intimacy with Mr. Prescott, the baptist minister. In that disputing age, the subject of baptism would

naturally occupy their attention: and the repeated discussion of it at length convinced the governor that believers' baptism alone was warranted by scripture. Though this was a persecuted principle, every where spoken against, this gentleman did not confer with flesh and blood; but, following the dictates of his conscience, was baptized by Mr. Prescott, in 1663, at Sandwich, and joined the church at Dover. In 1665, he resigned his commission, as governor of Deal; which, it seems, had been continued to him at the Restoration: and, removing to Dover, commenced business as a grocer. He was called to preach soon after he joined the baptists: and his labours appear to have been very useful. The numbers of the society continued to increase; so that, in 1667, the members were two hundred and forty-two. The zeal and ability of Mr. Taverner, probably, contributed much to this increase: and, in October, 1681, he was ordained elder.

No sooner was he placed in this important station, than he began to devise plans for advancing the prosperity of the people whom he was called to serve. He took a list of the names and residences of the members: and, considering the extent of the country over which they were scattered, and the great increase of their numbers, he was led to conclude that the interest of the cause might be better promoted, by dividing the society into several parts. On imparting his sentiments to his friends, they met with general approbation: and, accordingly, three distinct churches were formed. These were; the church at Dover, which retained Mr. Taverner and Mr. Richard Cannon as their pastors, assisted by Mr. Thomas Partridge as ruling elder: the church at

Sandwich and Deal, which elected Henry Brown and Richard Slaughter for its elders: and the church at Folkstone and Hythe, which put itself under the care of Messrs. Auther and Hadlow. The three churches, thus amicably organized, agreed to hold an annual general meeting, on the first Lord's-day in May, to commemorate their former union, and cultivate a mutual good understanding. These meetings were maintained for upwards of fifty years; not being discontinued till 1732.

After this separation, persecution continued to vex these churches. Mr. Taverner was frequently summoned before the magistrates; when he always bore an undaunted testimony to the truth which he professed. His enemies came with a false warrant, in 1682, and seized his goods and furniture to the amount of nearly one hundred pounds. Discovering, however, the illegality of their proceedings, he recovered the greatest part of his property. On another occasion, he was sent to prison; but his interest at court soon procured his release. It is, indeed, probable, that his influence and connections screened him, in a great degree, from the rage of his enemies: yet this did not cause him to desert his less privileged friends. His name stands at the head of a list of ten persons, who, Sept. 30th. 1686, a time of violent persecution, when the church found great danger in meeting for social worship, signed a resolution, importing that, in future, if any person should suffer loss, on account of having meetings at his house, they would, according to their abilities, bear equal proportions of the damage. The other subscribers were, Richard Cannon, W. Mellow, John Simpson, Richard Marsh, Cor-

nelius Garrison, Henry Hobbs, Thomas Neale, Thomas Stokes, and Henry Spillett.\*

The general baptists at *Bessell's Green* and *Bradburn*† appear to have suffered much for the truth, and to have borne it with great fortitude. They thought it their duty to maintain an open profession of their religion, by meeting publicly for worship, and leave the consequence to Providence: and they even judged those who advised them to more cautious measures to be worthy of censure. In 1672, a member of this society was solemnly withdrawn from; and his crimes are thus recorded in their church-book: "1. For being an instrument of Satan, in labouring to make our knees feeble, and our hands to hang down, and to hide our light under a bushel, by creeping into corners, and meeting by *fours*. 2. For neglecting the constant contributions to the wants of the poor. 3. For slothfulness, in neglecting to assemble with the church. 4. For refusing to do his duty in helping, according to his ability, to make up the loss that sister Palmer sustained for the truth's sake." And, in order to encourage each other boldly to suffer for the sake of a good conscience, twenty of the principal persons of the congregation entered into an agreement, Oct. 28th. 1681, to bear shares, in proportion to their circumstances, of whatever loss might be sustained by any on account of religion; and to pay their parts within a month after the loss.

Their zeal and courage were frequently put to the test. Their venerable pastor, W. Jeffery, suffered

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\* Crosby, Vol. II. pp. 151—160. Vol. III. pp. 104—112. L. Howard's Seat of the Scorned thrown down, p. 19, and P. I, from original MSS.

† *Supra*, pp. 107 and 166.

much, with great pleasure and patience, in his Master's cause: and his colleague in the eldership, Mr. John Reeve, was the partaker of his trials. The magistrates of Seven-Oaks, one Lord's-day, sent the police officers to the baptist meeting at Bradburn, when, it is probable, Mr. Reeve was preaching. The officers seized all the men in the congregation, and carried them to Seven-Oaks, where they were detained in custody all night. In the morning, when the justices were assembled, they sent for the prisoners; and, after some little discourse with them, dismissed them all. With hearts full of wonder and gratitude, the men returned to the meeting-house from which they had been taken, to unite in giving thanks to God for this unexpected deliverance. When they arrived at the place, to their great surprise and joy, they found the women still assembled; who had not left the house, but had spent the evening, night, and morning, in fasting, and prayer to God on their behalf. So signal an answer to their supplications must have had a happy effect in strengthening their faith, and preparing them for future sufferings.

During this period, it is probable, both their pastors died; as they must have been advanced in years, both having signed the Confession of Faith, in 1660. Mr. Jeffery is said to have died in a good old age; and to have been succeeded by his son, John Jeffery, as elder of the church.\*

Tradition places the origin of the general baptist church at *Eyethorn*, in this county, towards the close of the reign of queen Elizabeth, about A. D. 1590. For some time, the members of this

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\* B. G. C. B.

Crosby, Vol. IV. pp. 97—100.

society met for social worship in private houses ; particularly at the house of one of their friends at Street-end. The owner of this house bequeathed a small annuity for the support of the cause ; which, like many similar bequests, has long been lost. In 1624, the number of the members was upwards of twenty ; and, under many discouraging circumstances, a strict attention to discipline was maintained.

For more than one hundred and eighty years, pastors, of the name of John Knott, all of the same family, presided, in regular succession, over this congregation. Most of the general baptist ministers, under Charles II., followed some secular employment : and several of the pastors of Eyethorn were blacksmiths. As one of them was busy in his shop, information was given him that an informer and his crew were approaching, to apprehend him. He immediately withdrew by a back door, and concealed himself in an old saw-pit, overgrown with nettles and weeds. No sooner had he escaped, than his persecutors entered ; and found his wife, with a child in her arms. The little prattler immediately began, " Daddy is gone"—and would, doubtless, have discovered his retreat, had not its mother stopt it by a rude shake. While the informers were searching for her husband, Mrs. Knott prepared for dinner. They insisted on partaking of it : and she instantly offered them the best she had, waiting on them with the utmost complaisance and alacrity. This hospitality softened the hearts of these intruders, and they left the house without any further search ; declaring they would not do any thing to distress so good a woman. But though Mr. Knott was preserved at this time, yet, on another occasion, his goods

were seized, and offered for public sale; but so much was he respected, that neither his neighbours nor strangers could be allured to bid for them.\*

Another ancient and respectable society of general baptists assembled at *Biddenden*, a village near Smarden, in Kent. Like most other gathered churches, its origin is obscure. Its most early records, that have been preserved, commence "the twenty-fifth day of the tenth month (December) 1648;" and now lie before us. It must have been formed many years previous to this date, as it was then completely organized, and extended over several of the adjacent towns and villages.

On the day just mentioned, it was agreed, for mutual accommodation†, that the members of this congregation should meet, for public worship, and the administration of the ordinances, in three divisions; one at Cranbrook, another at Biddenden, and a third at Rolvenden: but that in "weighty affairs," the three congregations should consult and act as one: and jointly assist each other, in cases of necessity, in supplying the wants of the poor. At this time, George Hammon and James Blackmore were joint pastors; and the members must have been numer-

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\* Ivimey, Vol. II. pp. 217—219. Vol. I. p. 137.

† The reasons of this separation, assigned by the parties themselves, were, "that the glad tidings of Jesus the Anointed may be more propagated—the people, on the first day of the week, conveniently meet together to edify one another, and to watch over one another—to the end, that the offices of Jesus Christ, as king, priest, and prophet, may be exalted, and the discipline of Christ in each congregation be executed—and that the members may communicate together in the breaking of bread."

*Bid. C.B. ad init.*

ous, as more than seventy remained at Biddenden; the names of whom are subscribed to this agreement.

During the period of toleration under Cromwell, the pastors of this church were diligently employed in preaching the gospel. Before 1657, the members had increased to upwards of one hundred and twenty. They were also zealously engaged in contending for what they esteemed the doctrines of revelation. Mr. Hammon, particularly, as we have already seen,\* maintained frequent controversies, both personally and from the press.

Soon after the Restoration, this society was visited by persecution: for, in 1660, both its pastors were confined in Maidstone jail; and joined with their brethren in bonds in the petition mentioned at the beginning of this section. When they recovered their liberty is uncertain; but the cause continued to prosper, and the number of members to increase. In 1678, they were scattered over ten parishes: and, it being found inconvenient to continue to act as one society, an amicable separation took place. Two distinct churches were formed: one of which continued at Biddenden, under the care of Mr. Hammon; and the other assembled at Tenterden, under Mr. Blackmore.

In a few years after this division, Mr. Hammon appears to have been called to his reward. The last time he was at a church-meeting was July the 5th, 1680: and, probably, he did not long survive. He died at Haseldon Wood, in the parish of Cranbrook: and must have arrived at a good old age, as he had been pastor over this

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† Supra, pp. 166 and 167.

society about forty years.—He was a man of a superior character. Little influenced by the authority of doctors or priests, he was determined to think and act for himself. But, though this independence of disposition led him to entertain some singular opinions, yet he always considered the word of God as the sovereign standard of truth; and bowed, with respectful submission, to its decision. He is said to have acquired, by his own application, some acquaintance with the learned languages: and his works prove him to have possessed a shrewdness of observation and a closeness of reasoning, that well fitted him to shine in the disputing age in which he lived. Of his address and intrepidity the following anecdote affords a pleasing example.

In those troublous times, of which we are treating, when numbers of unprincipled wretches obtained an infamous livelihood by lodging accusations against their neighbours who ventured to worship God according to the dictates of their own consciences, G. Hammon was engaged to preach at a distant place. On his way thither, being overtaken by a violent storm, he took shelter under a tree, on the side of the road. While standing, a stranger, from an opposite house, mistaking him for a person of a different character, called out to him, saying, ‘I am an informer: I hear there is to be a meeting this night, at such a place; and I am going to give information against the persons assembled.’ Mr. Hammon, on hearing him name the place at which he was to preach, instantly replied, “I am a man-taker also, and am going to the same meeting.” ‘Are you so?’ said the informer, ‘then we will go together, and share the spoil.’ To this Mr. Hammon assented: and they proceeded to the

place of meeting, where the hearers were already assembled. After sitting some time, Mr. Hammon said to his companion, "Here are the people; but where is the minister? Unless there is a minister, we can never make a conventicle of it. I propose, therefore, that either you or I preach." Upon the other's declining it, Mr. Hammon said, "Then I must:" and, to the great surprise of his new associate, immediately commencing the service, he preached with such energy and effect, that the informer laid aside his profession, and became an honest man.

We have little further information respecting this congregation during the remainder of this period. They remained destitute of a pastor till after the close of it; and were occasionally supplied by the ministers at Rolvenden, or by Mr. Francis Cornwell. Being still exposed to severe persecution, in 1684 they entered into a mutual agreement to support each other by a joint contribution, according to the circumstances of each, towards repairing the losses sustained by any member of the church from fines or indictments, on account of religion.\*

It has been mentioned before,† that Mr. C. Blackwood, the clergyman of Staplehurst, Kent, in 1644, embraced the doctrine of believers' baptism. About the same time, Mr. Richard Kingsnorth, one of his parishioners, adopted similar sentiments. These united their efforts, and gathered a church at *Spilshill*, near Staplehurst, which soon spread itself into the adjacent parts. Mr. Kingsnorth, and most of their converts, were general baptists: but Mr. Blackwood held the

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\* Bid. C. B.—Ivimey, Vol. II. p. 221.

† See pp. 108—110.

doctrine of particular election. Mr. Kingsnorth, therefore, was ordained pastor; and Mr. Blackwood assisted him in the ministry. They laboured together for some time, with much harmony and success, until Mr. Blackwood joined the parliamentary army, and went over with it into Ireland; where he became very popular and useful. Mr. Kingsnorth continued his labours in this church till his death, in 1677; and appears to have been very successful. The church increased in numbers, and had many ministers raised up to preach the gospel. It appears, that, at the death of their first pastor, no fewer than five of his sons were employed in that honorable calling. He was the author of two pieces: one entitled, "The Pearl of Truth found out between two Rocks of Error;" and the other, "Gospel Certainty of everlasting Felicity." In both these, he endeavoured to support the distinguishing tenets of his denomination.

Soon after the death of Mr. Kingsnorth a division took place in this society, which probably had been delayed only through respect to his character. It appeared that an unhappy difference of opinion respecting the "ever-blessed Trinity" existed among the ministers and people. Some adhered to the original principles upon which the society was formed; while others embraced the novel tenets propagated by Mr. Caffen, which afterwards caused so much altercation among the general baptists. After many debates, a friendly separation was agreed upon: and Thomas and Henry Kingsnorth, two sons of their deceased pastor, W. Jeffery, and Henry Hillier, with several of the congregation, withdrew, and formed a separate church; which, for some time, assembled at Biddenden and Frittenden, and

afterwards at Headcorn and Biddenden. The ministers who adhered to the "ancient opinions," were, Daniel Kingsnorth, brother to their late elder; Richard and James Kingsnorth, two sons of the same minister; Richard Knight, John Austin, and Henry Snoad. These carried on the cause; and several others were soon after called to labour with them. We know, however, very little of the subsequent history of this church, though it still exists.\*

There was, also, a respectable general baptist church at *Maidstone*, over which Mr. Joseph Wright presided, for the greatest part of this period. He appears to have left Lincolnshire soon after the Restoration, and to have settled in Kent. He was a diligent and successful preacher, and suffered much for his adherence to the truth; being confined for twenty years in Maidstone jail. During this imprisonment he watched diligently over the interests of the churches; and was a zealous advocate for the distinguishing truths of the gospel, in opposition to the philosophical notions of his former friend, Mr. Caffin. But their controversy will fall more properly under the next period. He practised medicine in prison, with considerable success, for the support of himself and family. We have no account of the state of his church during this period.†

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\* Ivimey, Vol. II. pp. 233—237, and Private Information.

† Crosby, Vol. III. pp. 116—282, and *supra*, pp. 183—194.—Many other general baptist churches flourished, during this period, in this county: but we have not been able to obtain any particulars of the circumstances. Besides the twenty churches gathered by the exertions of Mr W. Jeffery and his associates, there were numerous congregations, in various parts of Kent, totally independent of them, of equal, if not of superior standing. We shall be happy, if the communications of our intelligent Kentish friends enable us to resume the subject in some future part of the history to more advantage.

SECT. 7.—*Notices of the General Baptists, in the Southern Counties, from the Restoration to the Revolution.*

IN the adjoining county of Sussex, the general baptists were numerous, during this period; and closely connected with the Kentish churches. At *Lewes*, and its vicinity, they were estimated, by their enemies, at five hundred: and suffered severe persecution, though they used every honest means to avoid giving offence. On Lord's-day, May 29th 1670, they agreed to assemble for social worship: but that they might not expose themselves to observation, or excite the resentment of their enemies, they appointed the meeting at three o'clock in the afternoon, when all the episcopalians would be at church: and, to conceal the place, it was arranged that the friends should go singly to their usual meeting-house, and from thence be directed to another, situated in a private lane, at about a quarter of a mile distance. Two informers, however, observing several persons going that way, followed them to the place: and, having made the discovery, repaired to Sir Thomas Nutt, a persecuting justice, and laid information. That magistrate, without any examination, fined the minister twenty pounds, and forty of the hearers five shillings each. Who the minister was, we are not informed; but he was not in circumstances to pay the fine; which, therefore, was levied on five of the hearers. Warrants of distress were granted to the informers, to levy the amount on the possessions of the accused; and the constables were charged to assist in the execution of them. On the following Wednesday, they proceeded to their odious task: and robbed the unresisting meeters,

as they called them, of property to three times the amount of their fines. Their shops were plundered of the goods on sale, weights, and implements of trade; and their kitchens of their most necessary furniture:—their beds and drawers were stript of their linen and apparel; and their cattle driven off their lands. These outrages were continued for several weeks; and the seizures were made with the most barefaced inattention either to the value or owner of the effects. From one farmer, they took six cows, which, at a moderate computation, were worth more than double the fines charged on him: and when the sufferer expressed his surprise, that persons acquainted with the value of cattle should make such unreasonable distress, the informer replied, “We take one for your sauciness, and another for our trouble.” A person, who was not accused of being at the meeting, complained to Sir Thomas, that the goods seized did not belong to the persons on whom the fine was laid, and obtained this haughty reply: “If I please, I will levy the fines on you: and how will you help yourself?”

Chillington, a village within three miles of Lewes, witnessed the same disgraceful proceedings. Mr. N. Martin was convicted, on very slight evidence, of having a meeting at his house; and a fine of twenty pounds was imposed on him. On his refusing to pay it, six cows, two young bullocks, and a horse, being his whole stock, were seized, and driven off. He appealed to the sessions against the sentence of the magistrate; and, of course, his property was restored. At the sessions, such was the prejudice against dissenters, that he was condemned to pay a fine of sixty pounds: which, however, was afterwards reduced to twenty-three. But still resisting the demand,

he was committed to close confinement: nor could his release be obtained, though the vicar of the place, sensible that he had been unjustly treated, offered to give bond for the payment of the fine within three months.

At *Brighthelmstone* the baptists changed their place of meeting, and assembled in small parties. But they were discovered; and the house surrounded by Capt. Tetterson, the constable, and his men. Finding the doors locked, and having no authority to force them, he placed a guard at the entrance, and went to the magistrate for a warrant. When he had obtained one, he was admitted; but no minister was found, nor were the people engaged in any religious exercise. There was, therefore, no proof of its being a conventicle. But, some of the informers swearing that they had heard the sound of a voice, which they supposed was preaching, the justice ordered all the congregation to be brought before him. After having endeavoured, in vain, to inveigle them into a confession, he convicted them, on the evidence of the informer: and laid a fine of twenty pounds on the house in which the meeting had been held. The house belonged to a malster: and Tetterson, going with his gang, broke open the store-houses; and filled sixty sacks, each containing five bushels, from a heap of malt; which he sold to one of his followers for twelve shillings a quarter.\*

Mr. James Sicklemore was actively employed, in the former part of this period, in promoting the general baptist cause in these counties. This laborious minister was educated for a clergyman; and, for some years, enjoyed the living of Single-

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\* Crosby, Vol. II. pp. 244—257.

ton, near Chichester. In this station, he was diligent and exemplary. Once being, according to his constant practice, engaged in catechising the children of his parishioners, he was led to explain to his pupils what their godfathers had done for them. One of his auditors, at the conclusion, ventured to ask him what authority he had from scripture for any part of his system: and Mr. Sicklemore, not recollecting any text to his purpose, silenced the enquirer by a warm appeal to the general practice of the christian church. This question led him to examine the subject; and, finding that infant baptism rested solely on tradition, he relinquished the practice, and became a zealous assertor of believers' baptism. This change in his views took place, in 1648: though he appears to have retained his benefice for some years afterwards; probably till the Restoration. But, as he disapproved of tithes for the support of the ministry, he gave away all his income among the poor. His labours were not confined to his own parish, but were extended to various adjacent places. He was very successful as a preacher; and the instrument of gathering several churches; particularly those at Chichester and Portsmouth.

In 1671, the church at *Chichester* purchased some ground, and built a meeting-house. About the same time, Mr. George Smith presided over it: a worthy minister, and one who suffered much for the sake of a good conscience. He was confined, for a long time, in Horsham jail, to the great distress of an affectionate wife and five small children. Two of his sons, William and John, became useful and acceptable ministers of the gospel.\*

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\* Crosby, Vol. IV. p. 245, and Private Information.

But the most noted general baptist church in Sussex, at this time, was at *Horsham*. It had been gathered during the civil wars, probably by Mr. Samuel Lover, who survived the Restoration, and signed the Confession of 1660. Some time after its formation, it was joined by the famous Matthew Caffin, a native of Horsham, who had been expelled from the university of Oxford, for embracing and defending believers' baptism. This gentleman, being of good natural abilities cultivated by a liberal education, was soon called to the work of the ministry. He appears to have been co-pastor with Mr. Lover for several years; and, succeeding him at his death, presided over this congregation through the whole of the period of which we are treating. His labours were assiduous, and his success great. He was frequently called to defend the principles of the baptists, especially against the quakers. These were then as much disposed to controversy as any of their cotemporaries; and often sought occasions of dispute. A quaker once came to Mr. Caffin's door, and gravely accosted him thus: 'Matthew Caffin, I have a message from the Lord to thee'. "Come in then," replied Mr. Caffin, "and deliver thy message." "I am come," proceeded the quaker, 'to reprove thee for paying tithes to the priests; and to forbid thy doing so any more.' "I think," rejoined Mr. Caffin calmly, "I can convince thee that thou art deceived, and the Lord has not sent thee: for, I assure thee, I never did pay any tithes, nor am ever likely to be charged with any:" for his farm was, as to him, exempt from tithes.

But more serious persecutions than these were his portion. He was five times committed to prison: once to Newgate; when many of his

fellow prisoners died, and he narrowly escaped. At another time, he was confined in Horsham jail; and owed his liberty to the intercession of his landlord, Sir James Moreton. Of his other imprisonments we have no particulars. Both he and his friends suffered much from fines and exactions, under the conventicle act: yet the cause flourished, and the minister maintained an honorable character, bringing up a numerous family with great respectability. He laboured diligently in his own congregation, and frequently visited the churches in Kent, Sussex, and Surrey; many of which he had been instrumental in planting.\*

The church at *Portsmouth*, as has just been said, was gathered by Mr. James Sicklemore. Mr. Wentworth appears to have been the first pastor; but we have no account of him. He was succeeded by Mr. Richard Drinkwater, who was ordained in 1669: and, for many years, laboured very acceptably, and was blest with considerable success. He suffered much for the testimony of a good conscience, being imprisoned for eighteen months: but his piety, prudence, and good conduct gained him universal esteem.

Thomas Bowes, a person of considerable abilities, and an excellent preacher, was co-pastor with Mr. Drinkwater. Possessing property, and occupying some lands in Portsmouth island, he was much exposed to the attacks of the informers, who frequently drove away his cattle, and sold them, to support their debaucheries. He outlived his colleague many years; and continued pastor till his death.†

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\* Ibid Vol. III, pp. 116, 280. Vol. IV. 328.

† Ibid Vol. II, p. 137.

The sufferings of the dissenters, in these parts, were greatly heightened by the intolerance of Dr. Ward, bishop of Salisbury, and Dr. Gunning, bishop of Chichester.—The latter signalized himself by his zeal. Many of his episcopal brethren were content privately to encourage the informers, and throw the odium on the civil magistrates: but the bishop of Chichester marched in person, at the head of a troop of police officers, to disperse the meetings of the schismatics; and if he found the doors closed, would manfully order them to be broken open with sledges: which once gave occasion to a wag in the crowd to exclaim, “What! has Peter lost his keys?” He once seated himself on the bench with the justices, at the quarter sessions, to see that no undue lenity was shewn to the offenders against the laws for the safety of the church. The chairman desired his lordship to give the charge; which he declining, received a handsome rebuke from the magistrates, on the inconsistency of his conduct with his character of an ambassador of the Prince of Peace. His zeal carried him still farther. He gave a public challenge to the presbyterians, independents, baptists, and quakers; appointing three days for the disputation. On the first day, mounting the pulpit, before a large congregation, he charged the presbyterians and independents, in very strong terms, with rebellion and schism; and would admit of no reply. The baptists, on the second day, were treated with greater civility. Probably the bishop recollected his dispute with Mr. H. Denne, in 1658; and, knowing the strength of their arguments, thought it prudent not to provoke them. On the third day, the quakers, observing the manner of his lordship’s attack, prepared to repel it with

his own weapons. They collected their friends from the adjacent counties ; and returned railing for railing, till they drove the bishop fairly out of the church. They followed him home ; and one of them, as the prelate hastened forwards, pulled him by his lawn sleeve, exclaiming, "The hireling fleeth ; the hireling fleeth."\*

We have traces of an ancient general baptist church at *Southampton*, under the care of Mr. John Sims, who was baptized by Mr. Sicklemore. It seems this gentleman had not been regularly ordained ; and yet, at the earnest request of the inhabitants of Middlesey, ventured to preach in their parish church, as he was on a journey to London. This gave such offence to the presbyterians, who then possessed the benefices, that Mr. Sims was apprehended at Bridgewater, under the authority of the act against unordained ministers. His pockets were searched, and some letters, which he was conveying from his country friends to their connections in London, were seized. He was sent up to the parliament, in custody ; and these letters forwarded, as grounds of accusation. The crimes laid to his charge were, the denying of infant baptism, and presuming to take a text, and preach before two presbyterian ministers. The government not attending to this important business with sufficient promptitude, Edwards thought it necessary to publish the intercepted letters, to warn the people against such dangerous sectaries. But,

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\* *Calamy's Account*, Vol. II. pp. 334, 672.—It is very evident, that the bishop's opponents were *general baptists* : as Dr. Calamy informs us that they agreed with his lordship about *free-will*, &c. a mode of speaking, by which the calvinists frequently endeavoured to cast a slur on the character of this despised sect.

*Account*, Vol. II. p. 334.

unless believers' baptism, and rejoicing that the presbyterians did not obtain the unlimited power they sought, were esteemed heresy and treason, these letters are perfectly innocent; and breathe a spirit of piety and true patriotism.\* We have no account of these baptists after the Restoration.

There appears to have been at this time, a flourishing general baptist church at *Downton*, in Wiltshire: of which Mr. John Sangar, who kept a grammar school in that town, was pastor; and Mr. Peter Coles assistant preacher. This society sustained its share of persecution. Mr. Sangar was much harassed by fines, and the frequent seizure of his goods, on account of his nonconformity: and Mr. Coles, for the same crime, lay several years in Salisbury jail.†

In the neighbouring county of Dorset, the general baptist cause made great progress during this period; principally through the blessing of God on the labours of Mr. John Miller. This pious minister was born at Hinton-Martin, in that county, of a respectable family; and educated among the presbyterians. When he arrived at years of discretion, after a diligent investigation of the subject, he embraced the principles of the baptists; and became zealous and active in propagating what he esteemed the doctrines of revelation. A church was formed at *Minthenton*, where he had fixed his residence: of which he was chosen pastor. But his labours were not confined to his own congregation. Notwithstanding the severity of the times, he travelled much, preached openly, and was made an instrument of turning many sinners to Christ, and of planting many churches.

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\* Edwards' *Gangræna*, Part III. p. 50, &c.

† Crosby, Vol. III. pp. 126, 127.

These active exertions naturally exposed him to great persecutions. He lay ten years in confinement; and hardly escaped a *præmunire*. In 1684, his goods were seized, and himself cast into prison. At the ensuing assizes at Sherborn, he was indicted for eleven months' absence from church. As there was only one witness against him, it was found difficult to prove the charge; till a neighbouring justice, one of king Charles' poor knights, turned evidence. He was then convicted in the full penalty of two hundred and twenty pounds, or twenty pounds a month. He objected to the sentence as illegal; but was told by the judge that he might seek his remedy where he could. As Mr. Miller declined paying this exorbitant fine, his property was seized by the sheriff. Four hundred sheep, twenty cows, seven horses, and six or seven fatting hogs; all the hay, corn, and wool of the last year's produce; and even the malt and hops reserved for the use of the family, were sold, as forfeited to the crown. These depredations continued for four months; and though Mr. Miller had regained his liberty, yet he durst not appear; as his persecutor, the justice, threatened to imprison him again. His eldest son so incensed the plunderers, by merely taking an account of what effects were sold, that a warrant was issued to apprehend him; and he was obliged to abscond. At length, two neighbours, one of them a churchman, observing the destruction that was making of this good man's property, went to the sheriff, paid the fine, and dismissed the officers, after they had seized and wasted goods to the amount of nearly five hundred pounds. During this pillage, Mr. Miller went up to London, and presented a petition to the king; in which he prayed, not for the resto-

ration of what had been thus wantonly seized, but that the little of his corn which remained might not be sold, but spared for the supply of his wife and eight children; to whom the rapacious bailiffs refused provisions, unless they were paid for them. To this moving appeal, the monarch answered, with the utmost unconcern, "I have nothing to say to you: you must go home and conform." Mr. Miller went home: but not to conform. Finding no prospect of enjoying his property in peace, he sold his estate: and, retiring to a lonely situation, took a small farm, of thirty pounds a year, on which he lived undisturbed, till May 14th 1694, when he was taken to his rest. He signed the Confession of 1660, some time after it had been presented to the king.\*

Thus we have endeavoured to collect the most material facts relating to the English General Baptists, during the gloomy period between the Restoration of king Charles II. and the Revolution which placed William III. on the throne. It has been seen that they experienced their full share of the distress which was then the portion of all who conscientiously dissented from the established church. The foregoing pages afford ample proof of the sufferings of one denomination of dissenters; and the storm involved all nonconformists. What, then, must have been the total

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\* *Crosby*, Vol. III. pp. 121—123. *Whiston's Memoirs*, Vol. II. p. 574.—There is abundant evidence, that the general baptist interest flourished much, in the southern counties, between the Restoration and Revolution: yet, though we have made considerable exertions, we have not been able to obtain any regular information as to particular societies. We are, therefore, obliged, though very reluctantly, to confine our account to the above hints.

amount? A catalogue is said to have been made, by an intelligent minister, towards the close of this period, of sixty thousand persons who suffered for their religion, during the reigns of the brothers Charles II. and James II., of whom five thousand died in prison. And, on a moderate computation, no less a sum than fourteen millions of pounds was extorted from them, by fines and levies. The reign of bloody queen Mary was innocent, when compared with this horrid period; whether we consider the number of victims or the distress endured. Numbers of dissenters left the kingdom, and retired into foreign countries: many respectable families were reduced to poverty; and hopeless despondency overspread the nation.\*

Yet, in the midst of this gloom, if we glance at the state of the general baptist interest in various parts of the kingdom, at the Revolution, we shall see reason to admire the goodness and power of the great Head of the church, in preserving and extending his own cause, while the powers of this world were exerting all their strength for its destruction. In Lincolnshire, and the adjacent counties, new churches were planted, and the old ones continued to flourish. The apostolic Thomas Grantham was still actively employed in promoting that cause for which he had so long laboured and suffered: and his efforts were effectually aided by many promising young ministers, who had grown up under his care, and drunk deep into his spirit. John Denne, and his associates, in the counties of Cambridge and Huntingdon; Thomas Monk, and many assiduous fellow-labourers in Buckinghamshire and its vicinity;

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\* Neal, Vol. IV. p. 554.

Francis Stanley, and Benjamin Morley, with a number of zealous coadjutors in Northamptonshire; were all diligently and successfully engaged, in their respective circles, in advancing the same interest. If we turn our eye to London, the view is equally cheering. The congregations had increased in numbers and in order; and were well supplied with ministers. Though Messrs. Lamb, H. Denne, Gosnold, Barber, Loveday and Clayton had been called to their reward, yet their places were well filled by Messrs. Plant, Jennings, Maulden, Russell, Marnor, White, Kirby, and various others. Those veterans, Messrs. Morecock, Wright, and Taverner, were still effectually employed in watering the numerous societies in Kent, and in planting new ones: and an encouraging group of young ministers, trained up under their influence, stood ready to assist their efforts, and enter into their labours. In the southern counties, our prospect is, indeed, indistinct and confined; but we can plainly discern, in various parts, general baptist churches, which, at the Revolution, were numerous and flourishing. From the whole survey, it is evident, that the walls had been built in troublous times; and that this denomination of christians had increased, both in numbers and character, during this distressful period. Indeed, at the æra of the Revolution, the general baptists appear to have reached the summit of their prosperity: nor were their churches, at any other time, equally respectable for the number of their members, the soundness of their doctrines, or the regularity of their discipline. And though our documents are too imperfect to permit us to calculate the number in England at this time, with any certainty; yet, taking those congregations

and districts of which we have the most accurate information as fair specimens of the whole, it may be safely concluded, that, if the general baptists, at the Restoration, amounted to twenty thousand, they must, at the Revolution, have exceeded thirty thousand.

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### CHAP III.

*THE HISTORY OF THE ENGLISH GENERAL BAPTISTS, FROM THE REVOLUTION TO THE CLOSE OF THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY.*

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SECT. 1—*King James II. favours the Dissenters.—William III. ascends the Throne—Toleration established.*

**T**HE dissipated Charles II. countenanced the measures adopted against the nonconformists merely to please his clergy and parliament, and obtain money to support his pleasures: but his bigotted successor appears to have pursued the same course, with a steady view to his favourite object, the encouragement of popery. He hoped that these severities would force the dissenters to make a common cause with the papists against the establishment; or, that, by crushing the sectaries, he should gratify the clergy; and induce them to connive at the favours granted to the Roman catholics. In both these designs he was completely disappointed. The dissenters, so far from being disposed to form any connection with the papists, were willing to be deprived of some of their own rights, rather than share them with persons of whose principles they entertained

the utmost abhorrence. And the clergy, when they saw James making such open attempts to encourage popery, united with great zeal, both from the pulpit and the press, in opposing it. Thus foiled, the king determined to try whether the dissenters might not be won by favours, to assist in overthrowing the established church. The laws against them could not, indeed, be repealed without the consent of the parliament; which, jealous as they were of the designs of the court, could not be expected: but James claimed the power of dispensing with the laws; and eleven of the judges had given their solemn opinion in favour of this claim.

Having obtained their sanction, he began to exercise his prerogative in favour of those who differed from the establishment; affecting a great regard for the rights of conscience, and ascribing all the persecution that had taken place to the instigation of the bishops. An office was opened, at which any person, for the sum of fifty shillings, might purchase a licence for himself and family; which stopped all actions depending against them on account of their religion, and granted them full liberty for the future, to attend what meetings they pleased. In order more effectually to please the dissenters, and humble their persecutors, in March, 1687, commissioners were appointed, in the several counties, to inquire what money had been raised, and what goods had been seized by distress, on account of religion, and not brought into the exchequer. The parties who had suffered persecution were summoned, to give an account of their respective losses; or, if they were dead, their relations were to appear for them. This commission struck terror into the whole tribe of informers, and their employers.

Judging of others by themselves, they did not entertain the least hope that the dissenters would not seize with avidity this opportunity of avenging themselves on their enemies. But the religion for which the nonconformists had suffered, had taught them to return blessing for cursing: and they nobly refused to appear against their persecutors. Their generous forbearance was warmly acknowledged by many leading men in the establishment; who gave the most solemn assurances that, in future, every kind of lenity and affection should be exercised towards their dissenting brethren, as they then kindly termed them.

April 4th 1687, James issued a proclamation, in which, after observing that conscience ought not to be forced, he declared that it was his royal will and pleasure—that all penal laws against nonconformity should be immediately suspended—that his subjects might meet freely in any place, and serve God after their own consciences; provided that nothing against government was taught, that their doors were open, and that the places were certified to some neighbouring justice—and that all oaths and tests required for holding places should cease, and all civil and military offices be left free to his good subjects of every sect.

This declaration was received by the dissenters with jealous gratitude. They, doubtless, were happy in being released from the hardships they had suffered: but they did not approve of the power of dispensing with the laws claimed by the king; and they feared the real object was to favour popery. They therefore rejoiced with trembling. A few of the baptists, quakers, and independents presented addresses of thanks to

the king: but the wiser part enjoyed the indulgence in silence. Among the ministers who waited on his majesty on this occasion, we notice only one general baptist, Mr. Thomas Plant, pastor of the Barbican church; who, in company with several particular baptist ministers, presented an address, March 23d 1687, in which they said, "The sense of this invaluable favour and benefit, derived to us from your royal clemency, compels us to prostrate ourselves at your majesty's feet, with the tender of our most humble thanks for that peace and liberty which both we and all other dissenters from the national church enjoy." They concluded with expressing their humble dependence on his royal promise, to secure their rights and properties; and to engage his two houses of parliament to concur with him in this good work. These addresses, guarded as they evidently were, met with a most gracious reception at court; and were handed about as proofs of the attachment of the dissenters.

But James drove forwards his arbitrary measures with so much violence, and pursued his plans for introducing popery with so little disguise, that all the friends of liberty and religion took the alarm. Persons of all ranks and sentiments joined in an invitation to William, prince of Orange, James's son in law, to come over and preserve the civil and religious rights of the nation. That prince complied with the request, and landed at Torbay, Nov. 5th, 1688. The misguided James, finding himself deserted by all his friends, and even by his own children, having previously sent his queen and her son into France, followed them, leaving the throne vacant. William arrived at London, Dec. 18th, and a parliament was assembled; which, on Feb.

13th, 1689, declared the prince and princess of Orange king and queen of England, to the great joy of every honest man in the nation.

King William III. was, by education and principle, a sincere friend to religious liberty. Could he have accomplished his wishes, all civil restraints on account of religious opinions would have been wholly abolished. But the clergy, when their dread of popery was removed, forgot the concessions and assurances which they had made to the nonconformists, in the time of their distress, and thwarted, as far as they could, the attempts of the good monarch to relieve them. A law, however, was soon enacted in favour of the dissenters; which, for one hundred years, was considered as the great bulwark of their liberties and rights; and has generally been distinguished by the appellation of the "Act of Toleration." It exempted persons taking certain oaths from the penalties for non-attendance at church and all other acts of nonconformity; discharged them from any prosecutions or informations for any such act which might be pending at the time of taking the oaths, and delivered them from the jurisdiction of ecclesiastical courts. Dissenting ministers, on subscribing the doctrinal articles of the church of England, were authorized to preach without molestation, and exempted from parochial offices. Their meetings, also, were protected from interruption, provided always they were held with the doors open. In this statute, it was expressly enacted, that baptist ministers should not be required to subscribe that part of the articles of the church of England which teaches infant baptism.\*

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\* Neal, Vol. IV. p. 549—ad ult. Appendix, No. 1.

Thus a legal and constitutional stop was put to the sufferings of the dissenters; and though various attempts have since been made, by the sticklers for uniformity, both clergy and laity, to revive, in a greater or less degree, the spirit of persecution; yet they have always been crushed by the wisdom and liberality of the government, and the jealousy of those more immediately interested. Within these few years, certain magistrates having shewn a disposition to interpret some clauses of this act too strictly, and thus restrain the liberties of the dissenters, his majesty's present ministers carried a bill through both the houses of parliament to explain and fix the principles of toleration, and render the privileges of the nonconformists more secure and explicit. This act received the royal assent, July 29, 1812; and will, it is hoped, long remain a monument of the liberal policy of the present age.

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SECT. 2.—*Mr. Grantham's last labours and death. — Spalding Church. — Lincolnshire Association. — General Baptists at Sheffield.*

WHEN we turn our eyes to the general baptists in Lincolnshire, and its vicinity, we naturally look for Mr. Thomas Grantham, the great support of their cause. We left him, preaching the gospel, and gathering a church, at Yarmouth, in Norfolk: and, at the Revolution, we find him zealously engaged, in the same sacred cause, at Lynn Regis, at the other extremity of the same county. Mr. James Marham,\* who had already been the instrument of introducing the general

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\* Supra, pp. 214, 224.

baptists into Holbeach and Wapool-Bell, on the death of his wife removed from the latter place to Lynn. He found here, also, an open field for his exertions, as there were none of his persuasion in the town. He, accordingly, invited Mr. Grantham to visit them : and that minister preached frequently in the Town-hall to numerous and attentive congregations. Pleased with the prospect, he encouraged Mr. Marham to hire a place, and fit it up conveniently for public worship. This being completed soon after the passing of the act of toleration, a license was procured, and the interest began to flourish.\*

After labouring some time at Lynn, Mr. Grantham returned to Norwich, to water the church which he had already planted in that town. His labours were great, and his success encouraging : many being induced to give themselves up to the church, and profess their faith in Christ by baptism. His meeting stood near St. Stephen's church, of which the Rev. John Connould was vicar : a worthy, pious, and learned clergyman ; but sincerely attached to the doctrine and discipline of the establishment. Perceiving some of his parishioners drawn away by Mr. Grantham's ministry, and understanding that he had, from the pulpit, bid defiance to the church of England, Mr. Connould resolved to accept the challenge. He, therefore, addressed a polite note to Mr. Grantham, dated April 17th 1621, requesting a plain and positive answer to two questions : " 1. What authority, or what call, whether ordinary or extraordinary, have you, to gather a church or congregation, separate from, or in opposition to, the established national church ?—

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\* Theol. Mag. for 1805, p. 111.

2. Whether you do own, and will undertake to defend, that the holy sacrament of baptism ought not to be administered to infants?" To these queries, Mr. Grantham, on the same day, replied: "1. I do believe God's ordinary way of sending ministers, whom he hath first prepared, is by due election and ordination, by fasting and prayer, with the laying on of hands by the bishops or presbyter of his church: and it is by such a call that I preach, and perform my office in the ministry. 2. Seeing God hath put it into the hearts of our superiors to give equal liberty to us with our fellow subjects, I will make no challenge to disputation with any minister of the national church; yet I am ready to maintain, in a peaceable and amicable way, that sacred baptism does not belong to infants, by Christ's appointment."

Thus commenced an epistolary controversy, which was continued for several months; in which each party evidently exerted his utmost abilities to defend his own system. Mr. Grantham appears to considerable advantage, even when opposed to this able disputant; who frankly acknowledged, at the close of the debate, that he did not think so much could have been said on either side. The whole correspondence was conducted in the most friendly and handsome manner: the clergyman inviting the baptist to his house, and offering him the use of his library; and the baptist consulting the clergyman, as his friend, in all cases of doubt or difficulty. After writing thirty letters each, most of them long and laboured epistles, they closed the dispute, Sept. 29th 1691: and the result was, as usually happens, each combatant professed himself confirmed in the truth of his own system. But, unlike the effect of most theological contests, it is

evident, that their mutual esteem and friendship increased during the dispute: and that, at the close of it, each entertained a much higher opinion of the piety and abilities of the other than he did at the commencement.\*

Though the laws had put an end to fines and imprisonments for the sake of religion, yet the old spirit governed too many of the high-church party: and Mr. Grantham, about this time, suffered much from the persecution of the tongue. One railed at him as a drunkard; while another revived the slander, which he had so ably confuted thirty years before, and said that he was a jesuit in disguise. Some called him an unclean person; and others asserted that he was a thief. While these calumnies were only thrown out, by the rabble, in general terms, Mr. Grantham, secure in conscious innocence, despised them; and calmly pursued the great work in which he was so zealously engaged. But his forbearance en-

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\* This correspondence has never been published; but a manuscript copy of it has been kindly handed to us. It contains 272 close-written quarto pages, large demy. At the close of the debate, some thoughts were entertained of printing these letters; but it was judged more prudent, at that time, to defer it. We cannot, however, avoid thinking that the sober, learned, and courteous arguments of the worthy vicar of St. Stephen's, would do more credit to the pædobaptist cause, than some of the late publications in its favour.

As a specimen of the temper and style of this correspondence, we insert the two last letters, which relate to the printing of the controversy.

“ Rev. Sir,

“ There is a report in town, that you intend to print our late disputation. If this be your purpose, you have my consent, so that it be done fairly, as I do not doubt of it. I purpose shortly to go into my own country; and therefore am desirous to know your resolution in this matter before I go. If you be not disposed to print, I desire to know your freedom, that I should

couraged his enemies; and persons of a more respectable rank joined the cry. A Mr. Toothby, who had been a persecuting justice, but was now out of commission, was very conspicuous in this dirty work: and was eagerly seconded by John Willett, the degraded rector of Tattershall, in Lincolnshire.

Mr. Grantham now thought that the interest of religion called upon him to defend his charac-

publish this dispute. I hope it may be of good use, to beget a better understanding between the church of England and those of the baptized believers. I could be willing to confer with you about this affair, if you think it adviseable so to do.

I am, Sir, Your loving Friend and Servant,

THOMAS GRANTHAM.

Norwich, Sept. 29th 1691.

Sept. 29th. 1691.

‘ Sir,

‘ Whatever may be reported, concerning my printing the Letters which have passed between us, I do assure you that it is, at present, far from my thoughts. As for yourself, if you have any such design, I have nothing to say against it; but leave you to your own liberty. It is not because I am ashamed of the cause which I have taken in hand to defend; but other reasons, which, if I may have an opportunity to discourse with you, I shall be ready to impart. Pray, Sir, let me know whether I may be so happy as to enjoy your company at my house this afternoon, at five o’Clock; or whether I shall wait on you at yours; or shall meet you elsewhere, at any other time: and, as it shall stand with my other necessary affairs, I shall be ready to shew myself

Your very ready Servant,

JOHN CONNOULD.’

Mr. Grantham, it seems, attracted the attention of a dignitary of the established church. In a letter, dated May 10th 1691, he tells Mr. Connould, “As for the questions which you whisper to me, they do not astonish me; because I have defended my doctrine and ministry against your exceptions, which have been objected to me by others: and particularly by Dr. Lloyd, bishop of Asaph, in a very christian conference at London, which ended with much friendship.”—It is to be regretted that no account of this interview has been preserved. G. & C. p. 33.

ter ; and the malicious zeal of his slanderers soon gave him a fair opportunity. John Willett wantonly declared, in writing, that he had seen Mr. Grantham stand in the pillory, two hours, at Louth, in the county of Lincoln, for causing his servant to fetch up seven of his neighbour's sheep, and brand them with his own mark. Proper evidence of this calumny being procured, Mr. Willett was apprehended ; and carried before Thomas Blofield, esq. mayor of Norwich. Here the audacity of the wretch forsook him. He acknowledged, in the most humble manner, his wickedness ; and confessed that all he had written against Mr. Grantham was utterly false and groundless. The mayor observed, that it was the foulest thing he had ever heard of : it was next to taking away Mr. Grantham's life, and deserved a severe whipping. On hearing this, the infamous slanderer threw himself on his knees to Mr. Grantham : and, with many tears and wringing of hands, supplicated his pardon. This worthy man, having fully vindicated his character, readily forgave his accuser : but the magistrate, though he praised the kindness of the prosecutor, directed his clerk to draw up a full and particular record of the confession ; and ordered the calumniator to put his own signature and seal to this memorial of his baseness. Having done this, he was discharged ; but not being able to pay the customary fees, he was detained in custody. Mr. Grantham, pitying his abject condition, gave ten shillings to the officers to discharge him : thus exemplifying the precept of his divine Master, in doing good to those that persecuted him.\*

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\* Crosby, Vol. III. p. 261.

Not content with these vile attacks on the character of this good man, plots were formed against him of a more serious nature. We have only obscure hints of the disgraceful particulars, and they appear never to have been fully known. Mr. Grantham writes to Mr. Connould, under date of May 10th, 1691, "I humbly thank you for your kind and faithful advertisement. Though I had no business of that nature appointed, I perceive some came with a bloody intent: God give them a sight of their sin. It is the opinion of some, that it is necessary, that the abuses which have been offered to us, and this design to destroy some of us, and therein the affronts which have been offered to their majesties' government, should be speedily represented to the council: and, in that case, I crave your advice; for I fear lest it should reflect upon the governors and teachers of this city." To this, Mr. Connould answers, May 29th, expressing his abhorrence of all such attempts; advising the baptists to obtain legal proof against the guilty: and assuring them that the magistrates of Norwich would have both honesty and courage enough to do their duty. Mr. Grantham observes, May 23d. "I give you hearty thanks for your advice; but hitherto we cannot learn the name of the butcherly woman who should have begun the business." This is all we know of these dark transactions: but this is sufficient to prove the rancour with which the enemies of the truth pursued its friends, even when the law had taken them under its protection.\*

Mr. Grantham had formed a design to return to Lincolnshire, in September 1691: but, pro-

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\* Dispute with Connould, pp. 36, 59, and 65.

bably, his wish to silence these calumnies, and protect his friends, might detain him at Norwich longer than he expected. He continued there till Jan. 17th, 1692, when he was called to his reward in the church triumphant. It is to be lamented, that no particulars of his last illness have been preserved: but, from an affecting speech, which he addressed to his weeping friends a few minutes before his death, we have pleasing assurance, that the gospel, which he had preached with so much diligence to others, supported him in those trying circumstances; and that the prosperity of the cause, to the promotion of which he had devoted his life, occupied his dying thoughts. As this document is interesting, we insert it below.\*

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\* "THE DYING WORDS OF MR. THOMAS GRANTHAM:

*Spoken by him within two minutes of his death, as those whose Names are affixed hereunto can testify.*

FRIENDS,

I am in a very weak condition; and as this is the sabbath, with me it will be the everlasting sabbath: for I am going off the stage of this world. Therefore, I recommend you to the grace of God, that you would walk stedfastly in the faith; as, by the grace of God, I have done to this my life's end: for, by the grace of God, I have not defrauded or polluted any person in the world, as now I am going to answer before God the Father. I came not amongst you for riches or for honour; but to preach the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; to spend and be spent for your good, both by preaching and writing: which words and works I recommend to you, to strengthen you in the faith which I have preached. In which faith I live and die; which has been according to the gospel of Jesus Christ; in which I would have you stand stedfast to the end; not wavering, but "fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life." I desire you, for the Lord's sake, to walk together, and keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, as Christ hath commanded you. "Then are ye my disciples, if you love one another." "Beloved, build up yourselves in your most holy faith; praying in the Holy

The malice of the enemies of this good man did not cease with his life: reports were spread that they threatened to abuse his corps. To prevent this, the Rev J. Connould, his worthy opponent, made interest to have the body interred in the middle aisle of St. Stephen's church. He read the burial service himself over the remains of his departed friend, in a most solemn and affecting manner, accompanied with many sighs and tears; and, on closing the book, added, with affectionate earnestness, "This day has a very great man fallen in Israel." Nor did time lessen the regard of this good vicar for the memory of his baptist rival:—more than eleven years afterwards, Mr. Connould died; and, at his own express request, was buried beside Mr. Grantham.\*

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Ghost; keep yourselves in the love of God; looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, unto eternal life." As I have told you before, submit yourselves to the will of God, and to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: give honour to whom honour is due; and so shall no man have cause to speak evil of you. As for my part, since I have been amongst you, I have been made a scoff and a gazing stock of many people, which I freely forgive them all: and heartily pray that God would forgive them, and shew them the error of their ways: I desire that you would pray for them, and not seek any revenge. But, to be short, I must leave you: do not grieve nor mourn for me. Tho' I die, I shall rise to glory: where I desire we may all meet, and see one another's faces at the last; knowing one another, and rejoice in glory: for I have conquered the infernal enemy by this faith, and have made the way plain and easy to me. And now I commit you to the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ; and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. *Amen.*

Spoken in the presence of

*John Mingo,  
Andrew Pegg,  
William Sidwell,  
Thomas Gamball,*

*Thomas Miller,  
John Clarke,  
Alice Clarke,  
Ann Grantham."*

\* Memorial of Mr. Grantham, in the G.B. meeting-house, Norwich.

It would be superfluous to endeavour to delineate the character of this celebrated general baptist. The excellencies of men of common size require to be pointed out by the historian; but the actions of such men as Thomas Grantham speak too plainly to need any comment. We, therefore, refer to the preceding pages;\* and are persuaded, that every impartial and discriminating reader has already pronounced him, as an individual, a christian, and a minister, a great and a good man.

His works have been noticed, as far as they have come to our knowledge, at the respective dates of their publication; except one, which was printed, in 1689, and called, "Truth and Peace: or the Last and most Friendly Debate concerning Infant Baptism." It is a "brief answer" to a defence of pædobaptism, by a doctor of the church of England: which was esteemed by some so satisfactory, that nothing more was necessary on the subject till that was answered. "Several persons of quality and learning" had urged Mr. Grantham to reply; which he did at large in this treatise. He has subjoined a Postscript in defence of the "manner of marriages among the baptized believers;" which appears to contain much curious information.†

The death of Mr. Grantham was a heavy loss to the general baptist cause in Lincolnshire and the adjoining counties; as none of his successors inherited an equal portion of his spirit and abilities, though several of them were assiduous and sincere. William Pann, who had been his co-adjutor and fellow-messenger, survived him several

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\* Supra, pp 128, 186, 193, 198, 204, 211, 216 and 224.

† Ivimey, Vol. II. pp. 279—281.

years, and succeeded him in the care of the churches.

No sooner had the Revolution secured to Britons the liberty of conscience, than the general baptists at *Spalding* began to exert themselves to erect a place for public worship. During the trying period preceding, they seem to have assembled in private houses, as less exposed to the observation of their enemies: but, in Feb. 1689, they commenced their contributions towards building a new meeting-house; which they completed in less than two years. It occupied the scite of the present building, and cost eighty-nine pounds.

Thus accommodated, this church prospered, and sent the gospel into different villages in the neighbourhood. They maintained preaching, for some time, at Moulton, five miles east of Spalding, where Stephen Maw, one of their "gifted brethren" resided: but he dying in 1691, the attempt was soon after relinquished. The scenes of their greatest success were on the sides of Gosberton and Fleet. At the former place, a congregation was established, and regular meetings supported; which was considered as a branch of the church at Spalding for a long time after the close of the seventeenth century. Mr. S. Phillips continued to labour at Holbeach till 1690: when Robert Vellem, of Fleet, became their regular preacher. He removed the meeting to Fleet; and laboured successfully till 1711; when he was called away by death.

The peace of this society suffered a short interruption, in the spring of 1693. Thomas Lawson, their elder, had imbibed sentiments favourable to mixt communion; and had ventured to declare them. This alarmed the church, and con-

siderable disaffection ensued : but the difference was amicably adjusted, at a solemn meeting held for that purpose, at Spalding, April 5th and 6th 1693 : at which William Pann, the messenger, presided. In Sept. of the same year, Israel Cave,\* another "gifted brother," was called away by death ; and, in Oct. 1695, their pastor, Thomas Lawson, departed this life. The loss of so many ministers must have been severely felt, and prevented their exertions for spreading the cause. But several young men were encouraged to exercise their gifts ; and, in due time, called out to assist in the ministry : not a few of whom became useful and acceptable preachers. William Roberts, who was a deacon in 1696, was called to the eldership in 1699 : and appears to have been a person of great respectability.†

The congregation at Bourn and Hackenby dropt their connection with Spalding, during this period, and became a distinct interest. Mr. Joseph Hooke, who excelled most of his associates in ministerial abilities, and was diligent in his Master's work, was the pastor of it till long after the close of the seventeenth century.

Towards the middle of this period, the general baptist churches in Lincolnshire formed an Association, for mutual support and co-operation ; which, for many years, was held, every six months, at Lincoln. The first meeting, in the Association-book, now before us, assembled July 16th, 1695, and was attended by seven elders ; Charles Warwich, of Coningsby ; Richard Sharp, of Lincoln : Ralph James, of North Willingham ;

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\* It is not improbable, that this person was the son of Israel Cave, who was ordained elder at Wisbeach, in 1655. See p. 141.

† Burgess, MSS.

Thomas Ullyot, of Elsham; Leonard Isaac, of Tattershall; Edward Howard, and Thomas Serjeant; to whom, at their next meeting, were joined, Samuel Phillips, of Holbeach; Joseph Hooke, of Hackenby; and Edward Wood, of Alford. Several deacons, and private brethren, likewise took a part in their meetings, and signed their records. The churches which united in this association were, Lincoln, Spalding, Sten-nigett, The Isle of Axholme, then considered as one society; Marsh-Chapel; South Marsh, including the congregations at Alford, Walmsgate, and Croft; Tattershall, Bourn and Hackenby, Boston, Highcam, Coningsby and Elsham; all which congregations appear, at this time, to have been in a prosperous condition; except Boston, which was destitute of a minister.

It is not clear, whether this meeting was the commencement of a new union, or the continuation of an association which had already subsisted some time. It is most probable, that, during the times of persecution, such meetings were held, as regularly as circumstances would permit; and that, when liberty had been secured, they began to meet more statedly. This association being held in the county town, and during the assize week, was, most probably, well attended; and contributed not a little to the prosperity of the cause with which it was connected.

At the first meeting, it was proposed to call Mr. Joseph Hooke to the office of messenger; and the proposal being approved, both by this association and the general assembly in London, and Mr. Hooke and his church having also acceded to it, he was very solemnly ordained to that office, Sept. 2nd, 1696, by Mr. Francis Stanley, messenger of the baptized churches in Northamptonshire.

At the meeting of this association, Aug. 9th, 1698, it was resolved, that "it would be a good improvement of earthly blessings, a comfortable discharge of our duty to God, and profitable for men's souls, seeing we are delivered from persecution, to raise a common stock for necessary uses." A chest was accordingly provided, with an aperture in the cover, and placed in Lincoln meeting-house. It had four locks, the keys of which were entrusted to four brethren in different parts of the county; and the chest was never opened except at the time of the association. Into this, the representatives of the several congregations were to put the contributions of churches or individuals: and the whole was to be at the disposal of the association.

There were several general baptists, A.D. 1700, at Sheffield, in Yorkshire; who applied to the Lincolnshire association for assistance. Mr. Hooke, at the request of that meeting, went over to set in order what was wanting among them; and several other ministers visited them. This supply was continued till 1703, when they appear to have chosen Mr. Edward Howard for their pastor. Ministerial assistance was likewise afforded to Nottingham and Sleaford: and the expences of all these journeys were paid out of the chest.\*

The Lincolnshire general baptists took a decided part against the philosophical notions of Mr. Caffin; which, at this time, distracted the whole denomination; but that controversy will be better understood, when we shall have stated their doctrines.

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\* Lincolnshire Association Book.

SECT. 3.—*Notices of the General Baptists in the other Northern Counties, from A.D. 1688 to A.D. 1700.*

THE general baptists in Northamptonshire and its environs were prosperous and active during this period. Their churches were numerous, and well supplied with able and zealous ministers. They held regular associations among themselves; at one of which, about 1700, they protested against the opinions of Matthew Caffin, and broke all connections with those who encouraged them. Francis Stanley, that eminent servant of Christ, continued to labour among them till nearly the close of the seventeenth century. He ordained Mr. Hooke to the messenger's office, Sept. 2nd, 1696: and, according to Crosby, died the same year, and was buried at East-Haddon. His usefulness, therefore, continued to his death; and his last illness was of short duration. As he signed the Confession of Faith in 1660, he must have been advanced in years. Benjamin Morley, his fellow-messenger, who had laboured with him in the same county, survived him. His general residence had been at Ravensthorpe, in Northamptonshire; but, towards the close of his life, he removed to Winslow, in Buckinghamshire: from which place he attended the general association in 1698 and 1699.

Mr. Francis Stanley was very instrumental in promoting the increase, order, and respectability of the churches. He wrote a book, entitled "Christianity indeed: or, the well disciplined Christian the Delight of Christ: shewing how believers in Christ ought to go in and out, each before other, in gospel order: governing and being governed, as the children of one Father."

This little work contains many excellent rules, motives, and encouragements, for the due exercise of proper discipline in churches, on the congregational plan : and ought to be well digested by every member of such church ; but especially by the elders and deacons. He has pleaded the right of ministers to a suitable maintenance with much earnestness of manner, and great force of argument : yet, though he was frequently employed in the duties of his office at distant places, he spent his own time and strength gratuitously in his Master's service. " Let no one," says he, " be so deceived as to think that I plead for private interest, or that it should be so done to me. For I thought I might speak the more freely, because I have not been chargeable to any, except in common entertainments : nay, if need be, I can give testimony that I have refused when it hath been tendered me." A noble proof of disinterested zeal.\*

The general baptist cause at Lynn, under Mr. J. Marham, was violently opposed about this period. Mr. Grantham, as we have seen, founded the society in this town, under very favourable appearances. For some time after his departure, public worship was supported by supplies from the neighbouring churches. Mr. W. Long, from London, who had been one of Mr. Grantham's assistants, laboured afterwards more stately, till he was called to another church ; when Mr.

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\* *Coningsby Association Book*, 1696. *Crosby*, Vol. III. p 127. *General Association Book*, 1702. *Stanley's Christianity Indeed*, p. 142. The running title of the last is, "*The Gospel's Honour, and Churches' Ornament*;" which Mr Crosby mistook for the title of the work. The copy before us has no date ; but, from some passages, it appears to have been published soon after the flames and pestilence had desolated London.

Audley, of Fenstanton, preached among them for a few months. On his removal, Mr. Marham began to exercise his own gifts; and his labours proving acceptable to his friends, he was chosen the first pastor of this church. But dark clouds soon began to gather over the infant society. Some of the leading inhabitants of the town entertained strong prejudices against the new religion; and determined to crush it. The Act of Toleration had not repealed the Conventicle Act: and, under the sanction of that law, the enemies of the baptists, in July 1691, entered informations against them, before the justices of the county; who immediately issued a warrant, to levy twenty pounds on the house, twenty pounds on the minister, and five shillings each on the hearers. In vain Mr. Marham produced his licence, and pleaded the Toleration Act; all his pleas were over-ruled, and the distress executed with great rigour. Not content with seizing his property, they threatened him with more severe consequences. But Mr. Marham, having discovered several mistakes and falsities in the informations sworn against himself and friends, was advised, in his own defence, to indict the informers for perjury. These persecutors were now in danger of being caught in their own snare: but, having some powerful friends in London, they threatened, and perhaps bribed, Mr. Marham's attorney, till he neglected the prosecution. During this delay, they went to this unsuspecting baptist; and, pretending great remorse for harassing so good a man, signed bonds for the friendly termination of the whole business. When they had thus obtained an indemnity for their perjuries, they seized his goods, under the former sentence; and removed the

cause into chancery. Soon after, Mr. Marham was summoned to London, to answer their bill of complaint, consisting of thirty-one sheets. This was followed by a tedious and expensive suit, which reduced this poor man to great distress and poverty. An application for pecuniary assistance was made, in 1692, to the liberality of the London baptists, both general and particular. But this appeal being either unsuccessful, or the malignity of the persecutors protracting the suit; in March, 1698, the case was brought before the Lincolnshire association: when it was concluded that there was "a great necessity to raise a speedy and plentiful supply for Mr. Marham: judging that his case concerns all." To expedite the business, the association wrote a letter to each church, exhorting them to act bountifully, and complete their collections in three weeks. They empowered two brethren, Henry Place and Benjamin Grantham, of Wisbeach, to ride round to the different congregations, and receive their benevolence. This measure appears to have produced considerable effect, the Lincolnshire churches acting liberally. At the ensuing Whitsuntide, the general assembly at London strongly recommended the case to the whole body of general baptists; and there is reason to believe that the application was effectual; as the Lincolnshire churches, which had only suspended their efforts till they saw what the other churches would do, never resumed the subject. Mr. Marham appears, indeed, to have sacrificed his all in the contest: for, nine years afterwards, we find the same association resolving, that "he should have something collected to supply his necessities."\*

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\* Theol. Mag. for 1805, p. 111—114. Lincoln Association Book, 1698 and 1707.

The church in Norwich, founded by Mr. Grantham, declined much after his death. At the close of this century, it was in a weak and low condition; which excited the "sympathy and pity" of the Lincolnshire association, to which it applied for assistance, probably ministerial. That assembly, not being able to furnish any present supply, promised their prayers, and a recommendation of the case to the neighbouring associations.\*

Our information respecting the churches in Cambridgeshire, during this period, is very scanty. They maintained an association among themselves; and John Lacy appears to have been a leading man amongst them. He resided at *Willbrun*; and was, probably, pastor of the general baptist society at that place. He was advanced to the messenger's office, before 1697; and attended the general association in London, for several years, as representative of the Cambridgeshire churches, to oppose the errors of Matthew Caffin.

Mr. John Denne also continued his labours, in the same parts, till after the commencement of the eighteenth century; but we know little of his history. Perhaps his age might unfit him for distant excursions.† In 1699, he published a sermon, from Acts x. 36, under the title of "The Glad Tidings of Peace: wherein is manifested Grace, Mercy, and Peace, from God the Father, through our Lord Jesus Christ, to all mankind." In this piece, he enlarges, and applies the senti-

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\* Ibid 1700.

† It appears, from the records of the church at Warboys, that he was baptized April 6th, 1645; and he was pastor of Fenstanton church before 1651: so that, in 1700, he must have been nearly eighty years of age.

ments which his father had advanced, in his little work, called "Grace, Mercy, and Peace\*;" many passages of which are borrowed by his son:—a sufficient evidence that Mr. Crosby was incorrect, when he said his sentiments differed from those of his father. We learn, from the preface, that some unhappy disputes had, for several previous years, disturbed the churches in the counties of Cambridge and Huntingdon, to which he dedicated it: and that he had been obliged to defer the publication of this sermon, on account of the violent opposition that had been raised against the doctrines which it contains. These squabbles naturally tend to injure vital religion; and prevent the prosperity of the cause of Christ. There was, therefore, most probably, good reason for the complaints, which the author makes, of the decay of knowledge and love in societies and individuals.† We have no account of the time of the death of Mr. John Denne, or of his friend Mr. Edmund Mayle, who appears to have been his colleague in the pastoral office for nearly half a century: but it is gratifying to find written, after the names of both, in an original list of church-members, "died in the faith."‡—There was, also, in 1700, a general baptist church at Ely, in this county, of which Mr. Clack was pastor.§

The general baptist churches in Buckinghamshire, and the adjacent counties, flourished greatly after the Revolution. The increase of the cause made it necessary, in 1694, for the society at *Amersham* to enlarge their meeting-house; and,

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\* See page 223.

† General Association Book, 1697—1704. J. Denne's Glad Tidings.

‡ Warboys C. B. 1676.

§ General Association Book, 1700.

in 1697, to elect William Charsley, as a colleague to their former elders, D. Jameson, and N. Bennett. The labours of these ministers were abundantly blessed; many additions were made to the members; and, at the close of this century, the church was in very prosperous circumstances.\* There were numerous other churches, of the same persuasion, in this county, at the close of the seventeenth century: the names and pastors of several of which we insert, from the records of the general association; in hopes that some more interesting documents may yet be recovered. There was a church at *Aylesbury*, under the care of John Baker—at *Winslow*, which, for a few years, enjoyed the labours of Benjamin Morley, Messenger; and over which Robert Goodson, William Gyles, and Leonard Wilkins, presided successively, during this period—at *Cuddington*, under Clement Hunt—at *Wing*, under William Sturch—and at *High Wycomb*, which was represented, in 1700, by Thos. Tripp. These churches, and probably others, of which the very names are lost, formed an association, which usually met at Aylesbury. Mr. C. Hunt, of Cuddington, sustained the office of messenger amongst them; and his abilities and pious attention contributed much to the prosperity of the cause. He represented this district, at the London general association; and heartily joined with his constituents in opposing all innovations in the “ancient faith.”†

The flourishing church at *Berkhampstead* formed a part of the Buckinghamshire association, and entered cordially into all its views. At the commencement of this period, it had but

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\* Amersham C. B.

† General Association Book.

one elder, John Russell; but the increase of members, and the large extent of country over which they were spread, soon called for more labourers. In 1698, Mr. Castledine was chosen elder; and, in 1700, John Cook and Thomas Basting were called to the same office. These good men had shared largely in the labours of the ministry for many years before they were regularly elected: and had been treated as elders by the neighbouring churches. They resided in different towns; and each laboured chiefly in his own neighbourhood:—Mr. Russell, at Berkhamstead; Mr. Cook at Chesham; Mr. Basting at Coney-street; and Mr. Castledine at St. Alban's. At these places, and, probably, at several others, they maintained constant public worship and prayer-meetings: and assembled for the transacting of the general concerns of the society at their principal stations in rotation. This church was highly respectable, and cultivated a friendly intercourse with the neighbouring congregations, of different sentiments: especially with the particular baptists at Hemel Hempstead, under the pastoral care of Mr. S. Ewer. The number of members, in 1700, amounted to upwards of two hundred and fifty; and, in less than six years afterwards, they increased to nearly four hundred: dwelling in more than thirty towns, villages, and distinct neighbourhoods.\*

Though a few of the members of Berkhamstead church resided at *Tring*; yet there was, at this time, a distinct church, of the same faith, in that town: another also existed, in 1701, at *Kemp-ton* and *Luton*, of which Joseph Garnett was

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\* Berkhamstead Church Book, 1688—1706.

pastor. In the same year, James Clark, and William Davis, attended the London association, as the representatives of a general baptist church at *Rainham* in Essex. The same meetings were, likewise, attended by Anthony Darvill, the pastor of a church at *Branford*, in Middlesex; and Samuel Cresswell, the pastor of a church at *Nottingham*, who brought a letter from the church at *Wimeswold*, in Leicestershire; under the care of William Suthenwood.\*

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SECT. 4.—*The Transactions of the London General Baptists, from the Revolution to A.D. 1700.*

Mr. John Griffith continued to preside over the general baptist church in *Dunning's-alley*† till May 16th. 1700; when he died, in the seventy-ninth year of his age. He had been devoted to God for more than threescore years; and upwards of fifty years pastor of that church; fourteen of which he spent in prison for the testimony of a good conscience. Through all this long course, he was preserved from bringing any reproach upon the ways of God by inconsistent conduct: but, in all things, he was enabled to be an ornament to the religion which he professed. He bore a long illness, previous to his dissolution, with exemplary patience, and filial submission to

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\* *General Association Book, passim.*—The foregoing are all the particulars we can collect, relating to the general baptists in the northern counties, during the period from the Revolution to the close of the seventeenth century. We trust some of our friends will favour us with more detailed accounts of many of these churches; as, doubtless, documents exist that would furnish ample materials.

† *Supra*, pp. 119, 168, 243.

his Father's will ; and to the last rejoiced in full assurance of hope. His funeral sermon was preached, from Phil. i. 21, by Mr. R. Allen ; and was afterwards printed, under the title of " A gainful Death the End of a truly Christian Life." Mr. Griffiths published two discourses : " God's Oracle and Christ's Doctrine : " and " A Treatise touching falling from Grace." The former is an exposition of Heb. vi. 1, 2, which the general baptists, at that time, considered as a summary of " foundation principles : " and the latter, an attempt to prove that a true believer may be finally lost. They were republished, in 1707, " carefully revised, improved, and enlarged," by Joseph Jenkins.—Mr. Griffith's successor was Robert Jemmett ; who, in 1696, had been pastor of a congregation in some part of Goodman's-fields.\*

The church in *Paul's-alley* prospered under the ministry of Mr. Thomas Plant,† till his death, in 1693. For some time after this loss, they were supplied by the occasional labours of neighbouring ministers ; and then turned their eyes to Mr. Richard Allen. This gentleman, as we have already seen,‡ was called to the work of the ministry, by the church in White's-alley, of which he was a member : but, at the commencement of this period, a difference in sentiment caused a separation from that people. The church in White's-alley held laying on of hands on every person baptized, as an essential principle of Christ's doctrine : Mr. Allen thought that it ought not to be made an indispensable requisite to church-fellowship ; and scrupled not, on proper

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\* Wilson, Vol. II. pp. 178, 179.

† Supra, pp. 119, 168, 247—249.

‡ Page 251.

occasions, to avow this opinion. The subject was brought before several church-meetings; and, at length, a time was fixed for its final decision. The elders and representatives of the several churches in connection with White's-alley were requested to attend at the discussion: and, July 18th, 1688, it was solemnly determined that Mr. Allen should be suspended from being a minister in that congregation. But, though a regard to what they thought necessary discipline obliged them thus to dismiss this good man from their immediate communion, yet it did not lessen their esteem for his merits: and, in following years, they frequently availed themselves of his assistance and advice.

Mr. Allen's connection with the church in White's-alley being thus broken, he opened a place for worship at *Turner's Hall*, Philpot-lane. Here he gathered a small, but very respectable church; among whom he laboured for seven years, with great acceptance; and was highly valued by his brethren in the ministry. After the decease of Mr. Plant, an union was proposed, of the Barbican church, which had never practised imposition of hands, and Turner's Hall society, into one church, under the pastoral care of Mr. Allen. The motion was accepted by both congregations; and the union took place, July 12th 1695: which was kept as a day of solemn prayer to God for his blessing on the connection. It is probable, that Mr. James Pitman had acted as pastor, for a short space, at Paul's-alley; and Mr. Joseph Stennett as minister: for, in the first article of the union, it was stipulated, "that brother J. Pitman, and brother R. Allen should be elders of the united congregations: and that brother Joseph Stennett should be continued in

the ministry." Of Mr. Pitman we hear no more. Mr. Stennett preached for this society till 1700: when he was respectfully dismissed; because he preached the doctrines of Calvin, and countenanced the schism of the friends of Joseph Taylor, from the church in White's-alley. He became an eminent and useful minister among the particular baptists.\*

Early in this period, Joseph Taylor, and Mark Keyes, were chosen to assist Mr. Jennings in the ministry, by the general baptist church at *White's-alley*; and their joint labours were highly blest. In 1615, the number of members amounted to four hundred and forty, in various parts of London and its vicinity; who appear to have been zealous, active, and honourable christians. But, in October, 1694, Mr. Jennings died; and, in a few months, was succeeded, in the pastoral office, by Joseph Taylor. At this time, Abraham Mulliner, one of their members, was acceptably employed as a preacher; and, in 1698, Joseph Jenkins, another promising young man, was called to the same important employment.

But the peace of this flourishing and happy church was soon interrupted, and its affairs thrown into confusion, by the improper conduct of its pastor. It had been observed, for some time, that his discourses had assumed more of a calvinistic strain than formerly; and some respectable members had complained of it, as a departure from the faith of the church: but these complaints had been quashed by the majority, who appear to have been much attached to Mr. Taylor. To their great surprize, however, on Lord's-day, Sept. 10th, 1699, when the church

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\* Wilson, Vol. III. p. 239. Vol. I. 135—138.

expected to join in celebrating the death of their Saviour, and all things were prepared for it, Mr. Taylor, at the close of his sermon, in which he cast heavy reflections on the church, told them, that the glory of the Lord was departed from them, and it was time for all honest men to leave them: that he, therefore, would have no more communion with them; but would preach at Devonshire-square the next Lord's-day; to which place he invited the members and hearers to follow him. Accordingly, on the following Lord's-day morning, he preached at Devonshire-square; and, in the afternoon, at Loriner's-hall; whither he was followed by many of the congregation from White's-alley: whom he declared to be a true church; and, assuming the office of pastor over them, administered the Lord's supper among them.

The church at White's-alley being thus miserably torn in pieces, those that remained acted with a prudent firmness. They called a church-meeting, on the Tuesday following, at which they resolved "to continue together, and endeavour to promote the honour and glory of God in that place:" and nominated a committee to provide a suitable supply of ministers. They agreed, also, to recal Mr. Mulliner, who was then labouring at Chichester, to assist his own friends. But suffering, as they conceived, from the effects of novel opinions, they required him to state his sentiments on the principal doctrines that distinguished the general baptists, previous to his coming amongst them. This he did to their satisfaction; and, soon arriving in London, was very instrumental in preserving the church from dissolution.

Having thus provided for their own necessities,

they prepared to proceed against the schismatics. They invited Mr. Morley, the messenger, to assist them with his presence and advice; and requested Mr. Pigott, Mr. Allen, and Dr. Russell, the pastors of the churches in Hart-street, Barbican, and at High Hall, with six principal members of each church, to attend their meetings on this unpleasant business. Thus supported, they proceeded to a solemn investigation of the conduct of their late elder, and his abettors. In the course of this examination, it was clearly proved, that this unhappy man had lived in habits of gross immorality: and he was obliged to confess, that he had taken these disorderly steps, in order to prevent the church from enquiring into his conduct. A sentence of excommunication was, therefore, passed against him, with the full approbation of all the churches which had assisted in the proceedings: and, after proper admonition, the same method was adopted towards his adherents. These called themselves the church; and affected to despise the acts of their former associates: but Mr. Taylor did not continue long with them. The particular baptists, when his real character was discovered, gave him no countenance; though they patronized the party that separated with him, which the general baptists refused to acknowledge as a church of Christ. After these distressing transactions, the church at White's-alley recovered its peace: and Mr. Mulliner laboured amongst them with diligence and success. In 1703, he was unanimously chosen to the office of pastor over this society, which he filled, with great credit and usefulness, for more than thirty-six years.\*

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\* White's Alley C. B.

Mr. J. Maulden presided over the church in *Goodman's-fields*\* through the whole of this period. It appears to have been a season of peace to that society, in which religion probably prospered without noise or ostentation; which, therefore, afforded few particulars for the notice of the historian: and the records of their more private transactions are unhappily lost. This, likewise, was apparently the case with the church at *High Hall*,† under Dr. Russel, of which, if we except the disputes in which the Doctor was engaged, we have no information that belongs to this period; beyond the close of which he presided over that congregation.

Mr. G. White laboured amongst the general baptists at *Dockhead*,‡ for several years, before he was chosen to the pastoral office. He was, however, solemnly ordained, Feb. 13th, 1693, with the full approbation of the congregations in connection with them. Previous to this, the church had left *Dockhead*; and built themselves a new meeting-house, in *Fair-street*, *Horsley-Down*. This building cost upwards of two hundred pounds: which appears to have been cheerfully raised, in a few months, by the free-will-offerings of the members. The society took possession of this meeting-house in Sept. 1692, and was afterwards designated as the church in *Fair-street*. Towards the close of this period, Mr. N. Foxwell, who had been pastor of the general baptist church in *Norwich*, coming up to *London*, joined this church; and assisted Mr. White in the work of the ministry.§

William Marnor, the pastor of the church in the *Park*, *Southwark*,¶ died July 16th, 1691, and

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\* Supra p. 253. † Ibid, p. 256. ‡ Supra p. 262.

§ Shad Thames, C. B.

¶ Supra p. 264.

was succeeded by William Brown. This minister was pastor when Capt. Pierce Johns so liberally endowed this and several sister churches: and, as this society obtained an equal share with other flourishing and numerous churches, it is probable that it was then in circumstances of similar prosperity.— Of the church in *Goswell-street*\* we have no particulars, except that it continued under the care of Mr. Thomas Kirby: and, probably was numerous, as it enjoyed an equal share in the endowment to which we have just alluded.

The munificent patron of the general baptists, on this occasion, was Capt. Pierce Johns, a native of Penzance, in Cornwall; and a mariner by profession. When retired from business, he settled at Mile End Green, near Stepney; and was a member of the church in White's-alley. In 1698, he invested two farms in Essex, one called Berry Farm, near Rumford; and the other, Mountsale Farm, near Southminster, in the hands of ten trustees, chosen out of the several churches, in London, belonging to the Union already described.† The instrument was dated July 7th, 1698, and directed, that, after the paying of fifty pounds yearly to his widow, during her life, fifteen pounds yearly to the support of the travelling ministers or messengers from the London general assembly, five pounds yearly to the general baptist church at Norwich, and five pounds yearly to the church in Dunning's Alley, the remainder of the rents and profits arising from these estates should be paid to the ministers and poor of the general baptist churches in White's-alley, Goswell-street, Fair-street, Goodman's-

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\* Supra p. 266.

† Ibid. p. 267.

fields, and the Park, "in such sort, manner, or proportion, as the majority of the trustees shall think fit; consideration and respect being had to their several states and conditions in the world." This endowment is still enjoyed by these churches; and, from the advanced value of landed property, the annual dividend is now considerable.\*

During this period, the churches to which Capt. Johns was so liberal, gave rise to another interest. The meeting-houses belonging to the five congregations were all situated, either in the east of London, or in the borough of Southwark; but many of the members resided towards the opposite extremity of the metropolis. As a regular attendance at their own places of worship formed one commendable part of the character of these old general baptists, distance of place became a serious inconvenience. They felt also a laudable wish "to promote the preaching of the gospel in the western parts of the suburbs of London." For these reasons, they sought for a convenient place; and, at a meeting of the representatives of the five churches, held at White's-

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\* *Pierce Johns' Trust Deed*—In a subsequent deed, dated July 30th, 1698, the Donor directed, that eight pounds yearly should first be given to each of the five churches, and the remainder, after that and the other annuities had been paid, should be distributed at the discretion of the trustees, to the ministers and the poor of the same five churches,

This liberal old sailor appears to have been a staunch general baptist. We find his signature to the proceedings of only one church meeting: the last minute of which is: "Brother Pierce Johns having declared his grievance, that brethren of the particular persuasion do preach here—it was agreed, that the matter be referred to the next church meeting." The business however was never resumed till after Mr. Taylor's expulsion.

*W. A. C. B.. Oct. 19th, 1696.*

alley, Nov. 5th, 1691, it was resolved to open a place of worship at the upper end of Bow-street, near Hart-street, Covent Garden. One of their friends was appointed to provide suitable preachers: and the ministers of the several churches were desired to give what encouragement they could to this attempt, without neglecting their own places. The members who attended at Hart-street were to continue in communion with the respective churches to which they had previously belonged: and those whom it should please God "to bring over to the faith there," were to sit down with such of the five congregations as they should choose, till they could be formed into a regular church. This was the commencement of the society in *Hart-street*: and, in a few months, there was such an appearance of success, that the elders and representatives of the five congregations agreed, April 12, 1692, "that it should be set down as a congregation, and be a sixth part in their community." Twenty-one of the members at White's-alley were dismissed, to form a part of this new interest: and, though we have no information of the number of members who left the other four churches; yet, if it bore any proportion to those from White's-alley, this society, even at its formation, must have been numerous.

The harmony between this infant church, and those from which it had been collected, was of very short duration. Early in 1693, the congregation in Hart-street admitted persons to communion with them, without the previous imposition of hands. This being contrary to one of the foundation principles of the five churches, gave great offence. Messengers were sent from White's-alley, to endeavour to convince them of their he-

resy: or, if they failed in that, to invite those who had gone from that church to return to the communion of their former associates. But their interference appears to have produced no effect: and, from that time, the society in Hart-street ceased to be considered a part of the union.

Thus, left to their own resources, they soon called Mr. John Piggott, one of their members, who had for some time preached occasionally, to be their pastor. He had been a member of the church in Goodman's-fields; was a schoolmaster by profession; and in habits of intimacy with Mr. Joseph Stennett. Possessing good natural parts, which he had assiduously cultivated from his infancy with a view to the work of the ministry, and being under the influence of genuine piety, he became eminent and useful. For several years the congregation flourished under his care; and the most cordial affection subsisted between the pastor and his flock. That this church was highly respectable, may be inferred, from its being chosen, by the congregation in White's-alley, in conjunction with the churches at Barbican and High Hall, to assist them in the business of Joseph Taylor.

Towards the close of the period now under review, an event occurred in this church which excited considerable attention. Mr. John Pilkington, who had been educated among the papists in the English seminary at Lisbon, imbibed such a dread of the protestant heresy, as he was taught to call it, that he determined to turn monk. Being disappointed in this design by the interference of his friends, he returned to England in disgust. Here he was led, by degrees, to examine the doctrines of the national church; and spent some time at Oxford. But neither the

promises of preferment, made to him by the dignitaries of the establishment; nor the civilities lavished upon him at the university, could subdue his prejudices. Persuaded that there was no salvation out of the catholic church, he determined to sacrifice every thing rather than risk his eternal felicity. He, therefore, reconciled himself to the papists; did penance for his apostacy, by travelling on foot from London to Holywell, in Wales; and then, going over to the continent, entered, as a Benedictine monk, into the English monastery of St. Edmund's, at Paris. Being appointed to officiate as secretary, he obtained an intimate acquaintance with all the proceedings of the pretended saints who dwelt in the monastery. The discord, pride, intemperance, lust, and almost every other species of vice, which reigned amongst them, disgusted his soul and opened his eyes. He was obliged to suspect that a religion, practised under such abominable hypocrisy, could not proceed from a holy God. He determined, at length, to read his bible; and to receive nothing as truth that was not taught in it. He soon found that popery was inconsistent with this sacred rule: and, after examining the church of England, and the various denominations of dissenters, he rested finally with the general baptists: believing that their doctrines and practices were the most consistent with the oracles of truth. Under this conviction, he offered himself, as a candidate for fellowship, to the church in Hart-street. Mr. Piggott appears to have been laudably cautious in examining the sincerity of his professions: and, when he had obtained satisfaction to his own mind, brought the case before the church, at a numerous meeting, May 28th, 1699. Mr. Pilkington attended, to give a pub-

lic account of his experience, and to renounce popery before the church. After introducing the business, Mr. Piggott took an opportunity of addressing the church, and the candidate, in this impressive manner. “And now, sirs, let me intreat you to banish from your minds all prejudice and prepossessions, and impartially attend to what the candidate will presently pronounce. Let me beseech you to put on the bowels of mercy: do not usurp the authority of God, and pretend to search his heart. For my own part, charity obliges me to believe that he is sincere: my blessed Lord having left me no other rule to judge of the goodness or badness of a tree, but by its fruits.” “And now, Mr. Pilkington, I charge you, before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels, and in the presence of this numerous auditory, that you speak nothing but the truth. If you are conscious to yourself of any base ends in the recantation you are come to make, confess, and give glory to God: for that God whom we serve, and under whose banner you desire to be enrolled, cannot be deceived, and will not be mocked. Sir, you and I must shortly appear before the Judge of the quick and the dead: and, if you should be insincere, I, that now exhort and admonish you, must be a swift witness against you at the great assize. I call God to record this day, that I am clear of your blood; and I call every one in this place to witness the solemn charge I have given to you. If, therefore, you are sincere, (of which I would not admit a doubt) go on, by the grace of God, to pronounce your narrative and recantation.”

After this solemn admonition, Mr. Pilkington read, before the whole assembly, an account of his life, and a recantation of the errors of popery;

which gave such satisfaction to the church, that he was admitted a member, and baptized by Mr. Piggott.—We know nothing further respecting this proselyte, except that he, with five others, signed the decision of the church, in the case of the division in White's-alley.

The harmony of this society was soon afterwards interrupted. Mr. Piggott, who, like his friend, Mr. Stennett, had long discovered a bias towards calvinism, seems, about this time, to have taken a more decided part; and to have openly endeavoured to introduce those tenets into the church. This attempt caused dissatisfaction and disputes in the society; which increasing, Mr. Piggott and a considerable number of the members who adhered to him, withdrew from the church in Hart-street: and, taking a meeting-house in Little Wild-street, laid the foundation of the particular baptist church in that place which still exists. The members who remained at Hart-street, and preserved their ancient faith, applied to their old friends in White's-alley for assistance; and were served in the ministry, in succession, by N. Foxwell, Joseph Jenkins, Benj. Ingram, and James Smith; till 1738, when the church was dissolved.\*

Through the whole of this period, the general baptists held *general assemblies* regularly in London; which consisted of the ministers and representatives of the London churches, the messengers of the various country associations, and the ministers of individual country churches. The unhappy disputes which, at this time, distracted the whole body of this denomination, occupied, in a

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\* White's-alley C. B. Wilson, Vol. IV. pp. 11—16. Crosby Vol. III. pp. 353—355.—IV. Appendix No. II.—IV. p. 315.

great measure, the attention of the assembly. These disputes also gave rise to another meeting, which, in 1697, under the name of the *general association*, was established in London; and met, for several years, at White's-alley. But we shall find another occasion to treat of these assemblies; and shall, therefore, conclude our account of the London general baptists, during this period, with a few hints respecting two persons of some note amongst them, who have not yet fallen under our notice.

Mr. Francis Smith was, for many years, an active and useful general baptist. He was a respectable bookseller and publisher. The earliest mention of him, that we have seen, is in the title of Jeffery's *Whole Faith of Man*; in the publishing of which he joined with S. Dagnall of Aylesbury. He signed the *Confession of Faith of 1660*; and the *Apology*, published the year following, on account of Venner's insurrection. We have not been able to discover that he was the pastor of any church; but, in 1672, he had been a regular preacher for twenty years. Previous to the Restoration, he published an excellent little piece, which he called, "*Symptoms of Growth and Decay in Godliness: in Eighty Signs of a living and dying Christian; with the Causes of Decay, and Remedies for Recovery.*" Of this, he printed a second edition, enlarged,\* in 1672, which he dedicated to Sir Thomas Foster; as a token of gratitude for the friendly assistance and protection which he had received from that gentleman.

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\* This Edition is recommended by four eminent general baptist ministers, in this official manner. "IMPRIMATUR; *W. Jeffery, Benj. Morley, Jos. Wright, Thos. Monk.*" This license is printed on the back of the title-page.

During all the period between the Restoration and the Revolution, Mr. Smith was harassed with continual persecutions, by the crown, or some of its venal officers. It was not, indeed, his religion; but his patriotism that caused his principal sufferings. He published books that cherished those sentiments of constitutional liberty, which were directly opposed to the arbitrary principles of the Stuarts. His treatment was extremely rigorous. He suffered many imprisonments; which were, sometimes, protracted for months, under circumstances of peculiar strictness and severity. It was the usual practice, with the agents of government, to seize his books as seditious or unlicensed; and, by defacing the print, render them unsaleable: then immediately to reprint the same books with his name as publisher, and sell them for their own profit. Sometimes they seized his books, under these pretences, and handed them for sale, uninjured, to their own agents. They frequently arrested his person, or drove him, for fear of apprehension, from his business and his shop, to the great detriment of his circumstances. He was frequently carried before the infamous judge Jeffreys; and felt, on several occasions, the whole weight of his fury. In the twenty years preceding 1680, he estimates his "public losses and apparent damages" at upwards of fourteen hundred pounds.\*

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\* In 1680, Mr. Smith published, in a folio pamphlet, "An account of the injurious proceedings, of Sir. George Jeffreys, Knight, late Recorder of London, against Francis Smith, &c." from which we have collected many of the above particulars. The treatment which this patriotic bookseller received from the infamous Jeffreys, in the business that occasioned this publication, was perfectly consistent with his character. Mr. Smith, had reprinted, with a few observations, an Act of Com-

But his sufferings were not all occasioned by his political heresies. In 1671, he had warrants out against him, for being present at religious meetings, to the amount of one hundred and forty pounds: by which he was obliged to abandon his trade for six months, and remove his goods in the night. To one meeting, at which he and several others were apprehended, the justice who headed the informers brought a cart, and

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mon Council, formerly made for restraining the expences of the Lord Mayor, Sheriffs, and other city officers. For this, he was indicted, as seditiously intending to disturb the peace of the kingdom, and bring the magistracy into contempt. He found bail to appear at the sessions, held Sept 8th. 1680: when the bill was thrown out by the grand jury. The complaint ought, of course, to have been dismissed: but the sessions being adjourned to the 16th, Jeffreys still held Mr. Smith to bail. When the court sat again, he directed the same indictment to be laid before the grand jury: when to his great vexation, it was again thrown out. He used many hard and reproachful terms to the jurors, refused to accept their verdict, and sent them back to re-consider it. After a decent interval, they returned into court, and a third time delivered the same verdict. This enraged Jeffreys; who breaking out into the most abusive language, ordered the bar to be cleared, and made the jurors stand forward; and each, in answer to his name, repeat his verdict. They all confirmed their former judgment: and sir George, foaming with rage, told them, they were perjured; and that it was impossible for God from heaven to pardon their perjury. The jurors heard his invectives in silence; and with dignified contempt withdrew from the court. Jeffreys then turning to Mr. Smith, endeavoured, by praising his ingenuous looks, and promising him lenity, to induce him to acknowledge the fact. But Mr. S. who had good reason perfectly to know the character of the recorder, replied, "Sir, my ingenuousness hath already experienced the reward of your severity: and besides, I know no law commands me to accuse myself; neither shall I. The jury have done like true Englishmen, and worthy citizens; blessed be God for such a just jury!" Incensed by this bold speech, the judge, in open defiance of the law, ordered Mr. S. into custody, till he found security for his good behaviour and appearance at the next sessions: when, as none came forwards, to accuse him, he was discharged by proclamation.

proper workmen ; and carried off, for his own use, a large gallery, with all the seats and forms in the place. In 1693, Mr. Smith was again in confinement, on a religious account ; and partook of the collections made for prisoners at White's-alley.

Such continued persecutions reduced this suffering man to great difficulties. In March, 1689, he presented a request for pecuniary assistance, to the church in White's-alley : stating that, in addition to the loss he sustained by his enemies, he had been injured by his friends ; having never been remunerated for several pieces, which he had formerly printed, for the general benefit of the baptized churches. When those who have generously stepped forwards in aid of a common cause are left to bear the burden alone, it reflects no small disgrace on their associates. It gives us pleasure, however, to add, that, on the settlement of the government, the friends of the Revolution did not forget a man, who had suffered so much in the cause of civil and religious liberty. He obtained an honourable station under king William : and the close of his life appears to have been tranquil. But this tranquillity was very short ; as he died Dec. 22d. 1691 ; and was interred in Bunhill-fields burying-ground.\*

Carolus Maria Du Veil, D.D. was another general baptist of considerable eminence. He was born of jewish parents, at Mentz, in Lorrain ; and educated in that religion ; but, by comparing the prophetic parts of the Old Testament with the New, he was convinced that Jesus Christ was the promised Messiah ; and embraced christianity. At this his father was so incensed,

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\* *Smith's Account. Symptoms of Growth and Decay. W. A.*

as to attempt to kill him with a drawn sword. He joined the Roman catholics, and obtained high honours and great preferment in the French church. In 1672, he published a Commentary on the gospels of Matthew and Mark, in which he took occasion to defend the tenets of popery. This gained him such reputation as a polemic divine, that he was appointed to write against the Hugonots, or French protestants. In order to confute these schismatics, it was necessary to read their writings. This Dr. Du Veil did: and, finding the truth on the side of those whom he had undertaken to confute, he nobly joined them. He fled from France, to avoid the effects of this conduct, to Holland; and afterwards came to

*C. B* and the *Inscription on his Tomb* in Bunhill Fields; which is worth preserving, and is as follows.

FRANCIS SMITH,  
Late of London, Bookseller,  
Whose grateful memory may this stone perpetuate,  
During the reigns of Tyranny and Oppression,  
In the seventeenth Century,  
For urging the frequency of Parliament  
And publishing the sentiments of Freemen,  
Suffered much  
By Fines and corporal Punishment.  
Unremitted severity  
Necessarily much impaired his constitution,  
Yet this spot did not receive him,  
Till Heaven, by the hand of  
The glorious King William,  
Had restored to his almost ruined Country,  
The Rights of Men, of Christians and of Britons.  
He died,  
Keeper of the Customs to that great Prince,  
22 Dec. 1691.

This stone was restored by his descendant,  
Thomas Cox, citizen of London, 1761;  
Who hopes to rest with his family in this place.

England. In a short time, he obtained the patronage of several bishops and dignitaries of the English church; and became tutor and chaplain in a noble family.

In 1679, he published an Explication of Solomon's Song; and, in 1680, an Exposition of the Minor Prophets. These works gained him great reputation; and procured him the friendship of the bishop of London, who gave him free access to his library. Here he met with some of the writings of the English baptists: by a candid perusal of which, he was convinced that their principles were most agreeable to the word of God. A young maid-servant in the bishop's family was a baptist; and much despised, on that account, by her fellow servants. The Doctor, however, formed an acquaintance with her; and she procured him an interview with Mr. Hanserd Knollys, a worthy particular baptist minister. Mr. Knollys, on conversing with him, perceiving that his doctrinal views agreed more nearly with the general than particular baptists, recommended him to Mr. J. Gosnold. With that good man, Dr. Du Veil formed an intimate acquaintance; was baptized by him, and became a member of the church in Paul's-alley. When this change in his sentiments became known, it lost him all his patrons and employments in the establishment; except Dr. Tillotson, who retained his friendship for him till his death \*

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\* There is some obscurity attending the chronology of these facts, though they are well attested both by history and tradition. Mr. Gosnold died previous to the publication of Dr. Du Veil's Exposition of the Minor Prophets, when the author appears to have been in full favour with his episcopalian patrons. Probably the Dr. might have formed an intimacy with Mr. Gosnold, and have leaned to his sentiments, for some time before he openly avowed himself a baptist.

In 1684, Dr. Du Veil published, in Latin, "A Literal Explanation of the Acts of the Apostles;" which, in the following year, was translated into English. In this work, the author vindicated his newly acquired principles: and it procured him a handsome letter of thanks from the learned and pious French divine, M. Claude.

For some time, Dr. Du Veil had the oversight of a small congregation in Gracechurch-street: but his imperfect pronounciation of our language rendered his preaching almost unintelligible to an English audience. He, therefore, practised physic, in the latter part of his life: and the baptists, in consideration of the sacrifice which he had made to principle, raised him an annuity, which he enjoyed till his death. "He was," says Mr. Crosby, "a grave, judicious divine, a good chronologer, a skilful grammarian; and such a pious good man, as brought honour to any cause in which he was embarked."\*

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SECT 5.—*Hints respecting the General Baptists in Kent, and the Southern Counties, from the Revolution to the close of the seventeenth century.*

THROUGH all this period, the general baptist church at *Biddenden*† continued to flourish. In 1691, William Todd and Andrew Robbins were elected elders; and the number of members amounted to one hundred and thirty-three. The inconvenience of the distance of situation was

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\* Crosby, Vol. III. p. 108—IV. pp. 252—259. Wilson, Vol. I. p. 206, and P. I.

† *Supra*, p. 283.

still felt ; and it was agreed, for mutual accommodation, to meet at three places: the whole society to assemble at Biddenden every other Lord's day ; and, on the intermediate Lord's day, to meet for public worship in two divisions ; one at Smarden and the other at Tenterden or Headcorn. The number of members, in 1700, appears to have been one hundred and forty-two.\*

Towards the close of the last period, persecution seems to have driven Mr. S. Taverner to seek shelter in London ; where he preached, says Mr. Crosby, "as often and as publicly as the circumstances of the times would permit." No sooner, however, did the storm subside, than he returned to his beloved charge, at *Dover* : † and resumed his labours amongst them. In 1692, he licensed the south end of his dwelling-house for public worship ; but it does not appear clearly, whether this was intended as the regular place of meeting for the congregation, or only as a situation for occasional preaching. Mr. Taverner laboured diligently and acceptably, in the service of his Master, till Aug. 4th. 1696 ; when he was translated to the church triumphant. In 1692 and 1693, he had attended the general Assembly, as representative of the church at Dover, when Mr. F. Eastwicke accompanied him, as elder of the church at *Folkstone* and *Hythe*. ‡

The members of the general baptist church at *Canterbury* § availed themselves of the quiet and toleration which the Revolution introduced, to renew their covenant with God and with each other, and to revive the vigour of discipline which

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\* Biddenden C. B. † *Supra*, p. 273.

‡ Crosby, Vol. III. p. 113. P. I. from original Records, and General Association Minutes.

§ *Supra*, b. 273.

the recent troubles had caused, in some degree, to relax. In 1698, there were three elders over this congregation; Daniel Saffery, Samuel Ongley, and Searles Jarman; though the time of the ordination of the two last is not preserved. At this time, the church consisted of one hundred and thirty members: who appear to have been zealous for the cause of Christ, and liberal in the support of it. Mr. Ongley, their pastor, at his decease, bequeathed more than three hundred pounds towards the purchase of convenient premises, in order to erect a new place of worship. About the same time, another friend, Mr. Ronden, left one hundred pounds for the same purpose. These sums were expended in purchasing and fitting up a commodious building for a meeting-house, and a piece of ground for a burying place, in the Black Friars, Canterbury; which were duly secured, in trust, for the use of the general baptist church in that place: and are still in their possession.\*

The church at *Bessell's Green*† was at this time flourishing and harmonious, and maintained a steady regard to discipline. But as only extracts from their records have been preserved, we cannot recover the particulars. In 1692, Joseph Brown attended the General Assembly, as elder of this church. There was, also, a general baptist church then at Marden, in this county, of which Mr. F. Cornwell was elder; who accompanied Mr. Brown to the assembly. Probably he was the son of Mr. F. Cornwell, already mentioned, as one of the founders of the baptist interest in Kent.† At that time Cranbrook was esteemed a branch of the church at Marden.‡

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\* Private Information. † Supra, p. 280.

‡ P. I.—Gen Ass. Minutes.

Mr. Joseph Wright was preserved to preside over the church at *Maidstone*\* till after the close of the seventeenth century ; but we have no account of the circumstances of the congregation. He was much respected : and, in his old age, probably in good circumstances ; as tradition says that he was once mayor of Maidstone. He died in 1703, aged eighty years ; and was buried at *Tovil*, a neighbouring village ; where his tomb still remains, with an inscription, in Greek and Latin, which is now nearly effaced. His successor, in the pastoral office, was Mr. David Brown ; who, in 1704, took his place at the General Assembly, as elder of this church.†

Mr. M. Caffin outlived this century, and died at *Horsham*‡, 1714, aged eighty-six. In his declining years, he was assisted in the ministry by his son ; who succeeded him in the pastoral office, and had for his colleague Mr. Thomas Southon. Under these ministers, the cause appears to have flourished.§

At the close of this period, the church at *Downton*, in Wiltshire, was reduced to thirteen members ; but, about that time, Mr. Benjamin Miller took the oversight of it, and laboured very successfully, in that part of the vineyard, for nearly fifty years. But as this church now forms a part of the New Connection, we shall have another occasion to resume its history.

The general baptists at *Portsmouth*¶ increased during this period, under the care of Mr. Thomas Bowes, who, towards the close of this century, was advanced to the office of messenger. He

\* *Supra*, p. 288.  
 assembly's Minutes.

† *Ivimey*, Vol. II. p. 237. Gen. As-

‡ *Supra* p. 293.

§ Gen. Assembly's Minutes.

¶ *Supra*, p. 294.

contributed not a little to the promoting of a public disputation, which took place, Feb. 22d. 1699. Mr. Chandler, a pædobaptist minister, had established a lecture, once a fortnight, at Portsmouth: the plan of which leading him to discourse on the sacraments, he treated with much severity the principles and practices of the baptists. These lectures were taken down, in short hand, by a gentleman, who, though a baptist, was in the habit of attending them. He shewed them to several of his friends; and, amongst others, to Mr. Thomas Bowes; who, thinking that the cause of truth might suffer, if it passed unnoticed, waited on Mr. Webber, the pastor of the particular baptist congregation at Gosport. That gentleman coinciding in opinion with Mr. Bowes, a party of baptists repaired to Mr. Chandler's meeting-house, while he was employed in answering the objections of the baptists. At the close of the service, Mr. Bowes, standing up, openly charged the lecturer with preaching false doctrines; and desired that he would admit a public dispute on the subject with an ordained minister of the gospel. Mr. Chandler accepted this challenge; provided that his opponent should be a man who understood the laws of disputation. The pædobaptists applied to the magistrates of Portsmouth, to procure them a licence from the king, "publicly to vindicate the common cause of the reformed churches, and settle the wavering in the belief and practice of those truths which tend very much to the advancement of early piety and religion." His majesty complied; and both parties looked out for the ablest champions. The baptists, at first, turned their eyes to Mr. Caffin: but he, being suspected of heresy, was passed over; and Dr. W.

Russell, pastor of the general baptist church at High Hall, London, was requested to undertake the defence of their cause. Dr. Russell's coadjutors were, Mr. John Williams, of East Knoyle, and Mr. J. Sharpe, of Frome, both particular baptists. They were opposed, on the part of the pædobaptists, by Mr. Chandler, Mr. Leigh, and Mr. Robinson; all eminent presbyterian ministers. The scene of combat was the presbyterian meeting-house at Portsmouth. There, in the presence of the governor, lieutenant-governor, mayor, and magistrates of Portsmouth, and a large and respectable auditory, attended by the civil and military power, to preserve order, the champions entered the lists; and, for upwards of nine hours, amused the spectators with all the manœuvres of polemics: the particulars of which would neither be interesting nor edifying. Both parties, as usual, claimed the victory: and a fierce paper war ensued; in which many bitter things were said of each other, and much injury done to the cause of true religion.

These public challenges were common among most parties, in the seventeenth century: and many exhibitions, like this which we have just described, took place. The general baptists were too well persuaded of the goodness of their cause, and too zealous in promoting it, to decline these contests; and were frequently engaged. But the Portsmouth disputation was the last scene of this nature; and the custom expired with the century. A method of discussing religious tenets has been adopted, more agreeable to their spirit and importance; and less dependent on the ability or ignorance, the confidence or timidity of individuals.\*

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\* Crosby, Vol. III. pp. 312—353. Mr. Chandler's impartial Account, &c.

A number of general baptist churches in Somersetshire, and the adjacent counties, had, prior to the Revolution, formed themselves into an association. In 1691, they published their creed, under the title of "A short Confession; or, a brief Narrative of Faith of some baptized congregations in the West, in the county of Somerset, or near adjacent, who stedfastly deny the doctrine of Antinomianism, and personal Reprobation." From the introduction to this paper, it appears, that they were then united in sentiment and affection among themselves; but were so much calumniated and despised by other denominations, that they declined all union with them in religious exercises. In order to remove this odium, and to obtain acceptance with their christian neighbours, they gave this public "account of their faith in the great things of the gospel." How far this publication accomplished their designs, we cannot say: but, in a few years afterwards, they resumed their associations, which had, for some time, been discontinued. The first meeting was held in 1693, at Taunton. These churches assumed the name of the Western Association; and flourished for a long time after the close of the seventeenth century.\*

From this imperfect sketch of the history of the English general baptists, during this short period, we are compelled to observe, that the seeds of decay had taken deep root in most of their churches and associations. Disunion among themselves, and a departure from the faith for which, during one hundred years, they had so zealously con-

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\* Crosby, Vol. III. p. 259. Vol. IV. App. No. I. Gen. Assembly's Minutes, 1693, &c.

tended, brand the close of the seventeenth century; and too evidently prove that the glory was then departing from them. We shall therefore pause here, and take a review of the doctrines and practices which distinguished their best days.\*

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## CHAP. IV.

### *AN INQUIRY INTO THE DOCTRINE AND DISCIPLINE OF THE ENGLISH GENERAL BAPTISTS DURING THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY.*

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#### SECT. 1.—*Preliminary Observations—Confessions of Faith, and other documents.*

THE author thinks proper to premise, that he by no means proposes to stand forth as the advocate of all the parts of doctrines or discipline adopted by the zealous christians of whom he writes. They were men; and, as such, fallible; it would, therefore, be weak to suppose they

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\* Since the last section was sent to the press, we have been favoured with the loan of a copy of the Minutes of the General Assembly from 1689 to 1728. In this valuable manuscript, the names of several churches and ministers are recorded of which we were wholly ignorant. We insert the principal of them in this note, to preserve them from total oblivion and excite further investigation.—They are the church at *Dedham*, in Essex, under Isaac Ham;—at *Tilbury*, in the same county, under J. Butcher;—at *Barnett*, Herts, represented by J. Willis and J. Askew;—at *Webstone*, under Mr J. Paish;—at *Ditcheling*, under N. Webb;—at *Warbledon*, under R. Norden;—at *Burnham*, Bucks, under H. Field;—at *Dwissham*, Wilts, under H. Miller;—at *Whittlesea*, represented by J. Cooper and T. Shearman;—at *Turner's Hill*, by J. Parry, and various others.

In 1692, it was agreed “that brother Reeves, go into Yorkshire, to preach the gospel, plant churches and set those in order

never erred. Nor shall he undertake, among the various opinions and practices which he may have occasion to record, to distinguish the precious from the vile. He, certainly, has his own sentiments: and will, of course, approve of those that coincide with his system, and disapprove of those that differ from it. But every reader has also the same right to judge for himself; and will, without the writer's assistance, assign to each tenet its place under truth or error, according as it agrees or disagrees with his own creed. The following sections, therefore, will contain nothing more than an impartial historical account of the doctrines taught, and the discipline maintained, by the general baptists of the seventeenth century; with, occasionally, a statement of the arguments by which they defended them; stated, as far as a due regard to the connection will permit, in their own words.

Nor is it designed to give a system of doctrine and discipline which was universally adopted by the general baptists. No such system existed. Among such a number of professors, each a zealous

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that are there." At the same time, John Cox attended as representative from that county. Some years afterwards Mr. Cox was proposed as a candidate for the work of the ministry in Yorkshire; and, after some hesitation, was approved by the assembly. From these hints, it is evident, that there were general baptist churches in Yorkshire, at the close of the seventeenth century; though, it is to be feared, that all traces of them are lost. In the minutes of the Lincolnshire Association, there is mention made of a John Cox of York, who, in 1701, maintained several strange notions, and pretended himself to be specially commissioned to restore the whole law of Moses; against whom that association protested. If this was the person who attended the General Assembly, it is probable, that his extravagancies hastened the decline of the Yorkshire general baptists.

*Gen. Ass. Minutes 1692, 1693, and 1697. Linc. Ass. Minutes, 1701, 1702.*

advocate for the right of private judgment, it would be unreasonable to expect complete uniformity, either in sentiment or practice. Education, connection, personal attachment, and various other circumstances, would lead two equally honest and able minds to draw different conclusions from the same premises. Such was the case with the English general baptists; considerable diversity of views, on many points, existed among them. Yet it is presumed, that it will appear, from an impartial survey, that, in all the leading articles of Christianity, they were, in a very pleasing degree, of one mind. And there was one point in which they all agreed: they all esteemed the holy scripture as the rule of faith and practice; and manifested a sincere desire to bow with implicit submission to what they judged its dictates. Some of their most striking peculiarities may be traced to a laudable anxiety to follow literally the injunctions of the Bible. They had not yet begun to examine the possibility or rationality of the doctrines of revelation, nor the propriety or justice of its precepts: their highest ambition, in their best days, was, in strict conformity to the letter of scripture, to believe the one and practise the other.

But though they acknowledged no standard of truth except the word of God, yet they found it necessary, in order to remove calumny and vindicate their own characters, to publish, from time to time, explicit statements of their sentiments and practices, or, as they were usually styled, "Confessions of Faith;" and, in other modes, to state and defend their principles from the press. From these sources, the materials for this chapter have been drawn: and it may be useful, before

we proceed, briefly to recapitulate the principal of these publications.

We have already had occasion to state at large the sentiments of the venerable John Smyth, the father of the English general baptists.\* Soon after his death, his followers thought it necessary to publish a Confession of Faith, which was printed at Amsterdam in 1611.† This maintains all the opinions which we have seen avowed by Mr. Smyth, and gives us considerable information on various points on which he had no opportunity of speaking. In 1615, a paper was published, by the same party, under the title of “Persecution for Religion judged and condemned;” in which they take occasion to state their sentiments on many important points of doctrine.‡ As this paper appears to have been sanctioned by the whole body of baptists in England, it may be esteemed a public document. Under the same sanction, was the Supplication to king James I., published in 1620.§ From this time to the Restoration, we have not met with any document of so public a nature; but, that they continued to maintain the same great truths, we have abundant evidence—from the transactions of their churches, as preserved in the original records of their societies—from the writings of their most eminent ministers—and from the reports of their adversaries.

Immediately after the Restoration, in March, 1660, the famous Confession of Faith, which was afterwards presented, by Thomas Grantham and Joseph Wright, to king Charles II., was subscribed by certain elders, deacons, and brethren,

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\* See Book II. Chap. I. Sect 2.

† Supra, p. 86.

‡ Ibid, p. 89.

§ Ibid, p. 91.

met at London, from various parts of the kingdom, and approved by upwards of twenty thousand.\* This Confession was long esteemed the Creed of the English general baptists. It was reprinted in various forms, under the sanction of several general assemblies and associations, at different periods, till many years after the close of the seventeenth century. It was also "printed on a sheet to be hung up in a frame;" and, in this form, adorned the apartments of many of this denomination. This Confession has been thought by some too concise on certain important articles, and too ambiguous in others. Mr. Crosby supposes that Mr. Grantham himself was not perfectly satisfied with it; and therefore inserted it in his *Christianismus Primitivus*, with the addition of "a few explanatory supplements, and the testimony of many of the ancient writers of christianity." Mr. Grantham, however, assigns another reason for these comments. "They were added," he says, "to shew, that though the composition of these articles be new, yet the doctrine contained therein is truly ancient."†

In 1678, the general baptists of the counties of Bucks, Hereford, Bedford, and Oxford, published a Confession of Faith, which they called "An Orthodox Creed," signed by fifty-four messengers, elders, and brethren.‡ The evident design of the compilers of these articles appears to have been to approximate as closely to the Calvinistic system as they could, without giving up their distinguishing tenets: and, in some doctrinal points, it differs materially from the Confession of 1660. This creed is very metaphysical; and

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\* *Supra*, p. 186.

† *Christ. Prim.* Book II. p. 63.

‡ *Supra*, p. 225.

attempts to explain and account for those things which the former only asserts. It is highly probable, that this essay at the explication of inexplicables, introduced or encouraged that spirit of philosophizing on sacred subjects, which, soon after its publication, distracted this denomination. It does not, however, appear, that it was ever generally approved. A cotemporary writer, a messenger among the general baptists, thus describes it. " 'Tis true, some small exceptions may be made against some few passages in it ; but nothing that respects the fundamentals of religion : there's nothing that directly opposeth the word of God. But they were men who composed it; and men may err. They expounded as well as they could, and imposed upon nobody : but left others to judge for themselves, and to receive their well-meant interpretations, if they could understand them ; if not, to let them alone."\* This passage shews us the light in which these christians viewed Confessions of Faith : they esteemed them expositions of their own sentiments, which every one had a right to accept or refuse, as he saw reason.—Thomas Monk, of Buckinghamshire, was considered as the composer of the Orthodox Creed.†

In 1691, the general baptists who dwelt in Somersetshire, and the neighbouring counties, published a Confession of Faith, in twenty-seven chapters. This agrees, in all material points, with the Confession of 1660 : but it seems not to have been much known in the other parts of the kingdom.‡

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\* Hooke's Necessary Apology, p. 39. † Minutes of General Association, 1700.

‡ Crosby, Vol. III. p. 259. Vol. IV. App. No. 1.

During the unhappy disputes concerning the Trinity, which distracted the general baptists at the close of the seventeenth century, many confessions, articles, expedients, &c. were, on various occasions, published by the contending parties. But as none of these were generally received, we refer them to the history of those contentions.

Early in the seventeenth century, the general baptists published a "Description of what God hath predestinated concerning man." We have not been able to obtain a sight of this work: but a refutation of it, by H. Ainsworth, now lies before us. It is entitled, "A seasonable Discourse: or, a Censure upon a Dialogue of the Anabaptists;" and affords considerable information respecting the early opinions of this denomination, being first published in 1623.

In 1678, Mr. Grantham's "Christianismus Primitivus" appeared; which, from the universal approbation it received, may be considered almost as a public document. And, in 1701, Mr. Hooke published, under the sanction of the Lincolnshire Association, "A Necessary Apology for the baptized Believers." These, with Jeffery's "Whole Faith of Man," Stanley's "Christianity Indeed," and various other pieces, as well as the records of particular churches, will throw a great light on the subject of the following sections: which will, it is hoped, preserve us from wandering far from the path of truth.

As the general baptists professed to build all their religion on the Bible, it may be proper to close this section with a few extracts, expressive of their sentiments touching the holy *scriptures*.

"The scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are written for our instruction; and we ought to search them, for they testify of Christ.

They are, therefore, to be used with all reverence, as containing the holy word of God, which only is our direction in all things whatsoever.”\*

“The holy scripture is the rule whereby saints, both in matters of faith and conversation, are to be regulated; they being able to make men wise unto salvation, through faith in Christ Jesus:—profitable for doctrine, and for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished to all good works.”†

“The authority of the holy scripture depends not upon the authority of any man, but only upon the authority of God; who hath delivered and revealed his mind therein to us; and contains all things necessary for salvation: so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any that it should be believed as an article of the christian faith, or be thought requisite to salvation.”‡ These Confessors then proceed to assert the superiority of the scriptures to all pretended inspirations, impulses, and dreams; to the light of nature, and the opinions of popes, councils, or fathers; and to urge the duty and advantage of every person’s reading and obeying them: concluding with a catalogue of the books of the Old and New Testaments; “all which,” they say, “are given by the inspiration of God, to be the rule of faith and practice.”

The language of the Somersetshire Confession is perfectly consistent with the above articles: and the writings of the general baptists abound in similar sentiments. One of the propositions they advanced, in their petition to king James I.

\* Confession of 1611, Art. 23. † Confession, 1660 Art. 23.

‡ Orthodox Creed, Art, 27.

in 1620, was, that “the only rule of faith is the doctrine of the Holy Ghost, contained in the sacred scriptures; and not any church, council, prince or potentate, nor any mortal man whatsoever.”\* Thomas Grantham not only asserts “the truth and divine authority of the scriptures as the undoubted oracles of God,” but devotes a laboured dissertation to the proving of this proposition: that “the only infallible and authoritative judge of controversies about religion is the Lord himself, as he speaketh by his Spirit in the scriptures.”† And, omitting all the rest, we shall close this article with a passage from Joseph Hooke’s Apology. “The holy Bible,” he says, “is our Canon: it is the rule of our whole religion: hence we learn all things. By this, we confute heretics, and prove every article of our faith. According to this, we live; and on this, we ground our hope. And whatsoever is not in this, we reject from our canon. We have no rubrics, nor common prayer-books, nor directory, nor liturgy, nor form of public worship: the Bible is to us instead of all.”‡

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SECT. 2.—*The opinions of the English General Baptists respecting the DEITY.*

ON this sublime subject, and others connected with it, two parties may be discerned among the English general baptists. The one, sensible of the grandeur and incomprehensibility of the Deity, and of the weak and limited powers of the

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\* Crosby, Vol. II. App. No. 11. † Christ. Prim. Book I. Introd. and B. IV. Baptist against the Papist. ‡ Page 34.

human mind, spoke with great caution in their explications of the essence and attributes of the infinite Being: generally using scripture terms, and never attempting to explain and define what they reverently deemed, in their own expressive phrase, "unwordable." The other, more confident, ventured to attempt a description of the nature and properties of God; and, in this attempt, introduced, without scruple, terms invented by the schools, though unsanctioned by the inspired penmen. The former were much more respectable, both for numbers and character: the latter were the subscribers of the Orthodox Creed; and chiefly confined to the counties of Bucks, Herts, and the vicinity. But these two parties differed more in appearance than in reality: both entertained similar ideas, on these important subjects; though the one dared not to use the language of the other. This, we presume, will appear from the following quotations.

"There are Three which bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Spirit; and these Three are One God, in all equality: by whom all things are created and preserved, in heaven and in earth."\*

"There is but one God the Father; of whom are all things, from everlasting to everlasting, glorious and unwordable in all his attributes."—  
 "There are Three that bear record in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these Three are one."†

"There is but one only living and true God; whose subsistence is in himself; whose essence cannot be comprehended to any but himself: a

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\* Confession of 1611, Art 1. † Confes. 1660, Art. 1 and 7.

most pure, spiritual, or invisible substance ; who hath an absolute, independent, unchangeable and infinite being ; without matter, or form, body, parts, or passions." " In this divine and infinite Being or unity of the Godhead, there are Three Persons or Subsistencies, the Father, the Word or Son, and the Holy Spirit ; of one substance, power, eternity, and will ; each having the whole divine essence, and yet the essence undivided."\* The article then goes on to explain the mystery of the divinity in the terms of the Athanasian creed ; which is adopted in a subsequent part of this Confession, because it " may be proved by most undoubted authority of holy scripture, and is necessary to be understood of all christians."†

The concise and general manner in which the Confession of 1660 speaks on this abstruse subject, has given some late writers occasion to surmise, that the compilers did not believe the doctrine of the Trinity ; but a few short extracts from the works of some of those who subscribed it, will, it is presumed, remove this suspicion.

Thomas Grantham, who is supposed to have drawn up this Confession, and must have known what was intended to be expressed, in his " Testimony of Antiquity" to the seventh article, quotes this passage from Augustin: " The Spirit, being the Father's and the Son's, is properly in scripture called the Holy Spirit. It is neither Father nor Son ; but personally distinct from both."‡ In his *Christianismus Primitivus* he has a section to prove " the unity of the Godhead from the unity of the nature and essence of the

\* Orthodox Creed, Art. 1 and 3.

† Ibid, Art. 28.

‡ Christ. Prim. Book II. Chap. 5.

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit;" in which Mr. Grantham observes, "As christian doctrine knows but only one true God, so it recommends us, for the most ample discovery attainable in this world, of this one and eternal Godhead, to the name of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; which some call the Trinity: a phrase no way offensive to Christianity. Yet, as some of the ancients well observe, it is not necessary to impose words on any man which God himself has not used. Yet truly this term, the Trinity, hath very near affinity with the language of the Holy Ghost, 1 John v. 7." Having treated at large on the essence of these Three, he concludes thus: "Now whether these Three, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, thus one God, as hath been shewn, may fitly be called three Persons, I shall not determine: only this I say, that I see no inconvenience that can attend it. For, since the Father is openly called a person, Heb. i.3, and the Son the express character of his Person or substance; it may seem no way inconvenient to allow the same to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit."\*

Mr. Thomas Monk, another of the subscribers of the Confession of 1660, was a zealous Trinitarian, as clearly appears from the "Orthodox Creed," of which he was the reputed author, and from a laboured treatise in defence of that doctrine, which he published in 1673, under the title of "A Cure for the cankering error of the New Eutychians."

But, omitting, at present, any further quotations respecting the Trinity in general, we shall proceed to examine their sentiments concerning the Son and the Holy Ghost.

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\* Christ. Prim. Book II. Part I. pp. 40, 43.

Of the *Lord Jesus Christ* they speak in this decisive manner.

“Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the second person or subsistence in the Trinity, in the fulness of time was manifested in the flesh, being the seed of David, and of the Israelites, according to the flesh, the son of Mary the Virgin, made of her substance, by the power of the Holy Ghost overshadowing her; and being thus true man, was like unto us in all things, sin only excepted, being one person in two distinct natures, True God, and True Man.”\*

“There is one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, who is the only begotten Son of God, born of the Virgin Mary; yet as truly David’s Lord, and David’s Root, as David’s Son, and David’s Offspring.”†

“We confess and believe, that the Son of God, or the eternal Word, is very and true God, having his personal subsistence of the Father alone, and yet for ever of himself as God; and of the Father as the Son, the eternal Son of an eternal Father; not later in beginning:—Not a God by office, but a God by nature, coequal, coessential, and coeternal with the Father and the Holy Ghost.”—

“We believe that the only begotten Son of God, the second person in the sacred Trinity, took to himself a true, real, and fleshly body, and reasonable soul, being conceived in the fulness of time, by the Holy Ghost, and born of the Virgin Mary, and became very and true man, like unto us in all things, even in our infirmities, sin only excepted, as appeareth by his conception, birth, life, and death.”‡

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\* Confession of 1611, Art. 8. † Conf. 1660, Art. 3.

‡ Orthodox Creed, Art. 4 and 5.

“Concerning God the Son, our Lord Jesus Christ; we believe him to be the Son of God, and the son of man, truly God, and truly man, the Messiah promised; that as to his divine nature, it was and is of an eternal existence, of and with the Father, and so truly God; and this Godhead veiled itself in a human body, and took upon him the nature and substance of man, in all its parts and infirmities, sin only excepted.”\*

The testimony of antiquity added, by Mr. Grantham, to the third article of the Confession of 1660, is from Augustine, in these words: “The world being all at peace, Christ, according to the precedent prophecies, was born in Bethlehem-Judah, being openly man of the Virgin his mother, and secretly God of God his Father—Christ Jesus, the substance of Israel, and the Son of David, God’s Son, God taking on our man without wasting Godhead, ordered Faith to be a pass for man to God, by his mean that was both God and man.”† This comment was considered as so expressive of the sense of the article, that it was ordered, by the general Assembly, in 1691, to be printed with it.‡

The divinity of Christ is, indeed, a favourite theme with Mr. Grantham; and numberless passages might be transcribed, from most of his works, in confirmation of this assertion; but the following extract from his “Sigh for Peace,” published in 1671, will serve instead of many. Speaking of some notions respecting the person of Christ, which were propagated at that time, he says: “And as I have shewed my dislike to these conceits, (to say no more at present) so I hold it

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\* Somersetshire Conf. Chap. 1.

† Christ. Prim. Book II. Chap. 5. † Gen. Assem. Min. 1691.

requisite to protest my faith in this case, as I have been taught, and as I have believed, and as I trust I shall hold fast unto the end: That Faith which I have learned, and which is the faith of our churches generally, is this:—

1. That the Lord Jesus, the Saviour of the world, is God by nature, and therefore of one substance with the Father, as touching the Godhead. He is called the only begotten of the Father—the express image of his Father's person—the true God, and eternal life—the Lord Almighty. It is he by whom the worlds were made, and without him nothing was made which was made. He is that very Lord, who in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the works of his hands. He is the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last. He is said to be before all things, and by him all things consist. He is the I AM, who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God. He is God over all, blessed for ever. Amen. I conclude, then, that he of whom these things are spoken, is doubtless God by nature.

“ 2. This Lord Jesus, the Saviour of the world, is man by nature. He was made lower than the angels: he took not on him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham. He is of one substance with his church, touching his manhood; and for that cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren. As they are partakers of flesh and blood, he also likewise took part of the same. He was made of a woman, raised up of the fruit of David's loins, according to the flesh. He is David's Son: called frequently a man, and the Son of man. He had the properties and infirmities of man, in all things, sin excepted. This his birth, growth, manner of life and death do

declare. I conclude, then, that he of whom these things may be said, is man by nature. The short is this:—Jesus, the Saviour of the world, was before all things, and he that made all things: therefore, he is God by nature. Jesus, the Saviour of the world, was born in time, and suffered or was slain: therefore, he is a man by nature.—Or, yet more shortly: This Jesus is Immanuel, or God-Man in one Person.”\*

Joseph Hooke, the countryman and disciple of Thomas Grantham, was a strenuous assertor of the same truths. A clergyman having objected against the baptists, that some of them held that “Christ is not the true God;” J. Hooke replied, “Whosoever did or do hold it, I believe it is a pernicious doctrine, contrary to God’s word, and destructive to the christian faith.” And, after reciting the passages of scripture which, in his opinion, proved the contrary, he concludes:—“Now all that has been said, with much more of the like nature that might be said, of Christ, according to the scriptures, must needs be true; but cannot agree to him as man, or a God by deputation, or a made God. This, therefore, I conceive must be so spoken, because he is God by nature, co-essential, and co-eternal with the Father. For, most certainly, he that made all things visible and invisible was not himself made: and, as he is man, he did not create all things. And yet that he is man, is as true as that he is God. He is David’s Lord, and David’s Son: David’s Root and David’s Offspring: Immanuel, God with us: God veiled in the flesh”—“That Christ is a person having in him the nature of God, and the nature of man, is clearly revealed;

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\* Grantham’s Sigh for Peace, pp. 104, 105.

but *how* these two natures are joined in personal union, remains a mystery.”\*

This is sufficient, with respect to Mr. Grantham and his friends: we shall only subjoin a few extracts, to the same purpose, from eminent general baptists, in other parts of the kingdom, who subscribed the Confession of 1660.

Francis Stanley, an highly esteemed messenger of the baptized churches in Northamptonshire, speaking of the Lord Jesus Christ, thus exclaims; “I have not words to express his royal majesty, and to set forth his excellent glory. He is exalted far above all principalities, and far surpasseth all names and dignities: for the Godhead dwells in him bodily; and he is more than worthy of all duty and glory. His love is unparalleled; his wisdom, matchless; his power, boundless; his justice, unquestionable; his innocency, admirable; his treasures, inestimable: Immanuel, God with us; who is exalted above, and triumphs over all his enemies.”†

The chief design of Thomas Monk’s “Cure for the cankering Error of the New Eutychians,” was to defend the doctrines of the proper divinity and humanity of Christ, against some who had begun to propagate contrary notions. “The chief things we are to consider,” he says, “in the person of Christ, are, that Christ is God—that Christ is man—and that he is God and man in one person.”‡ He undertakes to prove that Christ is God,—“by apparent and manifest sentences of scripture, wherein the divinity of Christ is averred—by his works, which were altogether divine—and by the worship and honour which

\* Hooke’s Necessary Apology, pp. 44—50.

† Stanley’s Christianity Indeed, p. 4.

‡ Cure for Cankering Error, p. 74, &c.

was yielded unto Christ, both of the saints that believed, and of the angels." But it would be tedious to quote all the passages relating to this doctrine, from a work wholly on the subject.

George Hammon, the zealous pastor of the general baptist church at Biddenden, in Kent, when speaking of the second coming of Christ to reign on the earth, expresses himself thus: "From hence you may see, if you will peruse the scriptures, that the Lord Jesus our King, as he was a man, and is, so he shall reign as a man; although the man of men as we may say, being the first-born from the dead. For consider him as God, he cannot be sent, nor appointed by any, neither is in subjection to any; but being a man in whom the Godhead is completed, he is in a capacity to be sent by the supreme and almighty Father."\*

Samuel Loveday, the founder of the church now assembling in Church-lane, Whitechapel, London, in commenting on Rom. ix. 5, observes, "In this eulogium of Jesus Christ, we have two circumstances considerable, 1. A description of Jesus Christ, as to his deity and dignity in himself: 2. An acknowledgement of the glory due to him from us."—"That Jesus Christ is God over all things and persons in heaven and earth, the scriptures are plain: and also that the title of God is appropriated to Jesus Christ, is plain.—Acts xx. 28. 1 Tim. iii. 16. God manifested in the flesh. Titus ii. 13. He is, therefore, the great God, eternal, and everlasting."†

John Griffith, the venerable elder of Dunning's alley church, London, when treating of the principle of "Faith towards God," Heb. xi. 1, says,

\* Hammon's *Sion's Redemption discovered*, p. 118.

† Loveday's *Personal Reprobation reprobated*, p. 33.

“ It is so called, because it is placed on the Lord Jesus Christ, who is God and man : and hence the apostle tells us, he ‘ testified both to the Jews and also to to the Greeks, repentance towards God, and faith towards the Lord Jesus Christ.’ The blessed Jesus is proposed as the great object of gospel faith : and, since the gospel declares this Jesus to be God, that is, of the same essence with his Father, that faith which is fixed on him may truly be called faith towards God. The holy apostle, John, assures us, that this is the commandment of God the Father, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ: and then he informs us, that this Jesus is the true God, and eternal life. As such, the true believer receives Christ, and depends on him for life and salvation : and, therefore, holy Thomas acknowledges him as his Lord and his God.”\*

It would be easy to multiply quotations of the same import ; but we forbear. Sufficient has already been produced, to prove that the English general baptists, as a body, during the seventeenth century, maintained the proper divinity and humanity of the adorable Saviour. There appears, indeed, to have been a few individuals, among the churches in Kent and Sussex, who early began to puzzle themselves with attempting to explain the mysteries of the incarnation ; and, by this vain attempt, were led from the simplicity of the faith. But this deviation was confined to a few speculative persons, and was unknown or disregarded by the general body. Mr. Grantham affirms, that, in 1671, many of their congregations had never heard of these speculations ; and that there was not one church

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\* Griffith's God's Oracle, and Christ's Doctrine, p. 20,

in England, that countenanced them.\* And, in 1701, Mr. Hooke represents the whole denomination as agreeing with the church of England in the doctrine of the Trinity.† We have seen one church formed on contrary principles in Kent, in 1677.‡ and we shall have occasion to record some disputes on this subject; which, towards the close of the century, distracted this denomination: but it will appear, it is presumed, upon an impartial examination, that both parties professed to maintain the doctrines avowed in this section; and that Mr. Caffin himself did not dare openly to oppose them. In short, the general baptists, as a body, were united in these views; and the deviations from them, previous to A.D. 1700, were very inconsiderable.

To complete the subject of this section, we shall close with a few extracts respecting the *Holy Spirit*.

In the Creed of 1611, there is no express article respecting the Holy Spirit: but he is mentioned in the first article, as one of the Three, which are one God.

The Confession of 1660 speaks more plainly, and asserts, “That there is one holy Spirit, the precious gift of God, freely given to such as obey him: that thereby they may be thoroughly sanctified, and made able, without which they are altogether unable, to abide stedfast in the faith, and to honour the Father, and his Son Christ, the author and finisher of their faith. There are three that bear record in heaven; the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one.”§

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\* Grantham's Sigh for Peace, p. 104.

† Hooke's Necessary Apology, p. 44.

‡ Supra, p. 287.

§ Conf. 1660, Art. 7.

“ We believe that there is one holy Spirit, the third person subsisting in the sacred Trinity, one with the Father and Son, coequal, coeternal, and coessential with the Father and Son; to whom, with the Father and Son, three persons, and but one eternal and almighty God, be, by all the hosts of saints and angels, ascribed eternal glory, and Hallelujahs. Amen.”\*

“ Concerning the Holy Spirit, we believe, suitable to the scriptures that speak thereof, that the Holy Spirit is of God, and is God, of the divine essence, coeternal with the Father and Son, and proceeding from both, God of the same nature, the enlightener, convincer, converter, sanctifier, strengthener, and comforter of his people, in and by the means appointed for that end, namely, the word of truth, and doctrine of the gospel.”†

Mr. Grantham explains more fully the idea which he and his friends had on this sublime subject, in his Sigh for Peace.

“By the Holy Ghost,” he says, “ we do not mean the spirit of man in the most reformed and elevated state imaginable; neither any created spirit whatsoever. But by the Holy Ghost, we mean that Spirit, by whose operation the creation of the world was brought forth and formed, who knoweth all things, even the deep things of God, and who is present every where: which Spirit we therefore believe to be one with the Father, in nature and essence, and therefore rightly said to be God.”‡

\* Orthodox Creed, Art. 8.

† Somersetshire Creed, Chap. I. Art. 3.

‡ Grantham's Sigh for Peace, p. 4.

SECT. 3.—*Of the Creation, the Fall of Man, and Original Sin.*

“God, in the beginning, created all things of nothing; and made man of the dust of the earth, in his own image, in righteousness, and true holiness: yet, being tempted, he fell through disobedience. Through whose disobedience all men sinned: his sin being imputed unto all; and so death went over all”\*

“God, in the beginning, made man upright, and put him into a state and condition of glory, without the least mixture of misery: from which he, by transgression, fell; and so came into a miserable and mortal state, subject unto the first death.”†

The Orthodox Creed, after describing at length the creation, the nature of man, as composed of body and soul, the terms of the first covenant, made with Adam in his innocency, and his fall, proceeds thus: “Original sin is the fault and corruption of every man that naturally descendeth from Adam: by means of which man has not only lost that original righteousness that God created him in, but is naturally inclined to all manner of evil, being conceived in sin, and brought forth in iniquity: and, as St. Paul says, the flesh lusteth against the spirit. And, therefore, man justly deserveth God’s wrath and damnation. And this concupiscence, or indwelling lust, remaineth even in the regenerate, that they cannot obey God perfectly in this life, according to the tenor of the first covenant.”‡

The Somersetshire general baptists, after

\* Conf. 1611. Art. 2.

† Conf. 1660, Art. 2.

‡ Orthodox Creed, Art. 11, 13, 14, 15.

stating their belief in the creation, the original innocency and felicity of man, "in which he might have continued, any decree of God in any wise notwithstanding"—his voluntary fall—and the just sentence of his Creator against him, proceed: "As this transgression did not only reach the case of our first parents, but also of their posterity, being in them: so, likewise, did the sentence that the Lord passed upon them concern not only the persons of our first parents, but, in them, all those generations of men that were to descend from them. 'Judgment came upon all men,' &c. The same penalties that were inflicted upon our first parents for that sin, which penalties are death and those temporal miseries that came upon them as the effect of that sin, do certainly come upon their posterity. They are brought into a mortal dying state, liable to all the miseries of this life; and, in fine, to death itself.' 'Death passed upon all men for that all have sinned:' mortal man could not procreate an immortal seed:—he begat a son in his own likeness." "But that this transgression did procure, in itself, the second death, in the lake of fire, or hell torments, either to Adam himself, or any of his posterity, as is by some not only imagined but affirmed; as it is a doctrine that is altogether scriptureless and so false, so it is altogether irrational: from whence it has no room in our faith."\*

We have transcribed the last passage at length, as it exhibits a fair view of the general opinion of these professors on the subject of original sin: the denial of which was constantly urged against them by their enemies. The charge was, in part,

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\* Somersetshire Confer. Ch. 3, 4.

correct. They did, as a body, the authors of the Orthodox Creed excepted, deny that any person was subjected to eternal punishment on account of the sin of their first parents;\* because God has expressly declared against the imputation of the father's sins to the children. Ezek. xviii. 1, &c. They seem uniformly to have arrived at this conclusion, though from various premises. Some allowed, that a certain degree of guilt did attach to all men on account of the sin of Adam; but this they supposed was all removed by the death of Christ. This was that sin of the world which the Lamb of God took away, John i. 29.† Others insisted that the penalty of Adam's disobedience was temporal, not eternal death;—because, temporal death only was mentioned in the threatening that preceded his fall, and in the sentence that followed it. Gen. ii. 17, and iii. 17—19:—because Paul says, Rom. v. 12, that the death which came by Adam passed on *all* men; which cannot be said of spiritual death; but is literally true, when understood of temporal death;—and because Christ will raise all men from the death caused by Adam's sin, 1 Cor. xv. 21, 22; which, as all men will not be delivered from spiritual death, must signify the resurrection of all men from temporal death.‡ Others refined on these arguments; and, assuming Eccl. xii. 7, & Zech. xii. 1, as their authorities, concluded, that only

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\* See the Confession of 1660, Art. 10.—Ainsworth's Censure, pp. 30—47. Hooke's Apology, p. 51. Jeffery's Whole Faith of Man, pp. 12—17. Hammon's Discovery of the Loss of the earthly Paradise, *passim*. Loveday's Personal Reprobation reproved, p. 97. Grantham's Christ. Prim, ubi infra.

† Hooke's Necessary Apology, p. 51.

‡ Grantham's Christ. Prim. Book II. Part I. p. 77, & Part II. p. 4.

‡ Jeffery's Whole Faith of Man. p. 12, &c.

the mortal part of man is derived from his parents; but that the spirit comes immediately from God; and therefore could not be defiled by the sin of the first man, because it had then no existence.\*

But, though the general baptists strenuously denied that the guilt of Adam's sin was imputed to any of his posterity, yet they stedfastly maintained that the moral stain and pollution contracted by their first parents was entailed on his descendants. Ainsworth assures us, that the Anabaptists against whom he wrote, who, if he does not slander them, "held that original sin is an idle term, and that there is no such thing," asserted that "all men have weak natures, and cannot obey and live, but sin and die."† And the authors of the Confession of 1611, the same persons whom Ainsworth censures, explain themselves more explicitly. "Men are by nature," they say, "children of wrath; born in iniquity, and in sin conceived: wise to do evil; but to do good they have no knowledge. The natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God: and, therefore, man is not restored to his former estate. But as man, in his estate of innocency, having in himself all disposition unto good, and no disposition to evil, yet being tempted might yield or might resist; even so now, being fallen, and having all disposition unto evil, and no disposition unto any good; yet God giving grace, man may receive or may reject grace."‡ These good men saw and lamented the proneness of the natures, even of their children, to sin; and ac-

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\* Hammon's Discovery, pp. 14, 15.

† Censure on the Anabaptists, pp. 29 and 37.

‡ Conf. of 1611, Art. 4.

knowledge that "the first thing they did, as soon as they were capable of a law, and temptation approached, was to break the law of God, as their first father did."\*

"Original sin," says Mr. Grantham, "is come upon all; even the very infant state of mankind lie under it: of whom that saying is true, Rom. v. "They have not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression." Yet death reigning over them proves the transgression of Adam to be upon them. Nor is it convenient to extenuate or lessen this sin, either in its nature or the punishment it brings with it: mankind being corrupt even from their origin, and wholly deprived of the glory of God, without the intervening mercy of a Saviour.—It has been to Adam's posterity like the sin of traitors, which bringeth with it corruption of blood to their offspring; for which they must bear the shame of such transgressions."†

Perhaps we may concisely explain the ideas of these christians on this subject, in the words of Dr. Jeremiah Taylor, which are quoted in the Somersetshire Confession, and referred to by Mr. Hooke, as expressing their sentiments. "Original sin," says the Doctor, is not an inherent evil; not a sin properly but figuratively: that is, it is the effect of one sin, and the cause of many; a stain, but no crime. It does not destroy our liberty which we had naturally. It does not introduce a natural necessity of sinning. It does not damn any infant to the eternal pain of hell."‡

With these sentiments respecting original sin,

\* Hammon's Discovery, p. 11.

† Christ Prim. Book II. Part I. pp. 77, 78.

‡ Somersetshire Conf. Chap. 4. Hooke's Apology, p. 51,

these good men found no difficulty in admitting the salvation of all that died in infancy. This cheering truth, indeed, forms a prominent article in three of their Confessions, and is assumed in the fourth. The Confession of 1660 states it thus: "All children dying in their infancy, having not actually transgressed against the law of God in their own persons, are only subject to the first death, which comes upon them for the sin of Adam, whence they shall be raised by the second Adam: and none of them shall suffer eternal death for Adam's sin; for to such belongs the kingdom of God." They were so explicit in stating their belief on this point, says Mr. Grantham, "that they might remove, if possible, all prejudice out of the minds of men touching their non-admission of infants to the participation of gospel ordinances, in the visible church."\*

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**SECT. 4** — *Election and Reprobation—the Extent of the Redemption purchased by the death of Christ, and the manner in which it is enjoyed.—Free Will—Agency of the Spirit.*

THE whole race of man being thus reduced, by the fall of their first parent, to a state of sin and helplessness, and exposed to everlasting destruction on account of actual transgressions, let us inquire what these professors believed as to the designs of an offended God towards his fallen creatures.

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\* Conf 1660, chap. 10. See also the Orthodox Creed, Art. 47. Somersetshire Creed, Chap. 4. Ainsworth's Censure, Hooke's Apology, &c. Especially Grantham's *Christ. Prim.* Book II. Part II. pp. 4, 5, 6; and his *Truth and Peace*, pp. 32, 33, 34.

“ God, before the foundation of the world, hath predestinated, that all that believe on him shall be saved ; and that all that believe not shall be damned : all which he knew before. And this is the election and reprobation spoken of in the scriptures: not that God hath predestinated men to be wicked, and so to be damned ; but that men, being wicked, shall be damned. For God would have all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth ; and would have no man to perish.”\*

“ God hath, even before the foundation of the world, chosen, or elected, to eternal life, such as believe, and so are in Christ :—his decree of mercy reacheth only to godly men ; whom, saith David, God has set apart for himself — Men, not considered simply as men, but ungodly men, were of old ordained to condemnation.—There is no respect of persons with God.”†

The authors of the Orthodox Creed, in their usual manner, took great pains to explain foreknowledge, election, reprobation, &c. ; and were in some danger of darkening counsel by words ; yet they seem to sum up their meaning thus : “ God foresaw Adam’s fall, but did not decree it. Yet, foreseeing it in his eternal counsel and wisdom, did elect and chuse Jesus Christ, and all that do or shall believe in him, out of that fallen lump of mankind. And hath manifested his love and grace by Jesus Christ, his elect or beloved son, through the gospel means, to all : and hath given us his word and oath to assure us that he desires not the death of the wicked, but rather that they repent, or turn to him, and live. And if any do perish, their destruction is of them-

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\* Conf. of 1611, Art. 5.

† Conf. of 1660, Arts. 8, 9.

elves." "God hath decreed to punish all those wicked or ungodly, disobedient and unbelieving or impenitent sinners, that have or shall despise his grace, love, and wooings or strivings of the holy Ghost, or long-suffering, whether by a total and continued rejection of grace, or by an universal and final apostacy."\*

"The word of God is his decreed will; and there is no secret will or decree in God contrary to his revealed word and will: and his decree is, that whosoever believeth and obeyeth him, persevering therein to the end, shall be saved; and he that believeth not shall be damned." "Whatsoever God hath absolutely decreed, shall certainly come to pass—but many things that do come to pass are not decreed by God." "The infinitely wise and holy God, suitable to his name and nature, did elect or chuse unto himself from

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\* *Orthodox Creed*. Art. 10.—It is not surprising, that modern authors should mistake the doctrine of this Creed for Calvinism; as, more than a century ago, the same mistake took place.—In 1700, a minister of the name of Boyer, at Wimeswold, Leicestershire, preached the doctrines of high Calvinism, asserting that he "drew them from the writings of Thomas Monk, and about fifty brethren besides, of the general faith, all stars of the first magnitude;" avowedly referring to the subscribers of this Creed. The matter was brought before the *General Association* at London; and it was determined, that, "It was utterly false; there being no such thing in their articles." To convince the friends at Wimeswold of the truth of this assertion, the Association sent them the *Orthodox Creed*, with a few comments, that they might examine it for themselves. They, at the same time, advised, that this minister should be dealt with, "not only as one who had preached false doctrine; but also as one who had preached untruths concerning his brethren."—While this anecdote shews that there is some obscurity in this Confession; it proves, that the authors were general baptists, and acknowledged as such by this Association; at which, it is highly probable, that several of the subscribers of the *Orthodox Creed* were present,  
*Minutes of General Association, 1700.*

all eternity, and merely of his own good pleasure; out of the whole body and bulk of mankind, an entire species or sort of men, namely those that in time do believe and sincerely obey him, patiently continuing in the way of well-doing unto the end." "Whensoever God doth reject or reprobate any person of mankind, it is for their wilful and actual transgressions, as the just deserving cause thereof; and not for his own will any otherwise considered." "The primary or antecedent intent of God, in his decree of reprobation, is the salvation, and not the damnation of men. The Lord declares, that he had rejected or reprobated them; yet exhorts them to duty, with promises on their performance: and if ever the Lord does finally reprobate any person or persons, it is for their final rejecting of him, in his many calls and gracious invitations. From whence we may conclude, that those that own personal election and reprobation, before time, so as to deny the love of God to the world, do not own the faith of the gospel."\*

In perfect conformity with this view of the divine purposes towards fallen man, the general baptists speak of the provision made for his salvation.

"The Lord Jesus Christ, whom God freely sent into the world, as freely gave himself a ransom for all; tasting death for every man: a propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." "God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance, and to the knowledge of the truth, that they might be saved. For which end, Christ hath commanded that the gospel

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\* Somersetshire Conf. Arts. 18, 20, 21.

should be preached to every creature. So that none shall eternally suffer in hell, for want of a Christ that died for them ; but for denying the Lord that bought them, or because they believe not in the name of the only begotten Son of God.”\*

“ Christ died for all men ; and there is a sufficiency in his death and merits for the sins of the whole world. He hath appointed the gospel to be preached unto all ; and hath sent forth his Spirit to accompany the word, in order to beget repentance and faith : so that if any do perish, it is not for want of the means of grace manifested by Christ unto them ; but for the non-improvement of the grace of God, freely offered to them through Christ, in the gospel.”†

“ God, by Jesus Christ, designed not the recovery of a few only, as some imagine, but of all mankind.” “ Concerning the extent of the death of our dear Redeemer, we believe, that, suitably to the great end of God the father in sending him into the world, he gave himself a ransom for all mankind ;—for the world, for the whole world : and that thereby the world hath its present being ; and that thereby there is a way of reconciliation, acceptation, and salvation, opened for all men. From whence we conclude, that if any man come short of obtaining reconciliation, acceptation and salvation, it is not for want of grace in the Father, nor a sacrifice in the Son.”‡

The great truth, that Christ died for all mankind, or, as it was sometimes expressed, “ the doctrine of the universal love of God in Christ to all mankind,” was the distinguishing tenet from

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\* Conf. 1660, Art. 3      † Orthodox Creed, Art. 18.

‡ Somersetshire Conf. Arts. 5, 6.

which the general baptists took their name; and for which they contended with the greatest ardour. It was prefixed to their church-covenants, inscribed in the title of their creeds, inserted in their trust-deeds, and considered as the glory of the denomination. A vigilant jealousy was constantly exercised, to preserve their churches sound in this article of their faith; and frequent opportunities were found, to state and defend it, both from the pulpit and the press. To attempt to transcribe quotations on a subject occurring so frequently would be very tedious: we shall, therefore, only refer to a few of the leading authors.”\*

It ought to be added, that these christians agreed in considering the death of Christ as a proper sacrifice for sin; and in asserting that the Lord Jesus suffered in the stead of sinners. “God

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\* *Ainsworth's Censure*, pp. 12, 13, &c. *Grantham's Christ. Prim.* Book II Part I. chap 5 and 6. *Loveday's Personal Reprobation Re-probated*, Passim. *Jeffery's Whole Faith of Man*, pp. 1.—  
 35 *H Denne's Drag Net of the Kingdom of Heaven, or Antichrist Unmasked*, p 85, and Passim. *J. Denne's Glad Tidings of Peace*, p. 23, &c. &c.—So important did the general baptists, at their first rise, consider this doctrine, that when they received any into their fellowship who had been baptized in the belief, that Christ died only for a part of mankind, they baptized them afresh: esteeming their former baptism a nullity, because they had been baptized into a wrong faith. And there is good evidence that the particular baptists returned the compliment, when they received any from the generals. This was frequently practised, during the civil wars, in Kent and its vicinity; but appears to have been soon laid aside by both parties.—A transaction that occurred in Fenstanton church, in 1653, will illustrate the importance which these general baptists attached to this principle. A certain widow, who had been baptized by H. Denne, being understood to have erroneous sentiments on this point; J. Denne and another brother were sent to admonish her. J. D. began the conversation by lamenting her departure from the faith; and she replied, that, “if by the faith they meant

freely sent Jesus Christ into the world, because of his great love to the world, who as freely gave himself a ransom for all, tasting death for every man, a propitiation for our sins."\*

"Christ, being made under the law, did perfectly fulfil and keep it; and underwent the punishment due to us, which we should have suffered; our sin, and the punishment of it, being reckoned or imputed to him, he, being made a curse for us, underwent and trod the wine-press of his Father's wrath for us." "The same Lord Jesus, by his perfect obedience to the whole law, and sacrifice of himself, which, through the eternal spirit, he offered up unto God the Father, hath fully satisfied the justice of God, and reconciled him to us."†

the doctrine of Christ's dying for all, she never had believed it." At this, J. D. expressed his surprise; and observed, that, he was confident, his father would not have baptized her, unless he had understood, that she had believed this truth. The matter was brought before the congregation; and H. Denne attended to explain his conduct. He stated, that he had been led to suppose, that she believed that Christ died for all, from the manner in which she applied, 1 Tim. I. 15: and that he was rather induced to think so, "because it was generally believed by all the members of the church till the coming of Timothy Trovis from London; who, he was confident, did more harm, than Hymeneus and Alexander mentioned in scripture." The widow, however, still persisting to assert, that she did not believe it at the time of her baptism, though she was now better satisfied, the question was put to the congregation, "whether the baptism was true, seeing she had no true faith?" and it was answered, that, "It was true in the intention of the baptizer; but not true in the intention of the baptized: and therefore, seeing that it is not the intention of the baptizer but of the baptized that makes baptism to be true, it was no true baptism". The woman, refusing to acquiesce in this decision, was excluded.

*Howard's Looking Glass for the Baptists, pp. 2, 3, and F. S. R: 1653.*

\* Conf. 1660, Art. 3.

† Orthodox Creed Art. 17

To the same purpose, Mr. Grantham employs an entire section, in shewing that, "According to the will of God, and his eternal wisdom, Christ did, in the place and stead of man, fulfil that law by which the whole world stood guilty before God: and another, in proving that "Christ did really, and not phantastically, suffer death in his own body for the sins of the world."\*

"Christ Jesus," says H. Denne, "was an offering unto God: but what was the effect of this offering? Even to make an atonement, to make peace, to redeem us from the curse of the law, from the tribulation and anguish, indignation and wrath, which the law had threatened, and must of necessity have fallen on us, had not he been made a curse for us. But in him the Father hath declared himself well pleased."† His son, John Denne, maintains the same tenets. "Christ, by the sacrifice of himself, paid the price of our redemption, discharged the debt due from us, and satisfied the justice of the Father for our sins: and, therefore, it is written 'Ye are bought with a price.' 'He gave himself a ransom for us.' What is a ransom, but a price paid for the redemption of captives? This Christ did for us: whereby we are discharged, and our sins taken away. He is a propitiation for our sins. What is a propitiation, but a sacrifice of expiation, whereby we are healed, and our debt freely discharged?"‡

It would be easy to multiply quotations; but we prefer a few extracts, to shew the way in which, as these general baptists believed, a sinner

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\* Christ. Prim. Book II. part 1. Chap. 3. Sect. 5, and 6.

† Man of Sin discovered, p. 26.

‡ Glad Tidings of Peace, pp. 20, 21.

becomes a partaker of the blessings purchased by the death of Christ.

“ Man is justified only by the righteousness of Christ, apprehended by faith : yet faith without works is dead.”\*

“ The way set forth by God for men to be justified in, is by faith in Christ. Rom. v. 1. That is to say, when men shall assent to the truth of the gospel, believing, with all their hearts, that there is remission of sins, and eternal life to be had in Christ: and that Christ, therefore, is most worthy their constant affections, and subjection to all his commands: and, therefore, resolve with purpose of heart, so to be subject to him in all things, and no longer unto themselves: and so shall, with all godly sorrow for the sins past, commit themselves to his grace, confidently depending on him for that which they believe is to be had in him. Such so believing, are justified from all their sins; their faith shall be accounted unto them for righteousness.”\*

“ Faith is an act of the understanding; giving a firm assent to the things contained in the holy scriptures. But justifying faith is a grace or habit, wrought in the soul, by the holy Spirit, through preaching the word of God, whereby we are enabled to believe, not only that the Messias is offered to us, but also to take and receive him as a Lord and Saviour, and wholly and only to rest upon Christ for grace and eternal salvation.”

“ Hereby we have deliverance from the guilt and punishment of all our sins, and are accounted righteous before God, at the throne of grace, by the alone righteousness of Christ the mediator, imputed or reckoned to us through faith.”\*

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\* Conf. 1611. Art. 6.

† Conf. 1660. Art. 6.

‡ Orthodox Creed, Art. 23 and 24.

“In short, we understand that men are justified,—1. By the grace of God, as the primary efficient cause.—2. By the death of Christ, as the meritorious and deserving cause.—3. By the word of the Lord, with its ministry as the instrumental cause to beget faith and obedience.—4. By faith and obedience as the conditional cause, or the holy terms on which they are justified”\*

“That the righteousness of Christ is imputed to men, and made theirs, through faith which worketh by love: and this faith is accounted unto men for righteousness,” is a doctrine that runs through every part of Mr. Grantham’s account of the “ancient christian religion:” and is stated, defended, and illustrated, in an entire section. “The whole world,” he says, “being found guilty before God, could not, by any righteousness which they had done, lift themselves out of that state of sin and misery: wherefore God, in the greatness of love to mankind, hath laid help upon One that is mighty to save; who brings near his righteousness to those that were far from righteousness, through faith.”\*

It has been an old objection against the general baptists, that they maintained *Free-will* in man; and they have frequently been stigmatized with the name of Free-willers. But since their adversaries hardly agree as to the meaning of the terms or the precise heresy which they intend to lay to their charge; it may be prudent to hear them explain their own sentiments on this subject.

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\* Somersetshire Conf. Art. 15.

† Christ. Prim Book II. Part I. Chap 3 Sect 1. See also on this subject, Griffith’s God’s Oracle, pp. 18—42. H. Denne’s Grace Mercy and Peace, pp. 85, 86, &c. Hooke’s Apology, p. 51. Jeffery’s Whole Faith of Man, p. 52, &c. &c.

“ Man now being fallen, and having all disposition unto evil, and no disposition or will unto good, yet God giving grace, man may receive grace, or may reject grace: according to that saying, ‘ I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that thou and thy seed may live.’ Deut. xxx. 19.”\*

“ Unbelief being the cause why the just and righteous God will condemn the children of men; it follows against all contradiction, that all men, at one time or other, are put into such a capacity, as that, through the grace of God, they may be eternally saved.”†

“ Man hath neither power nor will, nor a matter what to will for his own good, nor how, nor when in respect of a seasonable time, but what he hath from God: for all power belongeth to God. Yet we believe, that man ought to employ his will, yea, all the powers of his soul, in and about spiritual things: which, if men were faithful in, God would have the glory, and they the advantage.”‡

“ Man, falling from his state of innocency, wholly lost all ability or liberty of will to any spiritual good for his eternal salvation: his will now is in bondage under sin and Satan; and, therefore, not able of his own strength to convert himself, nor prepare himself thereunto; unless God’s grace takes away the enmity out of his will, and by his special grace frees him from his natural bondage under sin, enabling him to will freely and sincerely that which is spiritually good.”§

We add a short extract or two to shew what

\* Conf. 1611, Art. 4.

† Conf. 1660, Art. 4.

‡ Somerset, Conf. Art. 8.

§ Orthodox Creed, Art. 20.

part of the great work of conversion these good men ascribed to the agency of the Holy Spirit.

“The Holy Spirit, the precious gift of God, is freely given to such as obey him, that thereby they may be thoroughly sanctified, and made able, without which they are altogether unable, to abide stedfast in the faith, and to honour the Father, and his son Christ.”\*

“Vocation, or calling, general or common, is when God, by means of his word and Spirit, freely of his own grace and goodness, doth ministerially acquaint mankind with his gracious good purpose of salvation by Jesus Christ; inviting and wooing them to come to him, and to accept of Christ, revealing to them the gospel covenant: and in those that with cordial hearts do improve this common grace, he in time worketh unfeigned faith, and sincere repentance: and by his grace they come to accept of Christ as their only Lord and Saviour, with their whole hearts.”†

“God gives the blessing of his Spirit in and with his word: the word being the Spirit’s ministration: so that where the word is in truth, light, and power preached, there it is attended with the Spirit.—There is an absolute necessity for the workings of the Spirit, both in bringing and keeping souls to the Lord. Yet the Holy Spirit is not so given but that it may be resisted, and hath been, to men’s destruction.”‡

“No man can make this profession of Christ sincerely, heartily, and to his comfort here and hereafter, as God hath ordained, but by the Spirit of God; for unless a man herein be led by

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\* Conf. 1660, Art. 4.

† Orthodox Creed, Art. 21.

‡ Somersetshire Conf. Art. 14.

the Spirit of God, he is no child of God." "By its operation we taste the heavenly gifts whilst in this world, and are fitted for an inseparable union with Christ to eternity." "Without the influence of God's Spirit, illuminating our judgments, and heightening our affections, and so evidencing with our spirits that we are the children of God, we may talk of much, but we truly inherit very little of those virtues of which we talk."\*

"The Spirit of God is the principal agent by which faith is wrought in us: and, therefore, faith is reckoned amongst the gifts of the Spirit. Now the Spirit works in us, not only by its own operations, but also, in an especial manner, by the preaching of the word."†

Though the general baptists boldly asserted, that justification was by faith alone, yet they strenuously insisted on holiness of life, as the necessary and certain effect of saving faith. "Man, they say, "is justified by faith alone; yet faith without works is dead."‡ "We verily believe that unless men, professing and practising the primitive form and order of Christ's doctrine, shall also beautify the same by a holy and wise conversation, the profession of the visible form will be rendered to them of none effect; for, 'without holiness no man shall see the Lord.'"§

Amongst other motives which they urged, to engage professors to a holy circumspection of conduct, a powerful one was, the fear of final apostacy. For we have not found any of this denomination, except the authors of the Orthodox

\* Christ. Prim. Book II. Part I. Chap 6. Sect 3.

† Griffith's God's Oracle, and Christ's Doctrine, p. 30.

‡ Conf. 1611. Art. 6.

§ Conf. 1660, Art. 14.

See also

Orthodox Creed, Art. 26. Somerset. Conf. Art. 16, &c.

Creed,\* who maintained the doctrine of the impossibility of true believers falling from grace. “Men may fall away from the grace of God, and from the truth which they have received and acknowledged, after they have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted of the good word of God, and of the powers of the world to come; and after they have escaped from the filthiness of the world, they may be entangled therein again, and overcome. A righteous man may forsake his righteousness, and perish. Therefore, let no man presume to think, that because he hath, or once had, grace, he therefore shall always have grace. But let all men have assurance, that if they continue unto the end, they shall be saved. Let no man, then, presume; but let all work out their salvation with fear and trembling.”†

These christians looked forward with confident expectation to a resurrection of the just and unjust, an eternal judgment, and a future state of endless bliss or misery. “There shall be, thro’ Christ, who was dead, and is alive again from the dead, a resurrection of all men from the graves of the earth; both the just and the unjust: that is, the fleshly bodies of men, sown into the graves of the earth, corruptible, dishonourable, weak, and natural, which, so considered, cannot inherit the kingdom of God, shall be raised again, incorruptible, in glory, in power, and spiritual. Thus considered, the bodies of the saints, which here suffer for Christ, shall, when united to their

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\* Art. 36.

† Conf. 1611. Art. 7. See also Conf. 1660. Art. 18. Somersetshire Conf. Art. 17. Ainsworth’s Censure, pp. 19—29. Griffith’s Treatise on Falling from Grace, *passim*. Jeffery’s Whole Faith of Man, pp. 113—120, &c.

spirits, inherit the kingdom, and reign together with Christ.”—“There shall be, after the resurrection from the graves of the earth, an eternal judgment, at the appearing of Christ and his kingdom: at which time of judgment, which is unalterable and irrevocable, every man shall receive according to the things done in the body.”\* Indeed all their Creeds unite in representing the states of mankind as irrevocably determined at the awful day of judgment; and that the misery of the wicked will be of equal duration with the felicity of the righteous: or, as Mr. Grantham expresses it, “the parties respectively concerned in the eternal judgment will be in an equal state with respect to duration, though their portions will differ exceedingly; even as much as light and darkness differ.” How important the aspiration with which that good man concludes this solemn subject: “O that, therefore, men were wise, that it may be well with them to eternity!”†

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SECT. 5.—*The principles of the English Baptists misrepresented even by respectable authors.—Soul-Sleepers.—Millennium.—Obedience to Magistracy.*

SUCH were the principal sentiments of these general baptists, as they appear in their own writings. They certainly differ much from the tenets ascribed to them by their enemies: but it

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\* Confession of 1660, Arts. 20, 21. See also Conf. 1611, Arts. 26, 27. Orthodox Creed, Art. 50. Somersetshire Conf. Arts. 24, 25. Griffith's Lively Oracles, p. 205. Grantham's Christ. Prim. Book II. Part I. Chap. 3. Sect. 10.

† Ubi supra.

would be equally tedious and useless to perpetuate the calumnies of ignorance or malice, by attempting to refute them. It may, however, be proper to notice one or two instances in which their doctrines have been strangely misrepresented by authors of a more respectable character.\*

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\* Though we may permit the reproaches of the angry disputants of the day to sleep in undisturbed obscurity; yet the works of Dr. Wall, Mr. Whiston, and Dr. Mosheim will be read in future ages, and distant lands: and therefore deserve attention.

Mr. Wall was vicar of Shoreham, in Kent, in the beginning of the last century: a part of the kingdom in which the general baptists were numerous and zealous. This called his attention to the subject of infant baptism: and he took immense pains to collect all the information respecting the mode and subject of baptism that could be found in the first five centuries of christianity. These researches he published, in 1705, in two vols. 8vo. under the title of "An History of Infant Baptism." It is a valuable work—a monument of the industry and candour of the author. His own party were so well pleased with it, that he received the thanks of the Convocation, and a Doctor's Diploma: and the baptists have no reason to complain; as it has been the instrument of confirming many in their attachment to believers' baptism by immersion.

In this work, the author gives an elaborate account of the character and tenets of the general baptists among whom he lived; which, when we consider that it was written by a clergyman, does honour to both parties. "They are," he says, "as commendable as any other sort of professors, for a sober and grave, quiet and peaceable way of living." "They are generally commended for maintaining their poor liberally: and for passing censure on such of their own congregations as live disorderly."—"In some counties of England, they are the most numerous of any sort of men that do separate from the church. This is chiefly the case in Essex, Kent, Sussex, Surry, &c. there being very few, in those parts, that make any separation from the church, but they." "Socinians they have some, that creep in among them: but I have not heard of one church or congregation of them that makes profession of that doctrine: but, on the contrary, that they who profess it openly are rejected from their communion." At last, after intreating them to unite with the church, even if they retain their distinguishing opinions, and endeavouring to

In all ages of the church, when men have been permitted to study the scriptures for themselves, various opinions have been adopted on religious subjects, even by pious and learned christians. Popery and prelacy, assisted by the civil magistrate, laboured strenuously and perseveringly to

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prove that it was their duty to comply with his request, he adds, "One thing I am persuaded of concerning the antipædobaptists: and that is, that, if they were convinced that this joining in the public service of the church were lawful and practicable for them, they would join at another rate than some shifting people do now-a-days. I take them, generally, to be cordial, open, and frank expressers of their sentiments. If they thought, that St. Paul's command of receiving one another did reach the case, they would not interpret it trickishly. They would conclude, that what God commands us to do, he means we should do cordially, sincerely, and *bona fide*: and therefore, that if his word do bid us receive one another, he means we should do it intirely."—Such was Dr. Wall's opinion of these christians: and he had every opportunity of knowing their character. See *Hist. of Inf. Bap. Part. II pp. 216, 217, 223, 266, 275, 416.*

In 1747, the learned and laborious, though eccentric Mr. Whiston, joined the general baptists at Lyndon: and soon after published "A friendly Address to the Baptists;" in which he very frankly enumerates what appears to him their excellencies and their defects; and gives his reasons for joining them. He afterwards inserted this Address in the "Memoirs of his Life and Writings:" and thus secured it from oblivion, and gave it publicity. This piece, though well meant, has done considerable injury to the character of the general baptists. Mr. W. described them as he found them, in 1747, when their tenets and discipline had undergone a considerable change: and, being an Arian himself, he would naturally represent them as much as possible of the same sentiments. *Memoirs, Vol. II. pp. 455—491.*

Mr. Whiston being famous among both mathematicians and divines, his Memoirs were read at home and abroad. They fell into the hands of Dr. Mosheim, when he was composing his celebrated "Ecclesiastical History;" and, with Dr. Wall's History, appear to have been his principal guide, in drawing up the account of the English general baptists. We shall notice a few mistakes into which this respectable writer has been led; partly by too implicit a reliance on his authorities, and partly by a false hypothesis respecting the origin of the professors of whom he

produce uniformity ; but to no effect: whenever the mind was released from its shackles, it still formed its own system. The confusion in political affairs, and the civil wars in the close of the reign of Charles I., relaxed, and, in the event, abolished, for a time, the authority of the church of England, and checked the the usurpation of

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wrote : and, in doing this, we shall sufficiently correct the statement of Dr. Wall and Mr. Whiston.

Dr. Mosheim sets out with asserting the probability, that the English baptists “ derive their origin from the German and Dutch Mennonites ; and that, in former times, they adopted their doctrine in all its points.” But we have already seen, in the early part of this History, that both these suppositions are groundless. The first English baptists, after the Restoration, though they dwelt in Holland, had no connection with the Mennonites ; and disapproved of their doctrine so much, that they would not even receive baptism from them, (*Supra*, p. 70.)—He next complains of the latitude of the religious sentiments held by the English general baptists ; and says, “ They receive among them persons of every sect, even Socinians and Arians.” This might be the case when Mr. Whiston joined them, whom he mentions as an instance: but, during the seventeenth century, they maintained a strict jealousy over the tenets of those in communion with them ; and obeyed the scripture injunction of rejecting heretics, with rigour. And Dr. Wall assures us, that, in his time, those that openly professed Socinianism were rejected from the communion of all their churches. But Dr. M. supports his charge, by referring to the Confession of 1660: which, he says, is “ drawn up with so much latitude, that, with the removal or alteration of a few points, it may be adopted by christians of all denominations.”—This is, certainly, an effectual mode of producing uniformity: and we dare promise the learned author, that it will always succeed. In any creed, “ remove, or alter” the points in which it differs from others, and it will, doubtless, suit any one.

Dr. M. then states, in eight particulars, “ the sentiments, rites, and tenets, *peculiar* to the English general baptists.” The first is, that “ they look upon their sect as the only true christian church: and shun, with the most scrupulous caution, the communion of all other religious societies.” How this statement is consistent with the latitude of sentiment, which rendered their communion accessible to all kinds of christians, we pretend not

the presbytery, which pressed forwards to seize the throne from which prelacy had been hurled. Britons were thus restored, during the interregnum, to the liberty of discussing religious subjects, and of professing their own sentiments: and the usual effects were produced. Old systems of theology were revived; foreign doctrines

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to say. But allowing this charge to be just, as indeed truth requires us to do; yet surely this opinion and conduct was not "peculiar" to them. Other denominations were ready enough, in those disputing times, to think themselves the only christians and to stand at a distance from others.—Dr. M. further states, that many of the English general baptists embraced the particular opinion of Menno, that the body of Jesus was not derived from the substance of the blessed virgin.—But we have seen this doctrine protested against by them, as a body, in all their public documents, from the time of their first founder, John Smyth, to the conclusion of the 17th Century. And some years after that period, Dr. Wall declares his belief, that there were but few of them in England that held it. The fact appears to be, that then and for a long time afterwards, this tenet was proscribed by all the General Baptist churches; and that the very few individuals who favoured it were obliged to disguise it or explain it away, in order to preserve fellowship with them.—In the same indiscriminating manner, this historian charges them with holding the doctrine of the Millennium and the sleep of the soul. On these heads we shall only add to what is said above in the text, that, as both these doctrines were held by many besides general baptists, it is hardly fair to reckon them among the tenets "peculiar" to the latter. We refer our remarks on this author's account of the administration of baptism and extreme unction, as he is pleased to style it, to the next sections. In the mean time, we are sorry, that the picture of the English general baptists which is likely to continue the longest, and be exhibited the most extensively, should be so carelessly drawn: and present such an imperfect likeness of the original.

We observe, also, with some surprise, that this celebrated author asserts, that, if the common accounts may be believed, the English particular baptists do *not* "repeat the administration of baptism to those who had received it, either in a state of infancy, or by aspersion instead of dipping."—But we recollect the caution of the wise man, Prov. xxvi. 17—and forbear.

*Mosheim's Eccl. Hist. Vol. IV. pp. 478.—481.*

imported and adopted; and various opinions, apparently new, were promulgated. Some of these doctrines, being of a more important and practical nature, gave rise to different sects; others, more general and speculative, were not confined to any party, but were frequently maintained and opposed by different persons of the same community. Now it is certainly unjust to charge any party, as a body, with sentiments, which many among them opposed; and which were maintained by numbers of other denominations. Yet the general baptists have, from age to age, been branded with holding tenets which, as a body, they never espoused; and against which, in many instances, they have, in the most public manner, protested.

The state of separate spirits, from the period of death to the resurrection, was then a subject of much discussion. Three systems were adopted, each of which had been patronized by eminent men in former ages of the church. Some thought that the departed soul immediately passed into its final state: others, that it continued, while separate from the body, in an intermediate state of happiness or misery, which they distinguished by the term *Hades*, or the invisible state: while others believed that the souls both of good and bad men remained in a state of insensibility, till the day of judgment; when, on the resurrection of their bodies, they would be reunited to them, and fixed in a state of everlasting felicity or anguish. This last opinion has been ascribed to the general baptists, by almost all who have mentioned them: and hence they were stigmatized with the nickname of *Soul-sleepers*. But this doctrine was never avowed in any of the public documents of this party: and was thus expressly

condemned in the Orthodox Creed.\* “The bodies of men after death return to dust, and see corruption; but their souls or spirits, which *neither die nor sleep*, having an immortal subsistence, immediately return to God who gave them: the souls of the righteous, being then made perfect in holiness, are received into paradise, where they are with Christ, and beholding the face of God in light and glory, waiting for the full redemption of their bodies: and the souls of the wicked are cast into hell, where they remain in torment and utter darkness, reserved to the judgment of the great day. And besides these two places for souls separated from their bodies, the holy scripture mentions none.” Nor, indeed, have we found one general baptist author, in the seventeenth century, who favoured the opinion of the sleep of the soul, in a separate state, except George Hammon, of Biddenden: he certainly openly avowed and defended it.† All their other writers, that have fallen under our notice, never allude to the doctrine at all: but treat the subject of the resurrection as pertaining only to the body.‡

These professors have frequently been represented as unfriendly to magistracy, especially to monarchy; and this has usually been ascribed to the opinions which they entertained respecting the Millennium. It cannot be disputed, that many of them, in common with a numerous body of christians of almost every other name, confi-

\* Art. 49. of the Creed.

† Disc. of the Lat. of the Loss of Paradise. *passim*.

‡ Jeffery's Whole Faith of Man, pp 64—70—Grantham's Christ. Prim. Book II. Part I. Chap. 6. Sect. 6.—Griffith's Lively Oracles pp. 169—494.

dently believed, that the Messiah would reign again in person: and, having subdued the nations of the world to his sway, and extirpated the wicked, reign on earth for a thousand years, before the last day of general judgment: and that, at the commencement of that blissful monarchy, the departed saints would be raised from the dead, and those who were then living be changed, and all reign with their King through the whole of that period: at the close of which, the wicked would be raised, and the final decision made. And it is equally plain, that some of them conjectured that the revolutions in political affairs, which then distracted Britain, were intended to introduce this glorious kingdom. But, it does not appear, that they carried either their speculations or their hopes, on this subject, to the extravagant lengths to which many of their cotemporaries pushed theirs.

In the Confession of 1611, the personal reign of Christ is not noticed: and, in that of 1660, it is expressed nearly in scripture terms. The Somersetshire general baptists, and, if we may judge from the order in which they have placed the articles, the Confessors of 1660, thought that the promised reign of Christ and his saints would succeed the general resurrection and the final judgment, and last through all eternity. They supposed that this earth would then be restored to more than paradisiacal splendor and beauty—that the New Jerusalem would descend in great state from heaven to earth, in such a manner as that the royal palace of the Messiah would settle exactly on Mount Zion—that in this glorious city, as the metropolis, Christ and his saints would maintain a prosperous, peaceable, and eternal kingdom over the whole earth. This was

the magnificent scene to which many of them looked: and they had numerous scriptures ready to justify, as they thought, their high expectations.

But, whatever views these christians had as to the time and circumstances of this future kingdom of the saints, they appear to have been unanimously of opinion that it was unlawful to endeavour to hasten its advent, by any attempts to disturb the government under which they lived. They knew that God could, when he pleased, establish it: and they left it to him to accomplish his own promises. "We believe," said they, "that this kingdom ought not to be set up with the material sword: that being contrary to the very nature of Christianity."—"It will be the day of the *Lord's* vengeance; and it belongs to Him to execute it, and not to us."\* And Mr. Grantham seems to speak the general sense of his associates, when, alluding to this subject, he says, "If any man be impatient of Christ's coming, and would be doing any thing to the disturbance of the civil peace of nations, as if he would usher the Lord Christ into his seat of judgment; we look upon such men to be more busy than wise: and do exhort them to study to be quiet, and to do their own business; and to let God Almighty and his holy Child Jesus alone to the accomplishment of what he hath promised in this behalf: Let it suffice us to do what we are allowed in this case: and that is, daily to pray, 'Thy kingdom come: Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth.'"+

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\* Somersetshire Conf. Chap. 27.

† Christ. Prim. Book III. Ch. I. Sect. 3.—See also Jeffery's *Whole Faith of Man*, pp. 161—176.—Hammon's *Sion's Redemption discovered*, *passim*.

Whatever the reader may think of the soundness of these speculations, yet it is evident that they had no tendency to make those who held them bad subjects. Indeed the uniform conduct of the general baptists evinced the sincerity of their frequent testimonies in favour of the divine appointment of magistracy. We have never, in our review of their history, found them among the men given to change: nor have we met with a single instance in which any one of them has been accused, as a disturber of the peace of society; except the much injured John James. They seem to have paid conscientious obedience, in civil concerns, to the existing authorities, without enquiring by what right they were exercised. And though they nobly declared, that, in the affair of religion, they were subject to God alone, and boldly and uniformly refused to comply with any human imposition; yet they passively submitted to the penalties which the laws of their country inflicted, however unjustly, on their non-compliance. This conduct was in perfect consistency with their avowed principles, which they took every opportunity of laying before their fellow subjects: and which are concisely but clearly stated in a "Testimony," published by their messengers and elders, a few years before the Restoration: of which Mr. Grantham has thus preserved the substance.

"1. That it is not impossible, but some persons may be found, under the same form of profession with the present baptized churches, as well as in the churches planted by the apostles themselves; and that even, while they were living, who are not afraid to speak evil of dignities."

"2. If there be any such, they are protested

against, as persons unworthy of the holy profession of christianity: and humble request is made, that men's particular disorders of that kind may not be imputed to the whole party, engaged in the same form of religion with them."

"3. We declare that magistracy is God's ordinance in all nations: and that it concerns no christian, as such, to inquire after the dueness or undueness of the call of the civil magistrates to that high place of trust: but that it becomes them always to submit themselves to the powers that be; as being of God, who putteth down one, and setteth up another, as it pleaseth him."

"4. That we judge ourselves obliged, by gospel rules, not only to submit to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake; but also to pray for all that are in authority, that we, under them, may live quiet and peaceable lives in all godliness and honesty."

"5. That if it shall happen, at any time, that the magistrate shall command things, in matters of religion, which we, through conscience to God, cannot actually obey; that then we know no rule we have to resist the power which God hath ordained; but, in all cases, patiently to suffer, or humbly to intreat favour."\*

If, after perusing this solemn testimony, any reader should require still further evidence that the general baptists were good subjects, we refer him to the various petitions, addresses, and remonstrances mentioned in the course of this history,† and to the authorities quoted in the margin.‡

\* Christ. Prim. Book III. Ch. 1. Sect. 1.

† Supra, pp. 89, 92, 186, 189, 192, 193, 194, &c.

‡ Conf. of 1611, Art. 24.—of 1660, Art. 25. Orthodox Creed, Art. 45.—Somersetshire Conf. Chap. 22.—Grantham's Christ. Prim. Book III. Chap. I.

SECT. 6.—*The Discipline of the English General Baptists—their Ideas of a Church—its Members—Baptism—Imposition of Hands—Church-Officers—Messengers—the Election, Ordination and Maintenance of Officers.*

HAVING thus glanced over the doctrinal tenets of these general baptists, we shall take a concise view of the *Discipline* of their churches.

By “a church of Christ,” they meant “a company of faithful people, separated from the world, by the word and Spirit of God; being knit unto the Lord, and to one another by baptism, upon their own Confession of faith and sins.”\* “A particular assembly of people, gathered out of the world by the ministry of the gospel to the visible profession of faith in Christ, and obedience to his will in all his holy institutions. Such a people, so gathered into a particular congregation, continuing stedfastly in the apostles’ doctrine, they understood to be a gospel church.”†

“The right and only way of gathering churches,” in the opinion of these professors, “is, according to Christ’s appointment, Matt. xxviii. 19, 20, first to teach or preach the gospel to the sons and daughters of men; and then to baptize, (i.e. in English to *dip*) in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, or in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, ‡ such only of them as profess repentance

\* Conf. 1611, Art. 10.

† Somerset. Conf. Ch. 23.

‡ This expression has given an advantage to the enemies of the General Baptists, which has not been neglected.—Dr. Wall says, “One sort of them do count it indifferent whether they baptize with these words, ‘In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit;’ or with these, ‘In the name of the Lord Jesus:’ and do, in their public Confession, allow either of these forms. And I have heard, that some of them do

towards God and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ."\* Persons of this character and such only, they esteemed proper subjects for church fellowship; and therefore at once excluded all infants who were naturally incapable of these qualifications, and all who claimed communion with the church in consequence of being members of a civil society.

Besides these qualifications, they thought it

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affectedly choose the latter. I doubt this is practised by those of them whose chief leaders and directors are underhand Socinians: for they have many such among them. And it is not for the use of those that have a mind to obliterate the belief of the Trinity to baptize their proselytes into the faith and name of it." *Hist. of Inf. Bap. Part II. p. 222.* But this is directly contrary to his own assertions, when he represents the Socinians as a few that crept in amongst the baptists in disguise; who, as soon as they discovered their real character, were expelled from all their churches, *Ib. p. 275.* And it is obviously a calumny, as the framers of this Confession were avowedly Trinitarians. This tenet appears to have originated in too literal an interpretation of Acts ii. 38, and viii. 16, which are affixed to it in their Confession. Mr. Grantham totally overlooks it in his "Testimony of Antiquity" to this Article: and brings a quotation from Justin Martyr expressly in favour of the usual form. Indeed it does not appear that these professors frequently, if at all, administered the ordinance in the name of Christ alone. We have not met with any allusion to such a circumstance in their records: and the expressions of Dr. W. prove, that, if it was at all practised, the instances were very rare; or the Doctor, living where he did, would have had no occasion to use such guarded terms. Yet, on his authority, Dr. Mosheim says, "They (the English General Baptists) consider it as a matter of indifference whether the sacrament be administered in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, or in that of Christ alone:" *Eccl. Hist. IV. p. 480:* thus transferring the tenet, from a few of "one sort" to the whole body. Though it is certain, that the compilers of the Orthodox Creed, in the counties of Bucks, Oxford, Herts, and Cambridge, and the general baptists in Somersetshire and the western counties, expressly direct the administration of baptism to be performed in the name of the sacred Three. *Orthodox Creed, Art. 28.—Somerset Conf. Ch. 12.*

\* Conf. of 1660, Art. 11.

essential to true church fellowship, that the entering into it should be the voluntary act of each individual for himself. "In the primitive constitution of Christ's church," says Joseph Hooke, "the members held a free fellowship: there was no worldly force used in begetting members or holding them together in church fellowship; but their fellowship was from their own free choice, and by mutual consent. And in this we succeed the first churches: for we have no penal laws to force people to our communion, nor ever desire to have; but desire a free and unconstrained consent in all that join themselves to our fellowship. We are for no constraint but the power of God's word and Spirit, to persuade poor sinners to embrace Christ, and eternal life by him, in a sure way of his own prescribing."\* By thus making the joining in church-fellowship the voluntary act of the individual, infants were again excluded, and the very root of persecution cut up: for every one had a right to join what denomination he pleased; and, when he saw occasion, to withdraw himself from it.

When persons had given satisfactory evidence of their repentance and faith; and had, at their own request, been solemnly baptized, they were, for some time, considered as proper subjects for church-membership. The pastor, in the name, and by the authority of the church, gave them the right hand of fellowship; by which they were admitted to full communion, and had a right to all the privileges of brethren.

But, towards the commencement of the civil wars, some of these good men, observing that, in various instances which are recorded in the New

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\* Hooke's Necessary Apology, p. 76.

Testament, the apostles laid hands on those whom they had newly baptized;\* and especially finding that laying on of hands followed baptism in their favourite enumeration of the principles of the doctrine of Christ,† concluded that, “as God hath promised to give his holy Spirit to all that are called of the Lord, so he hath appointed a solemn way wherein his servants and handmaids are to wait upon him for the reception thereof; which way is, the prayers of his church, performed by her ministers or pastors, with the laying on of hands: and this as a principle of Christ’s doctrine belonging to them in the minority of their christian state.”‡

This doctrine spread rapidly, and very extensively; but never appears to have been adopted by all the general baptists. There were always many respectable churches which opposed the practice; and bore a practical testimony against the imposition of it. Many angry disputes, and much disgraceful altercation originated in this unhappy difference. The advocates for the practice, esteeming it a “foundation principle,” and as necessary a prerequisite to communion as baptism, could not unite, at the Lord’s table, with those who neglected it. And, though they did not absolutely deny their opponents to be true churches of Christ; yet they thought them entitled to the name, only in the qualified sense in which a person who has lost a limb may be called a man; or a building a house, though it wants an important part of the foundation. It is painful to hear some of the most pious and useful

\* Acts viii. 12, 19.—xix, 6, 7.

† Heb. vi. 1, 2.

‡ Grantham’s Christ. Prim. Book II. Part II. Chap. III. p. 31.  
—Sigh for Peace, p. 3.

general baptists of the seventeenth century, such as W. Jeffery, T. Grantham, and J. Griffiths, plead for the necessity of this barrier between brethren.\*

When a number of persons, thus qualified, had agreed to unite and maintain the interest of their Saviour, they set apart a day for fasting and prayer; when, after solemnly devoting themselves to the service of God, they gave to each other the right hand of fellowship; and generally subscribed their names to a mutual covenant, containing a few rules by which they proposed to conduct themselves as members of the same society. On these occasions, they usually procured the presence of a messenger or elder from a sister church; who, commonly, administered the ordinance of the Lord's supper to the newly-formed church.† They were now, however few their

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\* Orthodox Creed, Art. 32.—Conf. 1660, Art. 12.—Christ. Prim. *ubi supra*.—Sigh for Peace, *passim*.—Jeffery's Whole Faith of Man, pp 60—64.—Griffith's Lively Oracles, pp. 99—156.—Imposition of hands on baptized believers, as such, appears to have been unknown to the confessors of 1611. If we credit D'Anvers, it was first introduced, in 1645, by Francis Cornwell, into the church in Bishopsgate-street, which afterwards removed to White's-alley. During the Protectorate, it spread rapidly, in various parts of the kingdom. In 1659, it was defended, by W. Jeffery, in Kent: and, in 1660, inserted in the famous Confession presented to the king. In 1672, the churches in Bucks and the neighbouring counties introduced it into their creed; and it was held by most of the Lincolnshire general baptists. In London, it formed a principal bond of union among the Five Churches: though there were several flourishing societies which opposed the practice, Mr. Griffiths, indeed, quotes the "pious Gosnold" as an advocate for this practice: but it was not adopted by the church in Paul's-alley. The general baptists in the west of England, it is probable, did not approve of it: and there were many churches in Lincolnshire, who bore a decided testimony against making it essential to communion.

† W. C. B. A. C. B., &c.

number, and destitute of officers, esteemed a "whole church," competent to manage their own concerns, independent of any earthly controul, and responsible for their conduct only to the great Head of the church. Indeed, at their first rise, the general baptists did not affect large societies; but thought, that the purposes of their union might be better answered in smaller congregations. They judged, "that the members of every church ought to know one another, that so they may perform all the duties of love towards one another, both to soul and body. And especially, that the elders ought to know the whole flock, whereof the Holy Ghost had made them overseers. And therefore a church ought not to consist of such a multitude as cannot have particular knowledge one of another."\* They believed, "that every congregation, though they be but two or three, have Christ given them with all the means of their salvation; are the body of Christ, and a *whole* church: and, therefore, may and ought, when they come together, to pray, prophesy, break bread, and administer in all the holy ordinances, although as yet they have no officers:" and, "that as one congregation hath Christ, so have all: and, therefore, no church ought to challenge any prerogative or right over any other."† "To each particular congregation the Lord hath given all that power and authority which is in any ways necessary for carrying on of that order in worship or discipline which he has instituted for them to observe."‡

But a church was not esteemed completely organized without its proper officers; and, there-

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\* Conf. 1611, Art. 16. † Ibid. Arts. 11 and 12.

‡ Somer. Conf. Ch. xxiii. p. 4.

fore, they were anxious to procure them as speedily as circumstances would permit. For some time, they had only two orders of officers, Elders and Deacons; in which latter office they employed females as Deaconesses. The officers of every church, they say, "are either Elders, who by their office do especially feed the flock concerning their souls; or Déacons, men and women, who by their office relieve the necessities of the poor and impotent brethren, concerning their bodies."\*

Ever attentive, however, to the precedent of scripture, it was not long before they supposed, that they discovered, in the primitive churches, an officer superior to an elder. They remarked, that Barnabas, Luke, Timothy, Titus, and several others were fellow labourers with the Apostles in the preaching of the gospel, and the planting and regulating of churches; and that, in various passages, they are called apostles, or in English, messengers of the churches. They thought it probable, that the angels or messengers, of the seven churches in Asia, to whom the author of the Revelations addressed his epistles were also of the same order. They, therefore, introduced an officer into their system whom they styled a *Messenger*. He was generally chosen by an association of the representatives of the churches in a certain district: and ordained by those of his own order with great solemnity: the various churches keeping seasons of prayer and fasting. Sometimes a particular church chose a messenger; but, in that case, his business appears to have been confined to preaching the gospel where it was not known, and regulating such churches as

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\* Conf. 1611, Art. 20,

he might be made instrumental in planting. It is indeed probable, that, at the first, this was the chief object of their appointment; an object which demanded peculiar attention, when the nation was just emerging from the darkness of popery and prelacy, and the rays of divine truth had hardly pierced the gloom. Fixed pastors could not conveniently itinerate to distant parts; and it would have been thought irregular for unauthorized persons to have undertaken it; but the messengers stood ready for this necessary work, and their very office called them to it. "They were appointed," says Mr. Jeffery, "for the gathering of churches and the establishing of them."

But when churches increased, and errors and irregularities sprung up among the young converts and inexperienced ministers, it was judged expedient to extend the messenger's work, by assigning to him the superintendance, and, in a sense, the government of those churches which united in calling him to the office. Thus the Orthodox Creed, in 1678, says, "The bishops," as it styles the messengers, "have the government of those churches that had suffrage in their election, and no other, ordinarily: as also to preach the word to the world." In the same year, Mr. Grantham extends their ministry to three objects: 1. To plant churches where there are none. 2. To set in order such churches as want officers to order their affairs: and 3. To assist faithful pastors or churches, against usurpers, and those that trouble the peace of particular churches, by false doctrines." This last article appears the most objectionable part of the office; and might be employed so as to destroy the independency of churches.—At the close of the period of which we

are speaking, Mr. Hooke describes the work of the Messenger as being—to plant churches—ordain officers—set in order things that were wanting, in all the churches—to defend the gospel against gainsayers—and to travel up and down the world to perform this work.\*

The messengers were chosen, as already hinted, by the joint suffrages of all the churches in a district; but the Elders and Deacons, whose office was confined to one society, were chosen by the free votes of the members of that society.—“These officers are to be chosen, when there are persons qualified, according to the rules of Christ’s Testament, by the election of the church or congregation whereof they are members.”† “None are ordained amongst us,” says J. Hooke, “before they be chosen by the free consent of the whole

\* *Orthodox Creed*, Art. 31.—*Grantham’s Christ. Prim. Book*, II. Part. II. Chap. 9. Sect. 3, and Book IV. *Treatise* 5. pp. 152—170. *Hooke’s Necessary Apology*, pp. 78—83.—*Jeffery’s Whole Faith of Man*, pp. 95—98, &c.—The power of this office seems to have increased as the general baptist cause declined. At the Lincolnshire association, held at Coningsby, May 30, 1775, it is thus defined.—“The messenger who is chosen by the unanimous consent and approbation of the churches, which stand in a close connection together, hath full liberty and authority, according to the gospel, to freely inquire into the state of the churches respecting both the pastor and people, to see that the pastors do their duty in their places, and the people theirs: he is to exhort, admonish, and reprove both the one and the other, as occasion calls for. In virtue of his office, he is to watch over the several flocks committed to his care and charge. To see that good order and government be carefully and constantly kept up and maintained in the churches he is called and appointed to look after and to watch over; to labour to keep out innovations in doctrine, worship and discipline, and to stand up in defence of the gospel.” Such an *Inquisitor-general* is totally incompatible with the independency of the churches, professed by these christians.

† Conf. of 1611. Art. 21.

church, or at least of the major part. And good cause it is, where all are equally concerned, that they should be equally satisfied in the choice of such to whom they commit their souls."\*—In some cases, where the members were few, or the choice doubtful, they referred the decision to the Lord, and cast lots.†

In choosing their elders, they had more regard to the moral and religious character and attainments of the candidate, than to his literary rank or acquirements. In order to qualify a person for nomination to this office, he must have given

\* Necessary Apology p. 85.

† In 1658, the church at Fenstanton appointed a day of fasting and prayer for the election of a deacon; when very few of the members attended. Those that were present were much discouraged; but, after solemn prayer, they recollected the Saviour's promise, Matt. xviii. 20. and determined to proceed. Four candidates were nominated; and it was resolved to cast lots, "to know which of them was chosen by the Lord." Five lots were prepared; one for each candidate and one blank; "that, if it should please the Lord that none should be chosen, at that time, the blank might be drawn. This being done solemn prayer was again made to the Lord to order and dispose of them according to his will: after which the lot was drawn forth; and it fell on W. Yarle, who was then received as separated by the Lord. Whereupon the elders prayed over him; and laid their hands on him: appointing him to the office of a deacon in the church." F. S. R. pp 374, 375.—This appeal to heaven was, in those days, practised by other denominations. In 1682, Mr. F. Bampffield and his congregation, being looking out for a proper meeting-house, had the offer of three. Not being able to agree as to the eligibility of any one, they "laid aside their own prudential determinings; and, after they had besought the Lord to choose for them, did refer the determining of it wholly unto him," Accordingly the lots were given forth; one for each place; and "that they might not limit the sovereign will of the Allwise, a fourth blank. Having agreed upon one to draw the lot, they all looked up to the God of heaven, expecting his allotment. The lot, being opened, spoke Pinner's Hall."—*Bampffield's Lord's Free Prisoners.*

full evidence of his conversion to God, and his devotedness to his service—have been an honourable member of some regular general baptist church, and have adorned his profession by a suitable life and conversation. He must, also, have proved his ministerial gifts, by exercising them before his brethren—have received their approbation—and been by them called forth to preach the gospel. Indeed, so careful were they to prevent improper persons from intruding into the sacred office, that, in some churches, it was the custom to subject those who had been elected to it, before they were ordained, to an examination by experienced ministers, both as to their moral character, and the extent and soundness of their religious knowledge.\*—But in this, as in other respects, they regulated their conduct by the scriptures. “It is no where said,” observes J. Hooke, “in the word of God, ‘Let a bishop be an academic, a rhetorician, a logician, or a graduate;’ but it is said, ‘A bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach,’ &c. And when we find men thus qualified according to the mind of God, we choose them to the ministry, whether they have or not been bred at the university.”†

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\* Conf. 1660, Arts 5 and 15. F. S. R. and S. T. C. B.

† *Conf. of 1611 Art. 21.—Conf. of 1660 Arts. 5 and 15.—Orthodox Creed, Art. 31.—Somersetshire Conf. xxiii. 8—12.—Grantham's Christ. Prim. Book II. Part II. Chap. 8.—Hooke's Necessary Apology, p. 58.—Jeffery's Whole Faith of Man, p. 98.—Stanley's Christianity Indeed, p. 26.*—The baptists, as a body, but especially the general baptists, have constantly been represented as enemies to a learned ministry; and as professing a contempt for erudition and science. (*Mosheim, Vol. IV. p. 479.*) It may, therefore, be just to permit them to explain their own views on the subject. “We readily grant, that learning of the languages,

But a person, though chosen to be an elder by the suffrages of his brethren, was not permitted to exercise the functions of his office, till he had been regularly set apart by "fasting and prayer, with the imposition of hands." The ordination was a season of peculiar solemnity. The whole congregation were called to unite in the devotions and duties of the day; and neighbouring elders, and, frequently messengers, were invited to assist at the important transaction. Nor was it uncommon for sister congregations to hold a solemn assembly, at the same time, to wrestle with the great Head of the church, by fasting and prayer, to crown a connection so interesting to his cause on the earth, with his blessing. And, in all this, they followed, as they thought, the directions of the New Testament. Good Mr. Grantham pro-

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to wit, Hebrew, Greek, Latin, &c. may be useful in its place, as a servant to help: but to make it a qualification absolutely necessary to the being of a minister, we dare not. Our reasons are: 1. Because the gospel was at first preached and brought forth into the world by unlearned men;—such were the apostles. 2. Because amongst the many qualifications required, in the scriptures, to be found in those that are set apart to the work and office of an elder, we never find this recorded as one. 3. Because experience testifies, that men, unlearned in the languages, have been very useful in the Lord's hand, and famous instruments for the good of souls. 4. Because, in all ages, learned men have introduced and defended the errors of popery, and persecuted the true christians." *Somerset. Conf.* xxiii. 11. "Let none mistake me," says the pious J. Hooke, "as though I should despise human learning; as some have done in a passionate zeal because of its abuses, and others through sottish ignorance, being themselves strangers to it:—No. I love and honour human learning, and give it my approbation: only I would not have more ascribed to it than is due; nor by any means that it should be preferred above divine learning; but only attend upon it as a servant." *Necessary Apology*, p. 62. It would be easy, had we room, to shew that these were the general sentiments of the denomination.

duces scriptural precedents for the ordination of persons to all the three offices:—of a messenger, Acts xiii. 3; of an elder, Acts xiv. 23; and, of a deacon, Acts vi. 5, 6.\*

This connection, once formed, was esteemed sacred. Seldom do we read of their pastors removing from one church to another. The urgency must have been great that could, in their opinion, have justified such a step. Some of them seem to have thought the union thus formed indissoluble; except in case of the elder's apostacy from the truth. It was resolved, by the Lincolnshire Association, July 28th, 1696, "That there is nothing which we can justly fix upon, that can warrant an elder to forsake his people: nor can any elder, who has gone away from his own people, be established as an elder over another people in another place." The same assembly also determined, that an elder, "for a sinful life, or for teaching false doctrine, might be put from his office:" and that, "though, after his fall, he should prove a sound and good man, he may be taken into the place as a member, but not act in another place in the capacity of an elder." This appears to have been a sentiment commonly adopted by the general baptists at that time:—of such importance to the cause of religion did they esteem the character of its ministers; and so awfully injurious their failings."†

Many of these good men appear to have served the church gratuitously, both in the offices of messengers and elders. This was peculiarly the case in the former part of the century of which we are treating: and might be more necessary,

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\* Grantham's Christ. Prim. ubi supra.

† Lincoln. Assoc. Book. F. S. R. p. 303.

in the infancy of the churches.\* But they always maintained the right of a minister to receive a maintenance from those among whom he laboured: though they disclaimed any compulsion in the procuring of it. "The ministers of Christ," they say, "who have freely received from God, ought freely to minister to others: and such as have spiritual things ministered unto them ought freely to communicate necessary things to the ministers, upon the account of their charge: but tithes, or any forced maintenance, we utterly deny to be the maintenance of gospel ministers."†

These general baptists, it seems, were too inattentive to this necessary duty; probably in consequence of many of their first ministers having waived their claim, and gone the warfare at their own charges. This occasioned a very sensible and earnest expostulation on the subject from the zealous F. Stanley;‡ and drew forth this gentle admonition from Mr. Grantham.—"Let the baptized churches be exhorted to consider, that, while others have exceeded, they have been too short,

\* Most of their ministers carried on business: and it is evident, from their earliest records, that they seldom received any thing from the congregation, except travelling expences, &c. And when the increase of the cause, and other circumstances, rendered it necessary to contribute to their support, it was, in many places, yielded to with great reluctance. So late as 1679, it was considered, at Berkhamstead, as a crime worthy of church censure, to affirm "that men ought to have a set maintenance, by the year, for preaching."—*B. C. B.* 1679.

† Conf. 1660, Art. 16.—See also Orthodox Creed, Art. 31.—Somerset. Conf. Ch. xxiii Art. 12.—Jeffery's *Whole Faith of Man*, pp 99—102.—Grantham's *Christ. Prim.* Book II. Part II. Ch. 15.—Stanley's *Christianity Indeed*, pp. 136—149.

‡ *Ubi supra*. This active minister laboured long in his Master's cause, without being chargeable to any, except for common entertainment: he could, therefore, plead the cause of his less able associates with the greater freedom. He states it, on his own

in caring for their ministers: who, though they have, generally, with great cheerfulness, served them in the gospel of God freely; yet that will not justify the churches in the neglect of their duty. And besides, the ministers are rendered, by this neglect, the less capable to serve them: being much diverted, by worldly employments, from that serious study and exercise of reading; which ordinarily conduces much to the furtherance of the gospel, by the more ample preaching thereof. For, if Paul advises Timothy to this course of reading and study, to the intent that he might shew himself a workman that needs not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth, who was undoubtedly a man of rare parts; how much more should we, who come so far short of him, in all likelihood, stir up ourselves to that needful exercise.”\*

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SECT. 7.—*Public Worship—Psalmody—the Lord's Supper—Fast Days—Raising up Ministers.*

A CHURCH being thus formed, and officers chosen, they were prepared to exert themselves for promoting the interest of the Redeemer's kingdom on earth, in the conversion of sinners, and the edification of saints. Let us inquire how they prosecuted this great design.

Their first care was to provide for the due observance of the Lord's-day: for they thought

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knowledge, that “some ministers had spent a great part of their outward substance in the service of the churches—some their all, and some more than their all: many being reduced to the affecting strait, either to neglect the worthy work of the gospel, or else to be reputed worse than infidels.” 1 Tim. v. 8.”

\* Christ. Prim. Book II. Part II. p. 181.

“ that every christian church, according to the example of Christ’s disciples, and the primitive churches, ought, upon every first day of the week, to assemble together, to pray, prophesy, and break bread, and to perform all other parts of spiritual communion, for the worship of God, their own mutual edification, and the preservation of piety and true religion in the church. And they ought not to labour in their callings according to the equity of the moral law ; which Christ came, not to abolish, but to fulfil.”\* “ The christian sabbath,” they say, “ is to be kept after a due and reverent manner, in preparing our hearts, and ordering our affairs so before-hand, that we may rest that day from worldly and carnal employments, and frequent the solemn assemblies of the church : and in all public and private duties of religion, as hearing, meditating, and conferring, and reading in the holy scriptures : together with prayer, public and private ; and in the duties of necessity, charity, and mercy ; and not in any vain or worldly discourse, or idle recreations whatsoever.”† “ Christian assemblies,” says the pious Grantham, “ whether for the public preaching of the gospel to the multitude, or for the more particular edification of the church, are both grounded upon the doctrine and practice of Christ himself ; and therefore may, in no wise, be neglected by the church, nor contradicted or opposed by men : such assemblies being the most sacred conventions upon the earth, of greatest authority, and concerned in the most important affairs, even the things concerning the kingdom of God.”‡

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\* Conf. 1611, Art. 19. † Orthodox Creed, Art. 40.

‡ Christ. Prim. Book II. Part II. Ch. 5.

Such were the sentiments of these professors respecting the nature and importance of assemblies for public worship: and the wilful neglect of them was considered as disorderly conduct, which called for the censure of the church. A constant inspection was exercised over the attendance of the members: persons were appointed to take down the names of the absentees, and report them to the elders; and nothing but reasons of obvious importance were admitted as a sufficient apology for their non-attendance. When the societies grew numerous, the members were ranged into districts, according to the proximity of their habitations: and proper persons appointed to superintend each district. If any member did not appear in his place, on the Lord's-day, he was certain of a visit, in the course of the week, from one of the inspectors of the district, to call him to account for his absence. These regulations were rendered effectual, by being acted upon with steadiness, impartiality, and decision; and, for nearly a century, contributed much to the order and prosperity of the general baptist churches.\*

Their public worship is described, as consisting of prayer, reading the scriptures, prophecy, and

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\* In 1655, an "Order" was made, by the general consent of the congregation at Fenstanton, that "if any member of this congregation shall absent himself from the assembly of the same congregation, upon the first day of the week, without manifesting a sufficient cause, he shall be looked upon as an offender, and proceeded with accordingly." At the same meeting "it was desired, that, if any member should, at any time, have any extraordinary occasion to hinder him from the assembly, he would certify the congregation of the same before hand, for the prevention of jealousy." (*F.S.R.* p. 190.) And, in 1658, the same society, after considering the case of a wife who had been kept back, by the threatenings of her husband, concluded "that, un-

praise.\* The first two still retain their places in our christian assemblies; and the third was, in a good measure, similar to the modern preaching. But the reader must not confound the last with the psalmody of our congregations.—These rigid scripturists thought, that they could find neither precept nor example, in the New Testament, for the whole congregation, converted and unconverted, joining in singing, as a part of divine worship, the pre-composed poems of men, nor even the psalms of David translated into English metre, to tunes adapted to them by the art of the musician, and previously learned by

less a person was restrained by force, it was no excuse for absenting himself from the assemblies of the congregation." *F.S.R.* p. 373. Resolutions of a similar purport are frequent in the records of these churches: and numbers of cases prove that they were constantly enforced.

\* In the articles of union between the churches at Paul's-alley and Turner's Hall, in 1695, it was agreed, that "the public worship in the congregation, on the Lord's-day, be thus performed: viz. In the morning, about half-past nine, some brother be appointed to begin the exercises, by reading a psalm, and spending some time in prayer; and then reading some other portions of the holy scriptures till the minister comes into the pulpit: and, after the preaching and prayer, to conclude with singing a psalm. The afternoon service to begin at half-past one; and to be carried on, and concluded as in the forenoon; but, on breaking of bread days, the psalm to be omitted, in the afternoon, till the conclusion of the Lord's Supper." See the *Records of Barbican Church*.—This, which, with the exception of the singing, may be considered as a fair description of the usual mode in which these general baptists conducted public worship, proves, that the omission of reading the scriptures, in their assemblies, of which Mr. Whiston complains, did not exist at the period of which we are treating. Indeed, if we may trust Mr. Killingworth, the omission was very partial even in his day; as he assures us, that, the scriptures were read in all the Norfolk and London churches, and in all other churches of which he had any knowledge.—*Whiston's Memoirs*, Vol. II. p. 480. *Killingworth's Letter to Whiston*, p. 14

the singer. They esteemed all this as a relic of the cathedral service of the catholics and prelatists; and conscientiously preserved a jealous distance from imitating it. But, as praising God is a duty enjoined both by reason and scripture, they did not omit it. It is not easy to convey a clear idea of the exercise which they substituted in the room of singing: but we will let them explain it themselves.

“The best, and, for aught I can find, the only certain and undoubted way to be used, in christian churches, to sing the praises of the Lord, is this:—That such persons as God hath gifted to tell forth his mighty acts, and to recount his special providences, and upon whose hearts God hath put a lively sense of present mercies, should have their liberty and convenient opportunity to celebrate the high praises of God, one by one, in the churches of God: and that with such words as the nature of the matter and present occasion require; so that they be careful to keep to the language of the sacred word, and as near as may be to the methods of those psalms and hymns used aforetime by the holy writers of the scriptures: and that all this be done with a pleasant or cheerful voice, that may serve to express the joys conceived in the heart of him that singeth; the better to affect the hearts of all the congregation with the wondrous works of God, and the continual goodness which he sheweth towards the children of men, and especially to his people. And thus he that hath a psalm becomes an useful minister in the house of God; whilst as others wait on their gifts; whether it be prayer, teaching, exhortation, &c.: so he waits on his gifts also; being as studious to find out acceptable words, and to set his hymns and psalms in good

order, for common edification, as the wise preacher is careful, to the same intent, about his doctrine or sermon. 'Let all things be done to edifying.'"\*

Towards the close of the seventeenth century, several general baptist congregations adopted, though by slow degrees, the present mode of psalmody: but this was esteemed, by others, a culpable innovation. Several churches were divided on this subject: and, in others, when a majority had introduced the custom, the discontented, for a long time, went out of the place when the singing commenced. Many intemperate pamphlets were published by both parties, and much discord was sown among brethren: and the dispute continued to rage till long after the close of the period of which we are treating.†

Another important part of their religious services was, the celebration of the Lord's supper: which they considered as "the outward manifestation of the spiritual communion between Christ and the faithful, mutually to declare his death,

\* Grantham's *Christ. Prim.* Book II. Part II. Chap. 8. sect. 5.

† In 1696, Mr. Allen, minister of Paul's-alley church, published "An Essay to prove singing of psalms, with conjoined voices, a christian duty;" which was answered, in the same year, by the famous Dr. W. Russell, in "Some brief animadversions upon Mr. Allen's Essay." This author thus describes the unhappy effects which were produced by the introduction of this practice. "This way of singing has a tendency to your ruin: having begun already to diminish your numbers, and force two congregations to unite into one, to keep up their reputation, and supply that deficiency which singing in rhyme has made in their numbers. Nay, further: a great part of your members that remain are so dissatisfied, that, as soon as you begin to tune your pipes, they immediately depart like men affrighted." *p.* 12. — Probably Dr. R. refers to Mr. Allen's own church, in Paul's-alley. When the society from Turner's-hall united with that church, in 1695, it was agreed, probably in compliment to Mr.

until he come."\* They believed that it was appointed by the great Head of the church : and adapted to teach christians humility, love, unity, and stability in the faith ; and to excite them to labour after those qualifications which fit them for the worthy participation of this solemn feast. True believers only, they thought, had a right to this ordinance ; and no unbaptized, unbelieving, openly wicked, or heretical person ought to be admitted to it. It could not, as many of them asserted, be regularly administered by any but the pastor ; because he alone is commanded to feed that flock, and that only, over which the Holy Ghost hath made him overseer. It does not appear, that they were uniform as to the periods of celebrating this ordinance : but many of the churches had it once a month. " Had the precise time," says Mr. Grantham, " been limited in scripture, such times must have been sacred as well as the service : but here the wisdom of God thought not fit to impose any thing. Nevertheless, as the natural man will not long abstain from his bodily food, if he can obtain it ; so neither will the spiritual man neglect his Father's table : but delight to feed with those that call on the name of the Lord in that solemnity."

With these views, it is no wonder that these

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Allen, that *one* psalm should be sung, at each opportunity of public worship : and this was sung at the conclusion of the service, to give those who disapproved of it an opportunity of withdrawing. It was not till 1719, that they ventured to sing *twice* in the afternoon service.—A dispute on this subject in the particular baptist church under Mr. B. Keach, occasioned a division in 1691, which gave rise to the church in Maze-pond, Southwark.—*Wilson, Vol. III. p. 230. Vol. IV. p. 285*

\* Conf. 1611, Art. 15. See also Orthodox Creed, Art. 33. Somerset Conf. Chap. 13.

christians reckoned a regular attendance at the Lord's table, not only an invaluable privilege, but an indispensable duty; and the unnecessary neglect of it a fault worthy of serious censure. To prevent this, in many churches, the names of the members were called over, at the close of every celebration: and absentees marked for future animadversion.\*

In their proceedings respecting this solemn ordinance, they endeavoured to make the scripture their only guide. Thus they generally called it "breaking of bread," or "the Lord's supper;" and avoided the terms sacrament, eucharist, &c. as unauthorized by the New Testament. Thus, also, because our Lord and his disciples sat, at the institution of it, they durst not kneel: and, because our Lord broke the bread, they refused to cut it. Nor did they venture to approach the Lord's table fasting; as some, who pretended to superior reverence, were in the habit of doing—because it was first instituted after eating the paschal lamb. This circumstance, indeed, led several churches, at their first rise, in order more exactly to imitate the primitive model, to have a supper together, before the celebration of this ordinance. The general baptists at Fenstanton, as we have seen,† pleaded for it on the ground of convenience rather than duty; as an accommodation for brethren from a distance, rather than

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\* *Grantham's Christ. Prim. Book II. Part. II. Chap. 7.*—The Amer sham church ordered, that a fair list of the names of the members be kept in readiness—that the names be called over after the breaking of bread—and brother Young and brother Reading, take a strict notice of the members that are missing, at the Lord's table, and admonish them to be more circumspect.—A. C. B.

† *Supra* p. 133.

as necessary to the due administration of the ordinance. Many others, however, were more rigid: but it seems to have been nearly laid aside before the close of the seventeenth century.\*

In addition to these regular seasons of social worship, many of these christians thought, that "public humiliation, by fasting and prayer, is an ordination of God, appointed for his church and people:"† and, therefore, had frequent seasons appropriated for those exercises. True fasting, in their opinion, consisted in a total abstinence from food, pleasure, and labour, for a limited time, usually from six in the morning, to six in the evening; which was spent in reading the scriptures, solemn prayer, and preaching, accompanied with acts of charity and mercy. These exercises always attended the election and ordination of the officers of the church; and were often held on various other occasions. The objects to be kept in view were distinctly enumerated, when the fast was appointed; and related to the nation, the neighbourhood, the church or individuals. Thus, in 1676, the church at Amer-sham held a fast, the objects of which are thus recorded. "1. That the Lord be pleased to humble us under a sense of our brother Rudrup's

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\* The enemies of these professors took occasion from this practice, to fix on the advocates for it the ludicrous designation of *Legs-of-Mutton baptists*: "so named because at the celebration of the Lord's supper, as they pretended, they sat down at table and feasted upon legs of mutton and other meats." *D'Assigny's Mystery of Anabaptism*, p. 227. But this author, in 1709, could only hear of one congregation of them; and, had not modern historians revived the term without the explication, this harmless witticism might very properly have remained buried in the rubbish in which it was found.

† Orthodox Creed Art. 42. Grantham's Christ, Prim. Book II. Part II. Chap. II.

miscarriage, and that we may be more watchful in future—2. To bewail the divisions that are among God's people; and to seek for a spirit of love, unity, illumination, and obedience.—3. To pray that the Lord would be pleased to continue a seasonable harvest.—4. To intreat him to prevent all the wicked designs, which the enemies of the truth are devising, against those that fear the Lord.—5. To beseech him to support our sister Child under her heavy trials.—6. To beg that he would sanctify the affliction that is on Mary Hill; and give his blessing on her journey to the bath for her recovery." Such were the cases which these zealous christians presented at a throne of grace, on these solemn occasions; and the Lord was sometimes graciously pleased to grant signal answers to their prayers.—These frequent seasons of humiliation, prayer and intercession, must have had a happy tendency to nourish sympathy and charity towards each other, and piety and devotion towards God.\*

It may not be improper to close this account of their public worship with a few hints on the means they used to raise up a succession of acceptable ministers to conduct it.

They had no universities, colleges, or academies to supply them with ministers: but they "be-

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\* In the records of the church at Fair-street, is this entry, under date of November 1st. 1697. "Whereas it was requested by sister Wood, whose daughter lies in a deplorable condition, that we keep a day of fasting and prayer to God; we agree that Friday next be kept, at her house, from eight in the morning till four at night." This day was accordingly observed; and, at the next church meeting they ordered January 21st. ensuing to be kept as a day of thanksgiving, because that it had "pleased the Lord mightily to appear, hearing his people's prayer, and delivering the maid, in a marvellous manner." S. T. C. B.

The congregation at Fenstanton, being informed, in 1651,

lieved it to be the duty of christians earnestly to desire spiritual gifts, but especially that they might prophesy :” and, that “ every church of Christ ought to be a nursery, to nurse up and cherish gifts among themselves, and to embrace any among them, whether learned or unlearned, that were likely to be useful in the Lord’s work.”\* With this view, they adopted various plans for the discovery and cultivation of ministerial abilities. During the civil wars, they seem to have had stated public exercises for the discussion of religious subjects, in which any one was at liberty to propose and defend his own opinion ;† but these exercises soon gave way to less objectionable modes of exciting the latent abilities of the brethren. Regular meetings for prayer, religious conferences and the expounding of the scriptures, were encouraged in the different churches : one great object of which was, to bring forward to notice the various gifts of those who engaged in them. Thus the general baptists at Spalding agreed, “ That we will meet together every Wednesday evening, to seek the Lord by prayer and supplication : and that our brethren, as many of

“ that Mary Cox, was greatly afflicted with heavy temptations, it was desired by her and her parents, that a day should be set apart, by fasting, to seek the Lord on her behalf : which was consented unto.” F. S. R.

And, with regard to the fast, at Amersham, mentioned in the text, it is pleasing to read this minute of a subsequent church meeting “ The ninth of the eighth month, the church kept as a day of thanksgiving to almighty God ; because he was pleased to give most of the things which we had been seeking to him for by fasting and prayer.”

Numerous instances of a similar nature occur in the records of these churches, but these will suffice to give an idea of their proceedings in such cases.

\* Somerset, Conf. xxiii. 14.

† Supra p. 104.

them as can, lay out themselves in such a manner for the Lord, as seems most to answer the gifts given them of the Lord; that so a discovery may be made of that precious treasure of preaching and expounding the word, which, it is hoped, may tend to the glorifying of our heavenly Father, and the edifying of one another.\* And, in the church at Shad Thames, the younger brethren were encouraged to assemble, at the meeting-house, every Lord's-day morning, "to improve their spiritual gifts and graces, to the edification of such as should give them attendance."†

When, at these private meetings, any brother gave indications of possessing promising abilities, it was reported to the church-meeting, and he was desired to exercise his gifts before the brethren. After a proper trial, he was, if approved, called to the work of the ministry. At first, he was employed only occasionally; and styled "a gifted brother:" but if his conduct and abilities merited encouragement, he soon became more regularly engaged in the sacred work, and was designated "a brother confirmed in the ministry." In most churches there were two or three of the latter description; and, sometimes, a considerable number of "gifted brethren."‡

This mode of proceeding was well adapted for the discovery, trial, and improvement of real ministerial abilities, and to guard against the forwardness of those who only imagined that they possessed them. For it was held unlawful for any one, who had not been approved by the church, to preach publicly to the world. And

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\* B. M. S. S. from Spalding Church Books.

† S. T. C. B. 1691.

‡ F. S. R. p. 146.

there are many instances, in their records, of persons being censured, and even excluded, for disobedience to this regulation.\*

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SECT. 8.—*The Discipline exercised in the General Baptist Churches, to prevent Offences, and correct Offenders.*

THE general baptists of the seventeenth century considered Christ as the sole Governor of his church; and the precepts of the New Testament as the only rules of discipline. They, there-

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\* The following advices, respecting the calling forth of ministers, were given by the General Assembly, in reply to a case from Burnham: and may be considered as an epitome of the proceedings of their party on this subject.—“1. Every brother who concludes that he hath a gift to be improved, for the benefit of the church, ought to be permitted to express the same in private meetings for approbation—2. Every such brother ought to submit to the judgment of the church, to improve his gift when and where they shall think meet—3. If upon such a brother's exercising his gift, for some time, the major part of the church do approve it, and desire him, by his gift, to serve the church, we think he is then lawfully called to the work, and ought to do it.—4. But, if the major part do not think him so gifted as to preach publickly, then he and the minor part of the church are to be content with his private exercise; until the Lord shall please to indue him with greater ability for the public ministry.—5. But if the brother approved by the major part be called to the public ministry, the minor part ought not to discourage such a brother, either by word or actions; but to keep their places, and quietly sit down under a minister so approved.—6. Those who wilfully absent themselves from the meeting, when some brother so approved preaches, to the grief and discouragement of such brother, act disorderly, and are worthy of reproof.—7. We look upon it to be the duty of every member to love and encourage every gifted brother, and to pray for him, with all seriousness: which may be the means to prevail with God to enlarge his gifts, and to send forth more labourers.”

*Minutes of Gen. Assembly. 1704.*

fore, transacted all the affairs of the church in his name: and, as far as they could judge, according to his laws. All their records, which have fallen under our notice, afford pleasing evidence of this: for scarcely any decision of moment is entered, without a reference to the texts of scripture on which it is founded.

They also believed, that the church, as a body, was the only interpreter of the will of its great Legislator: and alone competent to decide questions relating to his cause. "Mind well," says W. Jeffery, "the power to judge differences, and to deal with members, lies in the body, the church; not in the officers distinct or apart from the church. This plainly appears from Matt. xviii. 17. 1 Cor. v. 1—6. Mark x. 43, 44."\*—They were, therefore, anxious that as many of the members as possible should attend at their meetings for discipline: and esteemed a neglect of them, unless for very urgent reasons, as worthy of serious animadversion. Thus the church at Canterbury agreed, in 1668, "that in case any member neglect such meetings as are appointed for discipline, they shall send the cause by some member, that day; or otherwise declare it themselves the next first day: and upon the failure of this, the person shall be reprobable."†

Their discipline may be considered as either preventive or corrective. The one designed by a vigilant oversight, to preserve the members from acting inconsistently with their high vocation: and the other, to reclaim such as had been led astray, or to clear the church from any parti-

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\* Whole Faith of Man, pp. 107, 108. Hooke's Necessary Apology, p. 88. Stanley's Christianity Indeed, p. 90.

† P. I. from Canterbury church Book.

icipation in the guilt or disgrace of their wanderings.

We have already seen, that, for the purpose of effectual superintendance, their societies, when they became too numerous for the inspection of the pastor alone, were divided into small districts. To each of these districts were appointed proper overseers, for the express purpose of "taking particular care of each member in their respective divisions, of their conversation and carriage—to take a strict notice what disorders may arise, and bring them regularly before the monthly church-meeting." In some congregations, each of the deacons undertook the superintendance of a district, and chose an experienced brother to assist him: but, in others, a number of distinct officers were chosen for this service, under the denomination of "Helps in government."\*—Monthly meetings were regularly held in most churches, for the transaction of the usual business of the society: and a general meeting, every three months, for the purpose of inquiring into the character and conduct of the members.

The strictness with which a regular attendance on the means of grace, and at the church-meetings, was enforced, has been already noticed. The same vigilance was exercised over the conduct of the members, in their families, in their business, in their connections in civil society, and even in their recreations. When any thing was observed contrary to the dictates of christi-

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\* See *Biddenden Church Book*, 1678.—The business of these *helps in government* is more concisely described, in another place, thus—"to look over and take care of the congregation in respect of their inward and outward condition—that is, to see how it stands between God and their souls, and how it is with them in respect of their outward wants," *Ibid.* 1686.

anity or morality, it was immediately checked by the affectionate remonstrances of these inspectors. This well-timed opposition to the beginnings of disorder, before principles were weakened or habits formed, must frequently have produced a most happy effect in restoring the wanderer to the paths of virtue. If any impropriety of conduct, or heresy in sentiment, was suspected to be insinuating itself among the people, the suspicion was soon reported to a church-meeting, where the error was examined, exposed, and condemned. Sometimes, not content with this private opposition, they desired their ministers to attack the intruder from the pulpit. As the members in general attended these meetings, and had a right to deliberate and vote on every subject, they were not only strengthened against the danger by the arguments of their brethren; but exposed themselves to self-condemnation if they acted contrary to the decisions in which they had joined. Nor were the ministers themselves exempt from this inspection. The superior importance of their character subjected their moral character to a more rigorous observation: and if any thing escaped from them in preaching, which was judged contrary to the scriptures, they were amenable to the same tribunal; and obliged to defend or retract their doctrines before the congregation.\*

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\* The following extracts, which might easily have been extended to ten times their number, will illustrate and confirm the observations in the text.

In 1656, some of the members of the church at Fenstanton, had contracted a habit of going occasionally to hear the clergy of the establishment, and the practice appeared to gain ground. It was, therefore, brought before the church-meeting, when "the congregation entered into a debate on the business: and

But, notwithstanding all this laudable care to prevent offences, yet cases would frequently occur which called for the exercise of discipline. Such is the proneness of our nature to evil, that no church, though collected with the greatest care, and superintended in the most vigilant manner, can long expect to be exempt from disorders in conversation, or errors in sentiment. The records of these societies prove, that they were composed of fallen and imperfect mortals.

In cases of private offences of one brother against another, they rigorously enforced the mode prescribed in Matt. xviii. 15, 16, 17. They thought, that when the great Head of the church

it was at length resolved—that it is unlawful for any member of this congregation to hear the teachers of the church of England, unless to reprove them." *F. S. R.* 304.

Towards the close of the seventeenth century, the Kentish general baptists seem to have paid too little attention to the preservation of peace among themselves, and to have indulged too freely in dress and show. This being observed by the society at Bessell's-green, a church-meeting was held, July 9th. 1697, when it was resolved.—1. That differences between brethren be speedily reconciled.—2. That all superfluity of apparel be laid aside: and that there be a moderation in all things;—and 3. That it be publickly preached down in the congregation; and that fathers and masters of families endeavour to suppress it." But these means did not, it appears, wholly remove the evil; for, at a subsequent meeting, April 11th. 1698, they adopted still stronger language. "Agreed, that the soul-condemning sin of pride be utterly extirpated and rooted out from amongst us; and that all the discriminating characters thereof, to wit, superfluity of apparel, &c. be utterly extinguished." *B. G. C. B.* 1697, 1698.

In 1678, a minister of the church at Shad-Thames was accused of preaching heresy. The affair was brought before the congregation, and he was "desired to come to the church and vindicate his doctrine, or be reclaimed from so great an error." The minister obeyed; and, after a full investigation, was acquitted: and the person who brought the charge was treated as "a false accuser," and ordered to make satisfaction. *S. T. C. B.* 1678.

had condescended to give such explicit directions, it was highly presumptuous not to pay a sacred regard to them. If, therefore, a complaint of this nature was brought to the church, before the previous steps, directed by our Saviour, had been taken, it was firmly rejected: and the complainant ordered, first, to perform his own duty, and then, if there should be a necessity, to bring forward his accusation. This steady adherence to the divine injunctions had the desired effect: and their records afford few instances of personal offences being brought before the congregation. Yet sometimes the offending party was stubborn, or the offended unreasonable; and neither private exhortation, nor the intervention of friends, could effect a reconciliation. An appeal to the church then became necessary: and, the complaint having been received, a day was appointed to hear both parties. If, after due investigation, the church concluded that a trespass had been committed, the offender was required to make satisfaction to his offended brother. If he complied, his sin was remitted, and he retained his fellowship: but, in case of refusal to obey the decree of the church, he was, after three admonitions, excluded; and "counted as a heathen man and a publican."

In some difficult cases of personal offences, a committee of judicious persons were appointed, to investigate the circumstances, and report the result to the church. And when the assertions of the parties concerned contradicted each other, and no other evidence could be obtained, they thought it "the churches' duty and liberty to appeal to the God of heaven, by casting lots, and making serious supplication to him, that he would be pleased to order and dispose of the lot

for their direction ; to shew which of the two was the guilty person :” and when the Lord had thus discovered him, they proceeded against the person on whom the lot fell as certainly guilty.\*

But the most numerous class of offenders were such as sinned, not against one another, but against the Lord : for they esteemed all acts of dishonesty, intemperance, or immorality, as sins against God himself. These were reckoned public offences ; and it was thought necessary, that the punishment should be prompt and signal. When any member, therefore, discovered that a brother or sister was guilty of an offence of this nature, he was expected to take the earliest opportunity of stating it to the congregation. Had he neglected, or even delayed, to do this, he would have been blamed for suffering sin on his brother, for obstructing his recovery, and for bringing the church into communion with the sinner.† But, in order to guard against frivolous or malicious accusations, the accuser was required to state the charge in writing, signed with his own name.‡ A copy of this charge was handed to the accused, who was summoned to attend at the next meeting for discipline : or, if the facts were very serious and scandalous, at a special meeting held for the purpose of considering them. On the appointed day, the case was solemnly investigated, and judgment given. If the crime was proved, to the

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\* Stanley's Christianity Indeed, p. 95.

† Jeffery's Whole Faith of Man, p. 104.

‡ These written accusations were sometimes very laconic. The following is a literal copy of one which was presented to the church at Dockhead, December 11th. 1704. “*Sir, I accuse Mrs. S— of swearing, and lying, and backbiting, and ingratitude. ELIZ. DICKES.*” The charges, however, were proved ; and Mrs. S. dismissed from the society. *S. T. C. B.*

satisfaction of the church, the offender was solemnly excluded from the society. But, if he professed penitence, and submitted to the decision of the church, after a sufficient time had been given to prove his sincerity, and nothing had transpired inconsistent with his professions, he was re-admitted to communion. Yet, in all cases of notorious scandal, it was thought necessary, to vindicate the honour of religion, that the separation of the offender from the congregation should be openly announced to the world, in the course of public worship: but, when the sins were of a more private nature, it was thought sufficient to notify it, to the church only, at the Lord's table.\*

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\* Of all the offences of a public nature, that which occupied their attention the most frequently and gave them the greatest trouble was "marrying out of the church." They had observed, that, in all the dispensations of the church, the patriarchal, the Abrahamic, and the Mosaic, the Lord had confined marriage within the bounds of that dispensation. They believed, that the apostles had adopted this restriction into the system of christianity; and that therefore it was binding on them. Judging, that the general estimation which the scripture makes of believers, is that they are members of the visible church; and esteeming their own to be the only truly-constituted churches, it was always a rule, that those who joined them should not marry any person who was not a member of some of their societies. Marrying, therefore, out of the faith, was esteemed an aggravated fault: because it was committed against the laws of God, the declared judgment of the church, and the offender's own agreement when he joined their society. Such offences were, however, daily occurring; and they were much puzzled how to proceed with the culprits. To require the parties to separate after they were married would have been highly improper; and to leave the delinquent in a state of excommunication, without the hope of reconciliation, would have been very severe. They, therefore, accepted the profession of repentance from the offender, if attested by suitable conduct; and, in due time, restored him to communion. *Minutes of the Gen. Assembly 1704. Biddenden Church Book, 1657, &c. &c.*

With those, however, who refused to hear the church, the discipline proceeded. If the offender attended the church-meeting, and justified his conduct, in opposition to the decision of his brethren, he was, in the presence of the whole congregation, seriously and earnestly admonished of the guilt he had contracted, and affectionately urged to repentance. If he still persisted, he was suspended from all the privileges of the church, and the business postponed till the next meeting. But when the accused did not attend the summons, and appear in his place, at the time appointed, it was considered as an aggravation of his crime: and to the list of charges already exhibited, was added that of "slighting the church." Messengers were sent to admonish him, to exhort him to repentance, and warn him to attend the next meeting for discipline.

After three admonitions, of this serious nature, had been sent at proper intervals, without effect, the church proceeded to what they termed "the ordinance of excommunication." This was, with them, a very affecting transaction. The elder, by the authority of the church, and in the name of the Lord Jesus, using the apostolic language, solemnly "delivered the offender to Satan, for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit might be saved in the day of the Lord." When the party was present, this sentence was pronounced in the face of the whole assembly; and accompanied with serious prayer, and earnest and affectionate exhortations with the fallen brother. If he refused to attend, messengers were deputed by the church, to seek him out, and pronounce the sentence on him personally: tendering him, at the same time, an admonition to repentance.

Another description of offenders, which frequently occupied their attention, at their meetings for discipline, were such as held, or were suspected to hold, heretical opinions. For, however lax in sentiment the general baptists of later times might be, it is certain that, during the seventeenth century, they were sufficiently rigid. They believed that the injunction of the apostle to Titus,\* made it the duty of every true christian church to reject heretics: and, with their usual alacrity, they endeavoured to follow the precepts of that great master-builder. In some cases, perhaps, they pushed their proceedings with too much rigor; yet they evinced an ardent love to truth, and a sincere desire to do the will of God. Their records abound with proceedings against such as entertained the doctrines of the quakers, or the high calvinists, or denied the divinity or humanity of Christ. The mode of proceeding was very similar to that with public offenders; and the sentence was the same:—they delivered obstinate heretics to Satan.†

But, it ought to be observed, that this solemn process was intended, by these christians, as a powerful means, under the influence of divine

\* Titus iii. 10, 11.

† Some of the members of the church an Fenstanton, in 1655, had turned to the quakers, and J. Denne and E. Mayle, were sent, by the congregation, to excommunicate them. One of the apostates insisted, that the church had no authority to deliver persons to Satan, for errors in doctrine, but only for immoral conduct: according to 1 Cor. v. 14. The messengers desired him to read 1 Tim. i. 19, 20: which when he had done, they replied: "Thou hast read the cause of thy condemnation: for thou art delivered unto Satan for the same cause, even for making shipwreck of faith and putting away a good conscience. Wherefore from henceforth keep silence: for out of thine own mouth art thou judged and condemned." F. S. R. 199.

grace, of reclaiming the wanderer; bringing him to sincere repentance, and finally restoring him to his friends and his God. Equally anxious to shew their obedience to all the precepts of scripture, if they delivered a sinner to Satan, it was for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit might be saved in the day of the Lord.\* If they shunned his company, and avoided all intimacy with him; it was, that he might be ashamed of his sin, and turn from it:—they still counted him not as an enemy, but admonished him as a brother.† These admonitions were continued long after the party had been excluded. Messengers were appointed, from time to time, by the church, to search him out, and exhort him to reflect from whence he had fallen: to repent, and do his first works. These messages were constantly repeated, till death removed the unhappy object out of the reach of their good offices; or hardened and undisguised profligacy rendered the case hopeless.‡

It ought, also, to be remembered, that, though these churches were so liberal of their censures,

\* 1 Cor. v. 5. † 2 Thess. iii. 14. 15.

‡ A few of these christians thought that the church had a power of inflicting a higher kind of excommunication, which entirely cut the offender off from all possibility of reconciliation. This they expressed by the apostle's phrase, *Anathema Maranatha*; 1 Cor. xvi. 22. and considered it the highest act of authority committed to the church. But though they claimed this power, yet they esteemed it highly dangerous for any society to attempt to exercise it, which could not infallibly judge of character. (*Orthodox Creed*, Art 34.)—The pious W. Jeffery seems to have thought, that the excommunication inflicted after three properly conducted admonitions, ought to be final, (*Whole Faith of Man*, pp. 105, 106.)—But these acts of discipline were most generally considered and employed as means of reclaiming the offender.

yet they confined the effects wholly to spiritual penalties ; and, by no means designed to injure the temporal circumstances of those whom they excommunicated. It formed a distinct article in their first creed, “ that excommunicants, in respect of civil society, are not to be avoided : ” \* and the same principles regulated their future proceedings. They steadily maintained, that no man ought to suffer in his rights, as a member of civil society, on account of his religious sentiments : and that church censures respected only church privileges.

Such was the mode of dealing with offenders, adopted by the English general baptists of the seventeenth century. Some have censured it, as betraying too much of rigour and bigotry : but Dr. Wall, who, living in the midst of them, had a good opportunity of observing its progress and effects, mentions it with honour, as well deserving of commendation and imitation. After describing their method of treating personal offences, he adds, “ As this is very much according to our Saviour’s and St. Paul’s direction in such cases ; so I have been told that it has the good effect to prevent abundance of law-suits, and end many quarrels : very few of them offering to withstand the general verdict and opinion of all their brethren. And there is no reason to doubt but that a like course would, if it were put in practice, have a like good effect among other societies of christians.” † And a little after, speaking of their dealing with open sinners, he observes, “ The like discipline, of renouncing brotherhood, they use against such of their com-

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\* Conf. 1611. Art 11.

† Hist. of Inf. Bap. Vol. 11. pp. 216, 275, 279, 280.

munion as are known to be guilty of any such immorality as is a scandal to the christian profession of a sober and godly life: for which care of their members, there is no man but will commend them."

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SECT. 9.—*Their Care of the Poor—Method of solemnizing Marriages—Washing Feet—Anointing with Oil—Miscellaneous Remarks.*

ANOTHER part of the discipline of the English general baptists, regarded the maintenance of their poor; for which they were honourably distinguished. Dr. Wall says, "they were particularly commended for maintaining their poor liberally:" and ascribes the number of proselytes that joined them to the good-will of the multitude, which they gained by this liberality.\* It is ranked in their Creeds, among the christian duties. "The deacons," say the Confessors of 1611, "are to relieve the necessities of the poor and impotent brethren."† "The poor saints," say Mr. Grantham and his associates, "belonging to the church of Christ, are to be sufficiently provided for by the churches, that they neither want food nor raiment: and this, by a free and voluntary contribution; and not of necessity, or by the constraint of the magistrate."‡

The deacons, whose peculiar duty it was to superintend this part of the concerns of the church, were required to look out for proper objects: and the poor were invited and encouraged to make their difficulties known to them. It

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\* Hist. of Inf. Bap. Vol. II. p. 216.

† Conf. 1611, Art. 20. ‡ Conf. 1660, Art. 19.

was, indeed, esteemed disorderly to contract debts, before they had applied for relief to the church. It was the duty of the deacons to investigate the accuracy of the statements; and, if necessary, to recommend them to the church. Relief was then afforded, in proportion to the urgency of the case, or the ability of the society. When it was thought requisite, a weekly allowance was granted, which, sometimes, was very liberal, and was continued as long as the case required it.\* Nor did they confine their benevolence to their own society. It not unfrequently happened, when the poor in a church were numerous, and the members few or indigent, that they recommended some of their needy friends to a more affluent congregation: from which they were allowed weekly pensions.† And, when the churches in any district were unable to support their own poor, they applied for assistance to the societies in other districts; and seldom applied in vain.

The funds for these benevolent purposes were raised from various sources. Some of these christians thought themselves obliged, in compliance with apostolic injunction,‡ to lay aside,

\* In 1688, the church in White's-alley gave to one poor sister, six shillings weekly: a considerable sum at that time. In July, the following year, the regular pensions allowed, by the same church, to poor members, amounted to the sum of £ 1. 11s. 6d. weekly; exclusive of frequent occasional donations, to meet temporary demands: such as paying rent, purchasing winter fuel, discharging surgeons' bills, &c. &c. W. A. C. B.

† Thus, in the Records of the church, just named, we find this entry. "June 2, 1690. Whereas brother Eades, a member at Dock-head, is in a very languishing condition, and that church is not in circumstances to relieve him, it is agreed, that we will allow him, at present, one shilling per week." W.A.C.B.

‡ 1 Cor. xvi. 1, 2.

weekly, for the support of the poor, a certain proportion of their profits.\* The deacons were expected to admonish such of the members as appeared remiss or niggardly in their contributions; and, if they neglected to attend to the admonition, to bring them before the church. A collection, for the poor, was made, in many congregations, every week; and, in most others, monthly, at the conclusion of the Lord's supper: and those members who were absent, on these occasions, were required to send their contributions. And, as the interest increased, opulent and benevolent persons left legacies to many churches, for the use of the poor. But, it is much to be doubted, whether this produced any lasting benefit:—for successors, finding such a fund provided, felt less necessity for personal exertion: and lost, it is to be feared, much of the zeal of their worthy ancestors.

The best things may be abused; and even the laudable generosity of these churches encouraged imposition. So early as 1652, "some persons made it a trade to go from place to place to seek relief:" and, it is very probable, that idle persons might sometimes unite themselves with their societies, with the sordid design of obtaining pecuniary support. They were, however, apprised of this danger, and adopted various regulations, in the disposing of their bounty, well adapted to guard against its misapplication.†

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\* Orthodox Creed, Art. 35.

† The church at Fenstanton, in 1652, adopted, on the motion of Mr. Denne, several resolutions, on this subject, which appear to have been imitated, in a great degree, by most of the G. B. churches. The following are the principal: "1. That it is the duty of persons that are in want, truly to declare their condition

Closely connected with the discipline of these churches, was their method of solemnizing marriages. They esteemed marriage as highly important to society; and thought that it ought to be under the cognizance of the civil magistrate: and, had the state made regulations concerning it, unconnected with religious ceremonies, they would cheerfully have complied with them. But in the "form of matrimony directed by the service-book," they found, as they thought, much of superstition and popery, which they believed themselves obliged to witness against. They could not conceive, for instance, why the ring must be laid on the service-book, and pass thro' the hands of the priest, before it was fit for the use intended: unless it was supposed to have gained some secret efficacy, or peculiar sanctification, by the operation. The introduction, also, of the sacred Three, on this occasion, shocked them: for they thought it dangerous to speak a word, much less perform a ceremony, in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, which he had not commanded. Nor could they under-

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to the church or the deacons. 2. That after due examination had of the condition of any brother, by the deacons, they are to declare it to the congregation. 3. That if any one belonging to the congregation hath any in want, that are nearly allied to him, he shall, to the utmost of his ability, relieve them, and not suffer them to be burdensome to the church. 4. That no person shall, at any time, be relieved by the congregation, but such as, to the utmost of his ability, does use all lawful means for his subsistence. 5. That if the congregation are not able to relieve those that are in want among them, but are obliged to send to other congregations, for help, they will not send any person in want, either with or without a letter, to gather their liberality for himself, but will send a man that is not in want, of whose fidelity they have had experience, that he may receive their liberality, and bring it to the congregation. F. S. R. 23,—38.

stand how to worship their wives. To worship any creature, in the sacred name of God, appeared to them very suspicious: and though they acknowledged that there was a kind of civil worship due to superiors; yet, as the law of God and nature had made the man the superior in marriage, they “saw no occasion to unman themselves, to gratify a ceremony.”

They, therefore, usually solemnized their marriages amongst themselves, in a manner very similar to that now adopted by the quakers.—When two persons, qualified according to the law of God and their country, with respect to the degrees of affinity, and their freedom from all other engagements, had agreed to unite in the marriage state, it was required that they should give notice of such intention to the church of which they were members, a sufficient time before the nuptials; that proper inquiries might be made respecting the circumstances. If no objection appeared, the parties, accompanied by their friends, and the pastor of the society, or some other minister, repaired to a meeting appointed, by previous notice, for this purpose: and there, in the presence of the congregation, joining their hands, they declared, that, from that day, they took each other for husband and wife: mutually engaging to treat each other with all the affection and fidelity which that relation required. They afterwards signed a Certificate of the transaction, drawn up on a paper properly stamped: which was attested by the signatures of as many of the company present, as were thought convenient. The minister then concluded the meeting, by giving suitable exhortations to the newly-married couple, and offering up solemn prayer to God, for his blessing on their union.



marriage act was passed: which requires all marriages to be solemnized in an episcopal church or chapel, after the publication of banns, and in the form prescribed in the liturgy of the established church. Since that period, all dissenters, except the quakers and the Jews, who were specially exempted from the restrictions of the act, have been obliged, in the article of matrimony, to conform.

When professors found themselves at liberty, during the confusions caused by the civil wars, to read the scriptures, and act for themselves, several of the English General Baptists, as well as others, esteeming the example and precept of the great Head of the church, respecting *washing the feet of the saints*,\* to be binding on all his followers, conscientiously practised it as a religious institution. It appears to have been warmly debated in Lincolnshire, during the protectorate. That troubler of Israel, R. Wright, stickled hard, in 1653, to make it a term of communion:† but his attempts were unsuccessful. We have no evidence of its being much practised after the Revolution, except among the Kentish churches. So early as 1659, W. Jeffery, the founder of those churches, pleads for it—as “commanded and blest by Christ”—“as setting out Christ’s humility”—as “declaring that the ways of Christ are self-denying ways”—“as being a self-denying practice, and therefore serving to humble the creature”—and, “when performed decently, and in order, as tending to produce affection among brethren.”‡ Yet these reasons did not long satisfy some of his successors. About the close of that century,

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\* John xiii. 4—17.

† Supra, p. 135.

‡ Whole Faith of Man, p. 103.

the church at Bessell's Green passed this liberal resolution. "As touching washing of feet, it was agreed, that those amongst us that see it a duty should be found in the practice of it: and those who cannot see it to be their duty should not withdraw their affection, in the least, from those who do; nor those who do, from those who do not: but all maintain an equal respect for each other."\*

We have not met with any clear account of the manner in which they conducted this ceremony. From several entries in their records, it seems, that it was not attended to at any stated seasons; but occasionally, at times appointed for that service by the church. And, it is probable, that, on these occasions, they imitated, as nearly as circumstances would permit, the procedure of our Saviour, when, as they thought, he instituted this ordinance.

There was another rite, which obtained much more extensive and durable footing among the English general baptists; and which they grounded on the apostolic precept, "Is any sick among you? Let him call for the elders of the church: and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: and the prayer of faith shall save the sick: and the Lord shall raise him up."† This *anointing the sick with oil*, they considered to be the peculiar privilege of the children of God, in all ages: which might, therefore, when the parties were properly qualified, still be legally claimed, and with humble confidence used. It was necessary, as they thought, that the sick should be an approved member of their church; and that he should not

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\* B. G. C. B. &c.

† James v. 14, 15.

only be convinced of the divine appointment of this ordinance, but also express his ardent desire to enjoy the benefit of it. It was requisite, too, that the administrators should possess a full persuasion of the propriety and efficacy of the operation. And, as the original direction mentions *elders* of the church, it was long thought improper for one minister to act alone in this ordinance. It was not till 1701 that the Lincolnshire Association determined, that it might, in cases of urgency, be performed by a single elder. So scrupulous were the Kentish general baptists in observing the express letter of the institution, that, when the church at Biddenden, in 1678, divided into two parts, and their elders G. Hammon and J. Blackmore became independent pastors of the distinct societies, it was agreed, at the time of the separation, "That each elder shall fairly and willingly, as aforesaid, join the other, and go to such members of each congregation as are sick, and shall send for them, to administer the ordinance of anointing, till there is some other provision made in the congregation, from which they may supply themselves."

The enemies of these christians have endeavoured to give an air of superstition and impiety to this practice, by calling it "extreme unction;" and thus identifying it with the popish sacrament so denominated: and grave historians have perpetuated the calumny.\* But the design of

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\* Thus, Dr. Wall, calls it "*extreme unction* of the sick, spoken of James v." *Inf. Bap.* Part II. 272. Whiston's loose mode of expression seemed to favour the identity of the Romish and baptist practices. *Memoirs*, Vol. II. p. 473. And Dr. Mosheim, who had no other guides, roundly states it, as one of the "peculiar" rites of the English general baptists, that, "They use extreme unction." *Eccl. Hist.* Vol. IV. p. 480. No wonder that

anointing with oil, among the baptists, was to cure the sick, and restore him to health; and the mode of administration was conformable to the precept which requires only the prayer of faith: while the extreme unction of the papists is accompanied with many superstitious ceremonies: and only administered to persons at the point of death, as a passport to heaven, rather than as the means of recovery.

Though there is such abundant evidence, that this ceremony was occasionally observed by the general baptists, through the whole period of which we are treating; yet we have not met with any well-attested accounts of particular cases, before the close of the seventeenth century. Afterwards, such cases are numerous: and the results of some of them truly surprising. Indeed, this practice appears to have much increased in their estimation, during the former part of the succeeding century. In 1757, a learned general baptist, a layman, who could not be supposed to be self-interested, thus describes it. "This holy unction is the children's peculiar privilege, which, thro'

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an opponent, in the heat of debate, should improve these reports, and exclaim, "Let us look into their end, and bring them to their grave; and here, like the papists, they use the extreme unction." *Russen's Fundamentals without a Foundation*, p 60. To this rant, the judicious Joseph Stennett calmly replies, "When he calls it," (the baptists' anointing wit hoil) "extreme unction," and says they administer it at the last hour, like the papists, he does them wrong: for this is not done when they despair of life; but for the recovery of the sick, as his own words afterwards declare. And though I cannot say I am satisfied, that the obligation of the precept, James v. 14. 15, continues, since miracles are not common in the christian church; yet, I must acknowledge there seems to be more in that text to countenance such a practice, than Mr. Russen has produced, from the whole scriptures, in favour of the opinions he professedly defends in this treatise." *Answer to Russen*, page 205.

divine grace, and God's unbounded love to his people, is appointed and designed for the relief of our bodies, the comfort of our souls, the strengthening our faith and hope in all the gracious promises of his holy word, and steadfast walking in all the sacred ordinances of his house and worship: and also for the advancement of his own glory, the discovery of his love and faithfulness, and the manifestation of the truth of the christian religion throughout all the ages of it."\*

Several historians have mentioned the abstaining from the eating of blood as one of the characteristics of the general baptists. But, though it is true that they generally, perhaps universally, believed the practice forbidden, both by the precept given to Noah,† and the decree of the church at Jerusalem;‡ yet so many conscientious persons, of other persuasions, have always agreed with them in this opinion, that it cannot be reckoned as descriptive of them. It would, indeed, have been very surprising, if men so determined to follow literally the precepts of scripture, had entertained any scruple on this subject.

Various other particulars have been recorded: but, as they were only partially adopted by them, and were practised by others, we omit them. It may be necessary, however, to hint, that neither the washing of feet, anointing with oil, nor abstaining from blood, are ever mentioned in their public Confessions: and, therefore, formed no part of their belief or practice, as a body.—We close this section with two remarks.

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\* G. Killingworth's Reply to Whiston, pp. 9, 10.

† Gen. ix. 4.

‡ Acts xv. 29,

However these good, but, in general, illiterate men, might misunderstand the proper application of some parts of the oracles of truth ; yet, it is evident, they were actuated by a deep sense of their authority, and an earnest wish to submit to their direction. What else but a holy determination to obey God, could have inspired them with courage to brave the insults, the ridicule, and the persecution of all parties ; and to persevere, with unshaken constancy, in the profession and practice of what they esteemed the laws of their Saviour?—We have seen their enemies treating them with every possible indignity while living ; insulting their bodies when dead ; depriving them of their property, their liberty, and even of their lives ; calumniating their characters, in the most cruel and wanton manner ; and holding them up, at once, to the hatred and derision of their fellow-subjects :—and yet these christians quietly proceeded in the conscientious discharge of their duty ; and left their defence to Him, whom they served. Such fortitude and obedience do honour to their memories ; and furnish an useful lesson to their successors. If these esteem themselves better instructed in some parts of divine knowlege than their ancestors were, may they evince the same zeal for the honor of their Redeemer, the same disposition to keep all his commandments, and the same child-like simplicity in receiving all his doctrines !

It is worthy of observation, too, that in all our researches, we have found nothing like imposition, as to the mode of administering any of these ordinances. Neither the writings of their leading men, nor the transactions of their associations or general assemblies, furnish even the

outlines of a form, to be generally observed. Nor did they, like the presbyterians, who profess to condemn prescribed models, publish a long directory, to instruct the administrator in the due mode of discharging every part of his duty. No. They left their ministers and brethren to study that infallible directory, the word of God, and to regulate their procedure in all affairs of a religious nature, to the best of their own judgments, in conformity to that sacred standard. Happy would it have been for the cause of truth, had all christians acted on the same principles!

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SECT. 10.—*Associations—General Assemblies—Right of Appeal—the Authority of General Assemblies—their Utility.*

We have thus far considered the general baptist churches as independent societies, each carrying on the cause of the Redeemer distinctly from the rest : but we should do them great injustice, did we not contemplate them as acting in concert, in the great work in which they were all engaged.

As soon as any number of general baptist churches had been gathered, in any county or district, they united to support a periodical meeting, to consult for the common welfare. Such a meeting was called an *Association*, and was usually held, at the principal place of the district, quarterly, half yearly, or annually, according to the convenience of the congregations supporting it. It was composed of two or more representatives from each church in the district, elected to this office by the church which sent

them. The messenger or elder was most frequently chosen, and was joined to one or more respectable private brethren : who had equal right with the ministers to deliberate and vote.

The business usually transacted at these associations was—the reformation of inconsistent or immoral conduct, whether in ministers or private christians—the prevention or suppression of heresy—the reconciling of differences between members and churches—the giving of advice in difficult cases, whether respecting individuals or societies—the proposing of plans of usefulness—the recommending of cases that required pecuniary support—and, in short, the devising of the most effectual means of promoting the prosperity of religion in the world at large, but especially in their own churches.

It is not easy to ascertain the number of Associations into which the English general baptists were divided ; new unions being frequently formed, and old ones dissolved. During the period which we have been reviewing, we have discovered traces of the Buckinghamshire, the Cambridgeshire, the Dorsetshire, the Isle of Ely, the Kentish, the Lincolnshire, the London, the Northamptonshire, the Western, and the Wiltshire Associations. These all existed at the close of the seventeenth century ; and appear then to have been, in a greater or less degree, flourishing. Several of them, we know, were composed of a considerable number of prosperous churches :—the Buckinghamshire Association, in 1678, was attended by upwards of fifty-four messengers, elders, and brethren.—These meetings, probably, took their rise during the civil wars, as we find them frequently assembling under the protectorate.

These Associations, in the different parts of the nation, maintaining only a local union, a more general co-operation became desirable. To effect this, occasional meetings were held, usually in London, as the centre of the kingdom, which they styled *General Assemblies*. They were composed of representatives from the various Associations, and from such churches as chose to send their deputies: which might be either ministers or private brethren. Mr. Grantham, after having detailed the proceedings of the meeting at Jerusalem,\* which they reckoned as the scriptural precedent both of their Associations and General Assemblies, adds, "From all which, is it without doubt, that, in General Assemblies, the brotherhood are to be admitted: such, doubtless, as are judicious, and apt to lend assistance in such weighty affairs. The reason is evident: because the gifts of the Holy Ghost are common to the whole brotherhood: by virtue of which they are permitted to speak in the church,† and consequently in general assemblies also, where the use of all manner of gifts are needful."‡

It is not easy to ascertain the exact date of the first introduction of General Assemblies among these churches: but we may place it, with great probability, under the protectorate. Mr. Grantham, in 1671, speaks of them as generally established and approved:§ and, in 1678, having mentioned the assembly, recorded Acts xv. he proceeds thus: "According to this precedent, the baptized churches in this age and nation have kept an Assembly-general for many years,

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\* Art xv.

† Cor. xiv. 31. ‡ Christ. Prim. Book II. Part II. p. 142.

§ Sigh for Peace, pp. 130—132.

for the better settlement of the churches to which they are related.”\* This Assembly has been continued to the present time; and is now annually held in Worship-street, on the Tuesday in Whitsun week. It has, indeed, been most usually held yearly; though it was occasionally adjourned for two, three, or even four years: and this, not only during the persecuting reigns of the Stuarts, but after the Revolution.†

This system of Associations and General Assemblies gave rise to a custom of *Appeal* from the decisions of particular churches. When any member thought himself aggrieved, by the proceedings of his church, he might appeal to two or more neighbouring churches, and require them to hear and judge the case. If the appeal was received, a meeting of deputies from each of the societies to which the appeal was made was appointed; and, both parties having been heard at length, judgment was given. But if either party remained still dissatisfied, the business might be brought before the Association to which they belonged; and have another investigation. And from the decision of the Association, there yet lay a final appeal to the General Assembly. For some time, the discontented persons appear to have been considered as having a right to claim a hearing: but this was found to protract altercations, and nourish a captious spirit. The Assembly therefore resolved, that no cases of this nature should be received by them, without the mutual consent and request of all the parties concerned.‡

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\* Chr. Prim. ubi supra p. 137.

† From 1689 to 1728, a period of thirty nine years, there were only twenty two general assemblies. *Minutes of Gen. Assembly.*

‡ “Resolved, that it be agreed, that if any controversy arise

This right of appeal appears hardly consistent with that independency of individual churches which these professors so strenuously asserted. Of this they were aware: and therefore restrained the power of Associations and General Assemblies to giving good advice, which, on account of the wisdom, experience, and piety of the persons who composed such meetings, challenged respectful consideration. They by no means allowed them to legislate for the churches, or considered their decrees as infallible. "This mutual consultation of many churches," observes Mr. Grantham, "shews not any superiority of churches one over another; but only the brotherly interest which they have in the strength of each other, and the duty which lieth upon the churches, to help one another in their difficulties."\* And, when treating on the question, "How far agreements made by a General Assembly do oblige the churches concerned by their representatives?" he asserts, "To ascribe infallibility to any Assembly since the apostles' days, must in no wise be allowed.—Wherefore, though we ought to consider with great respect what is concluded by a general

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in any church or churches, or between particular members thereof, that the controversy shall be heard and determined by the said church or churches in which it has risen, which have full power and authority from God's word to hear and determine, by the same word, all controversies among themselves. But if the controversy be not determined to the satisfaction of both parties, the dissatisfied member may, with the consent of the church or churches to which they belong, refer it to sister churches by their representatives, or to the association. If their decision be still unsatisfactory, it may be brought to the assembly, to be heard and determined, provided the contending parties so agree; but without such mutual agreement, the assembly hath no authority over any particular churches, only to give their counsel and advice." *Minutes of Gen. Assembly, 1711.*

\* Ubi supra. p. 139.

council of Christ's true ministers ; yet we may lawfully doubt of what they deliver, unless they confirm it by the word of the Lord."\*

This respectable author, however, esteemed Associations and General Assemblies as highly important and useful. "Doubtless," says he, "the strength of the church thus united, is the most powerful means under heaven, through the virtue of Christ's promise to be with them as his church, to stop the current of heresy, and to keep the churches in unity, both in doctrine and manners."† Nor did he think, that, in the formation of these Assemblies, it was necessary to attend to those differences, which in particular societies would forbid communion. "General Assemblies," he observes, "are ordained for general controversies ; and, through the blessing of God, are the best expedient under the sun for composing divisions in the churches. Here the liberty of christians should be, yea, must be, maintained ; though they differ right much in their opinions in matters of religion. We know well, that, not only the christians in the ages bordering on the primitive, but even the apostles of our Lord, did allow christians of very different persuasions freely to deliberate on things propounded in such assemblies. For my part, I could heartily wish, that all the congregations of christians in the world, that are baptized according to the appointment of Christ, would make one consistory, at least sometimes, to consider of the matters in difference among them. For if this be not admitted, there are no means remaining, as I conceive, to heal their divisions : and, consequently, to obtain that peace which should rule in the

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\* Ibid. p. 139.      † Ibid. p. 137.

hearts of all God's people, because they are thereunto called in one [universal] body."\*

This good man, who, though he was constantly engaged in controversy, was yet a sincere lover of peace, carried his views of the utility of these meetings still farther; and thought that they might be made instrumental in producing universal concord among all the various religious parties. "When it shall please God," he says, "to put it into the hearts of the rulers of nations to permit a free and general Assembly of the differing professors of christianity, for the finding out of the truth, we trust that some of the baptized churches will, if permitted, readily make their appearance, with others, to help on that needful work."\*



SECT. 11.—*Dissensions among the English General Baptists, at the close of the seventeenth century, respecting the opinions of Mr. Caffin*

WE have seen, in various instances, the sacred regard which the English General Baptists paid to the volume of inspiration. They were fully persuaded, that it was the word of a God of faithfulness and truth; and, therefore, very rationally concluded, that they had sufficient authority to believe any doctrine which it asserted. Convinced, by daily experience, that many things in nature and providence were to them incomprehensible, they never expected to be able fully to understand all the doctrines of revelation.—Hence, when any proposition of a religious nature

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\* Sigh for Peace, p. 131.

was offered to their consideration, their first care was, to examine whether it was taught in the scriptures: and, if they were convinced of this, they esteemed themselves bound to believe it, though it might, in some respects, exceed their comprehension. This was, for a long time, the general character of these professors: but, at length, some speculatists rose amongst them, who presumed to drag the doctrines of religion to the bar of their own reason. Before they ventured to give their assent to a truth, however plainly asserted by the inspired penmen, they examined whether they could understand and explain it: and, if it did not approve itself to their superior powers of reasoning, esteemed it a subject of doubt, if not of disbelief.

The leader of these rational sceptics was Mr. M. Caffin, pastor of the church at Horsham in Sussex: a minister eminent for his diligence and success, who had contributed much to the spread of the general baptist interest in those parts, and had suffered greatly for his attachment to it. He was a man of good natural abilities, which had been improved by a liberal education: an expert disputant, who, for half a century, had been considered as the champion of his party, and was often called to defend it against able opponents. This, probably, tempted him to depend too unguardedly on his own powers; and inclined him to suspect every thing which exceeded their grasp.

It appears, that he early began to puzzle himself with endeavouring to explain inexplicables. His first difficulty seems to have been, to reconcile the assertion, that Christ was free from sin, with the fact of his being conceived of the virgin. He could not understand how a clean thing could be

produced by an unclean one. Instead of referring to the scripture, and contenting himself with the account which it gives of the fact, he adopted an hypothesis which, as he thought, removed the difficulty. He supposed, that the body of Christ was miraculously created in the womb of his mother; and, therefore, did not partake of her substance. He pursued his reasonings, till, at length, he maintained, that "the Lord Jesus Christ, as he was the Word, John i. 1, was not of the uncreated substance of the Father, nor of the created substance of his mother; but that God made him a creature only: and that this creature was made flesh, not by taking flesh of the Virgin, but that the Word was turned into flesh in the womb of the Virgin." These were the sentiments which his enemies ascribed to him: though he appears to have artfully disguised them in public; and to have spoken out only in private conversation or correspondence.

With this turn of mind, it is no wonder that he disliked the Athanasian creed. "He readily acknowledged," when defending himself before the general Assembly, "that there were some propositions in that creed which were above his understanding, after the most diligent and impartial examination: and, therefore, he never had, nor could as yet receive it, as the standard of his faith"\* Had Mr. Caffin objected to this horrid formula, because it dares to explain what the oracles of truth have left unexplained; and to fix the penalty of eternal misery on the disbelief of these human explications, every intelligent friend to genuine christianity would have approved his conduct. But when he declared "that he could

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\* Crosby, Vol. III. p. 210.

not make it the standard of his faith, because it was above his understanding," he prepared the way for the denial of the most essential truths of the gospel.

Mr. Caffin was accustomed to converse frequently, on these subjects, with Mr. J. Wright, of Maidstone, with whom he had long been in habits of great intimacy. That minister, perceiving the destructive tendency of his principles, and probably observing, that they had already begun to produce baneful effects in the neighbouring churches, both in Kent and Sussex, thought it to be his duty to sacrifice private friendship to the public good. He therefore preferred a charge, at the general Assembly, against Mr. Caffin, of heresy, in denying both the divinity and humanity of our Saviour: and demanded, that he should be expelled from the Assembly, and from all communion with the baptized churches. Mr. Caffin, who was present, made a specious defence: professing his regard to Christ, and his submission to the authority of the scriptures: and concluded by observing, "that it had been his study and delight to exalt and honour his Saviour, both as God and man, to the highest degree of thought—that he never disturbed the minds of any christian about unrevealed sublimities; but was willing that every one should have the same liberty of judgment which he claimed for himself—and, that he was far enough from perfection in knowledge; but, as his friends well knew, was always open to conviction, and thankful for every addition of further light." The Assembly were so well satisfied with this defence, that they not only acquitted Mr. Caffin, but censured Mr. J. Wright for want of charity. Not discouraged, however, by this repulse, Mr. Wright, in conjunc-

tion with another minister, brought the business before an Assembly, held at Aylesbury: but here he was equally unsuccessful. That meeting resolved, "to maintain amity and friendship with Mr. Caffin, though he might differ a little in some abstruse unrevealed speculations."\*

Mr. Wright, finding his efforts fruitless, and despairing of rousing his colleagues to a sense of the danger that threatened the churches, withdrew from the Assembly, and protested against all its proceedings. Nor does he appear to have afterwards taken any part in this debate; though he lived at least seventeen years; and the controversy continued long after his death.—The date of his appeals to the Assembly is not preserved: but we have good evidence that it was prior to 1686 †

Mr. Caffin, encouraged probably by the failure of Mr. Wright's attempts, appears to have acted more openly in spreading his opinions. One John Weller had been excluded, by the Buckinghamshire churches, for maintaining openly the sentiments of which Mr. Caffin was suspected. To support his friend under what would probably be styled the persecution of bigotry, Mr. Caffin wrote a letter to Weller; in which he frankly avowed that he was of his opinion on the subjects in debate: calling the tenets for which he was suffering, "precious truths; in which he was full of confidence." At the general Assem-

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\* Crosby, Vol. III. pp. 281, 282.

† This is evident, from the following entry in the Biddenden Church Book, dated Sept. 6th. 1686. "Agreed, that we have communion with all our neighbour congregations, as occasion may offer: except it be with such persons as stand by and justify Joseph Wright in his late actions, which have been a grief to many."

bly, in 1692, Mr. Caffin had expressed himself, on these topics, with great freedom; and his words were taken down, and attested by several of the hearers.

In the year following, 1693, the former charges of denying the divinity and humanity of Christ were, once more, preferred against Mr. Caffin, at the general Assembly. To support this accusation, the letter to Mr. Weller was produced, and acknowledged, by Mr. Caffin, to be his writing: and the memorandum of Mr. Caffin's assertions, at the preceding Assembly, was read. Yet, such influence had the accused over the majority of this meeting, that, "by far the greater part of the assembly voted, that he was not guilty of the matters charged against him." To establish, however, their own orthodoxy, they resolved, "that the opinions ascribed to Mr. Caffin were heresies." But the proceedings of this Assembly were so much disapproved by some of its members, that a spirited "Protest" was published against them, signed by sixteen "Messengers, elders, and brethren, representatives of several congregations in divers parts of the nation", "to clear themselves and the congregations to which they belonged of those gross errors, and of the countenancing of them." The Assembly then adjourned for three years: probably with a view to afford time for the heat of these contentions to subside.\*

When the Assembly met, at Midsummer, 1696, the subject was again resumed, with unabated zeal. The protesters insisted on Mr. Caffin's being brought to a trial; and, if found guilty, excluded from the communion of the churches;

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\* Minutes of Gen. Assembly, and Protestation of the Seceders.

but the majority adhered to their former decision. After much contention, the protesters withdrew themselves from all connection with the Assembly; and soon after published the following paper, entitled, “The *Reasons* of our *Separation* from the *General Assembly*.” “Whereas Matthew Caffin hath been oftentimes charged, at several general Assemblies, held at London, with holding, that the Son of God, or the Word, was not of the uncreated nature and substance of the Father, neither of the created substance of his mother,—which we believe, and are ready to prove, to be a great heresy; and several messengers, elders, and representatives of baptized churches in England, having, for many years, endeavoured that the said M. Caffin might be brought to a fair trial, and never yet could obtain it from the general Assembly; and also entered the Protest hereunto annexed.\* And also now, at this present Assembly, held at Goswell-street, London, June 4th. 1696, we having used our utmost endeavours that there might be a fair hearing of the matter: and, notwithstanding all the endeavours that we have used, it hath been refused and cast out by the said Assembly, to the great grief and trouble of our souls;—

“We, therefore, having a due regard to the honour of God, and of our Lord Jesus Christ, the purity of the churches, and the discharge of our own consciences, do, in behalf of ourselves, and the churches which we represent, for the reasons above-mentioned, dissent from, disown, and separate ourselves from this general Assembly, until they shall purge themselves of the said heresy.” This paper was signed by W. Smith, A. Beaven,

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\* The Protest of 1693, mentioned above.

John Perkins, John Lacey, F. Morris, Clement Hunt, Robert Goodson, J. Taylor, Thomas Fowle, Joseph Morris, Robert Hore, J. Baker, T. Wainright, James Clark, Richard Cox, John Cook, and Richard Robinson ; besides William Alliott, Edward Wood, Josiah Welbey, J. Bailey, and W. Woodham, who signed after it had been presented to the Assembly.

The seceders resolved to hold an annual meeting in London, at the time of the general Assembly, to consist of the representatives of the churches which approved the separation ; to which they gave the name of the *General Association*. The first meeting was held May 12th. 1697 ; and was attended by the representatives of the churches in White's-alley, London ; Deptford, Kent ; Rainham, Essex ; Wilbrun, Cambridgeshire ; Aylesbury, Cuddington and Berkhamstead, Bucks. In the following year, it was joined by the church under Dr. Russell, London, and the congregations at Brainford, Essex, and Ashford, Kent.\*

The General Assembly declared the separation of these seceders disorderly ; and sent them, in 1697, an admonition to return. At the same time they resolved, " that all debates, public or private, respecting the Trinity, should be managed in scripture words and terms, and no other " A weak and ineffectual attempt to quash the controversy !—For, at that Assembly, Mr. J. Amory presented a letter from the Western Association, calling earnestly on the Assembly to bring Mr. Caffin to an immediate examination. And, in 1698, Mr. Garrett urged the same request, with much importunity, in the name of the churches

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\* Minutes of General Association.

in Northamptonshire. But, though Mr. Hooke, in behalf of the Lincolnshire Association, zealously seconded Mr. Garrett's proposal; yet the Assembly, after declaring the tenets ascribed to Mr. Caffin to be heretical, adjourned for two years: with an intimation, that the investigation demanded should be granted at the next meeting.

During the interim, the general Association met, in 1699; and addressed a long letter to the churches in the various parts of the kingdom, which they esteemed sound in the faith: stating the reasons and design of their separation from the general Assembly; the nature and proofs of Mr. Caffin's heresy; and the urgent necessity of opposing it, in order—to preserve the general baptist cause from reproach—to maintain the honour of the Saviour—and to prevent the spread of error. They concluded the address in these words: "Therefore, beloved brethren, hearken to the call of God; 'Come out from among them, and be you separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you.' For it is impossible to have communion with men who are thus guilty of heresy, blasphemy, and idolatry, but you must needs be defiled. In vain is it for you to separate from such as err about the subjects and manner of baptism; if, at the same time, you maintain communion with heretics and idolaters; as those must needs be who deny the Deity of the Son of God, and the immensity and omnipresence of the Divine Essence.\* And how you can think to answer it

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\* This refers to another opinion of Mr. Caffin, who, as his enemies asserted, maintained, "that God, in respect of his essence, is neither infinite nor omniscient; but is a limited Being, in a form or shape much like a man." When a creature

to the Lord of life and glory, when you are summoned before his tribunal, thus to slight his friends and encourage those enemies of God and Christ, we cannot imagine. We beseech you, therefore, in the bowels of Christ, to consider these things, before it be too late. Make haste, and delay not, we beseech you, to shew your love to Christ, by owning and encouraging us, in our vindication of the honour and majesty of the Redeemer."\*

Several churches joined with the seceders this year: but many, unwilling to make a breach till every effort had been made to procure redress, waited the issue of the promised trial. In 1700, the general Assembly met at Fair-street, Horslydown; when Mr. Caffin was present, and the subject was resumed. But, in order to avoid the heat and confusion of a public investigation, a committee of eight persons were appointed; four of whom were selected from Mr. Caffin's friends, and four from his accusers. These were directed to confer with Mr. Caffin, and to prepare some statement of the subjects in debate, which might, if possible, satisfy all parties; and serve as a basis for future union. After due deliberation, they brought forward a proposition; which,

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undertakes to describe the CREATOR, it may be expected that he will fall into gross absurdities. What Mr. C.'s real sentiments were, it is not easy to say: as none of his own works have fallen under our inspection; and it is not always safe to trust the reports of adversaries. But it seems he explained himself, on these sublime subjects, at the General Assembly in 1697, so unsatisfactorily, that honest John Amory exclaimed, in the open meeting, to Mr. C.'s face, "That God, whom my brother Caffin worships, is none of my God; neither will I worship him: that Christ that he worships is none of my Christ; neither will I worship him." *Min. Gen. Asso.* 1699.

\* Minutes of Gen. Association, 1699.

being considered by the Assembly, was approved and signed by the majority of the members present. It was afterwards agreed to offer this "Expedient," as it was justly called, as a ground of re-union, to the general Association, which was then sitting at White's-alley: and Mr. J. Amory was sent to propose it to their acceptance. But that meeting objected to the Assembly's expedient, as obscure and ambiguous; and tendered a proposition, on the same sublime subjects, of their own composing. This Mr. Amory declined presenting: and proposed, that both papers should be laid aside; and four persons be appointed by each party to endeavour to effect an agreement. The Association accepted this proposal; and the deputies met: but, neither being disposed to give way, nothing was done. On the contrary, this abortive attempt at reconciliation seems to have widened the breach: for, at the close of the conference, the general Association agreed, "That we stand to what we did at the general Assembly, in the year 1696: and that we cannot have communion with any persons, at the Lord's table, nor admit any to preach amongst us, that are in communion with that Assembly; until that Assembly shall purge themselves from the heresies for which we made our separation."\*

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\* *Min. of Gen. Assem. and Gen. Ass.* 1700.—It may perhaps amuse the curious reader, to see the propositions framed on this occasion.—The Assembly's *Expedient* ran thus:

"It is agreed, That Christ, as he is the Word, is from the beginning: but in time that Word took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham; and as such is Immanuel, God with us, or God manifest in the flesh: and, as he is the Word, is one with the Father and the Holy Ghost. And, as he was God manifest in the flesh; so he is the Jesus, that tasted death for every man. And further: whereas there have been, and yet are, debates about the Most High God, we con-

The opposition of the seceders was strengthened by a resolution passed at this General Assembly ; importing, " That whatsoever conceptions any of us may have, concerning the several expressions contained in the Expedient, contrary to the common acceptation thereof ; yet if any one, by preaching, writing, discoursing, or otherwise, shall publish or declare such his conceptions thereof, to the disturbance of the peace of the church or churches of Christ that are of our communion, such person is declared to be a disturber, and to be accountable for this conduct to the Assembly."\* The members of the Association contended, that this resolution granted a liberty to every one to sign the expedient, in his own sense ; provided he kept it to himself : a permission which they thought to be inconsistent with christian sincerity.

At the next meeting of the General Assembly, in 1702, the Northamptonshire churches renewed their complaints : asserting that Mr. Caffin had

ceive he is one infinite, unchangeable, and eternal Spirit, incomprehensible Godhead, and doth subsist in the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost."

The Seceders expressed themselves in these terms :

" The Association meeting in White's-alley, London,

" Do believe, that the Lord Jesus Christ, in respect of his divine nature, is of the same essence, nature, and substance with God the Father ; and, as such, equal with him from everlasting ; and not God only by deputation : and that this eternal Son of God, subsisting in the same divine essence with God, the Father, and the Holy Spirit, did, in the fulness of time, take on him the seed of Abraham ; by being made of the seed and substance of his mother, according to the flesh : and that he was of the same flesh and blood as our bodies are, sin only excepted : and that he was not made man by having his divine nature or substance changed into flesh and blood in the Virgin's womb."—*Min. of Gen. Assen. and Gen. Assoc.*

\* Minutes of General Assembly.

not been brought to a fair trial. The majority, however, after deliberating on the subject, voted, "That the declaration Mr. Caffin has made, and his signing the aforesaid expedient, are sufficient and satisfactory."\* This decision appears to have caused both the Northamptonshire and Lincolnshire churches to forsake the Assembly and join the Association; to which they sent representatives the following year. But though the Assembly adhered so tenaciously to Mr. Caffin, yet they took every opportunity of condemning the opinions ascribed to him: which they again, this year, declared to be errors, and formally abjured.†

Previous to the meeting of these conventions, in 1704, a book was published, entitled, "A Vindication of the ancient General Assembly," in which some overtures of peace and unity were proposed. This book was laid before the General Association, assembled at White's-alley, June 8, 1704: and that meeting thought proper to send messengers to the general Assembly, which was then sitting at Goodman's-fields, to inquire how far they would "make good" the overtures contained in the Vindication. On the same day, the Assembly returned an answer, that, "though, as a body, they had not been any way concerned in the publication of the book; yet, on seriously reading the overtures alluded to, they were ready and willing to embrace and act upon them; and that they did expect the same disposition from the Association." In consequence of this correspondence, Jos. Hooke, Joseph Jenkins, S. Keeling, and Samuel Wright, were appointed by the

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\* Crosby, Vol. III. p. 284.

† Minutes of General Assembly, 1702.

Association ; and John Amory, John Maulden, David Brown, and Benjamin Miller, by the Assembly ; to confer together, and consider of proper methods for restoring these jarring bodies to their former harmony. These eight brethren, after mature consideration, proposed a number of articles of faith and conditions of union : which, being approved by both parties, a reconciliation was effected. The next day, the members of the Assembly and Association met as one body : and for some time the general Association was suspended. The propositions on which these representatives united were immediately published, for the information of their constituents, under the title of “ The Unity of the Churches :” in which the articles of faith, on the disputed points, are thus expressed.—“ First, respecting Almighty God.—We do believe, and are very confident, that there is one, and but one living and true *God*, who is from everlasting to everlasting, and changeth not ; without body, parts, or imperfections : essentially present in all places ; of infinite power, wisdom and goodness ; the Maker of all things in heaven and earth, visible and invisible : and, that in this divine and infinite Being, or Unity of the Godhead, there are Three Persons, the *Father*, *Word*, and *Holy Ghost*, of one substance, power, and eternity.” “ Secondly, respecting the Lord Jesus Christ—We do believe, that there is but one Lord Jesus Christ, the second Person in the Trinity, and the only begotten Son of God ; and that he did, in the fulness of time, take to himself our nature, in the womb of the blessed Virgin Mary, of whom, in respect of the flesh, he was made ; and so is true God, and true Man, our Immanuel.”\*

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\* Unity of the Churches.

Several prudential resolutions were added, designed to prevent reflections and offences, and to restore mutual good-will. The paper was signed by thirty-nine members of the Assembly and Association, exclusive of the eight who composed it. But, it seems, that dissatisfaction soon began to shew itself: for, in the next Assembly, May 1705, new debates arising, another committee was appointed, "to go immediately and agree upon an expedient to confirm the union already begun." This committee recommended, and the assembly, after mature deliberation, approved the following extraordinary "expedient."

"This Assembly do agree, that the paper, intitled 'The Unity of the Churches,' upon assent to which the general Assembly and general Association were united in the year 1704, doth contain both articles of faith and articles of union; and that no person shall be admitted a member of the general Assembly, that refuses to assent to and subscribe the whole in the paper: and, that the person signing, or to sign, shall not be permitted to ask any question, neither shall any question be asked him, upon pain of being excluded, or refused a member of the Assembly."\* The extreme caution and reserve displayed in this document, afford sufficient proof of the irritation and discord that agitated the minds of all parties.

It is worthy of remark, that through the whole of these unhappy dissensions, all parties agreed in considering the denial of the divinity or humanity of Christ, as a dangerous heresy. This the general Assembly formally declared, at almost every meeting held during the altercation:

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\* From the Paper printed in 1705.

and the articles on which they, at last, re-united, sufficiently prove their sentiments, on these important topics.\* The questions at issue were, whether Mr. Caffin was guilty of holding the errors imputed to him; and whether it was lawful to hold communion with such as explained themselves, on these subjects, in the manner in which he and his friends did. This is fully evident from the account we have already given: and is confirmed by the candid Dr. Wall; who was a witness of the transactions which we have just detailed; and whose testimony will not be suspected of undue partiality in favour of the baptists. Speaking of the "Reasons for Separation," published by the general Association, in which they say, "that it is to the reproach of Jesus Christ, and the pollution of the churches, to hold communion with the general Assembly, &c." the Doctor observes, "But all this is not, as far as I can learn, that they charge the general Assembly with Socinian tenets; but only with refusing to turn out some that are accused of holding them: which accusations they think to be fully proved; but the others, it seems, say they are not."†

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\* If any additional evidence was required of the orthodoxy of the majority of the general Assembly, it might be proper to notice, that, during these debates, they repeatedly recognized the confession of 1660, as their creed; and that, in 1691, they agreed that "this Confession should be reprinted with Brother Grantham's explication of the Third Article." His explication was, most probably, the "Testimony of Antiquity," subjoined to that Article in his *Christ. Prim.* which as the reader has already seen (*supra*, p. 369) asserts the divinity and humanity of Christ in strong terms.—*Min. Gen. Assem.* 1691, 1697, 1704.

† *Hist. of Inf. Bap.* Vol. II. p. 276.—As several historians, not being in possession of the original documents, have given a very imperfect account of these unhappy disputes, it was thought, that, in justice to all the parties, a more particular detail of the

This reconciliation, as might have been foreseen from the temper in which it was made, was of short duration. Indeed the members of the general Association appear to have anticipated a speedy rupture; and therefore agreed, when they consented to the union, "That upon the first breach of the articles now made, by any of the members of the Assembly when united; and, upon regular application to the said Assembly, no redress can be obtained; that then this Association will immediately re-assume the state in which we now stand:" and "that the messengers, elders, and representatives of the same churches which constitute the present general Association shall be esteemed the general Association, in time to come."\* Accordingly, in a very few years, this Association was resumed; and parties again ran high. In 1709, an attempt

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proceedings ought to be preserved. This detail we have attempted to give; and have drawn our information from the most authentic records. But, it is hoped, that the reader will not suppose, that we intend to panegyrisé the conduct either of the general Assembly or the seceders. For, though the steady attachment to principle, and warm zeal for what they esteemed the fundamental doctrines of the gospel, which distinguished the latter, merit our high approbation; yet, it is to be lamented, that these commendable dispositions were not tempered with a greater spirit of meekness. If, instead of public citations, and excommunications, they had endeavoured to draw Mr. Caffin with the cords of love; and laboured to nourish in their people a proper submission to the authority of scripture, and a deep sense of the necessity of a personal interest in the Saviour of sinners, it is very probable, that the good old man, for such he evidently was, would either have laid aside his speculations, or have confined them to his own breast. But the public attack of his opponents rendered him more tenacious in maintaining his opinions, attracted the attention of others to them, and gave them an importance and diffusion which otherwise they might never have obtained.

\* Minutes of Gen. Assoc. 1704.

was made to accommodate the differences; but the Association adhering strictly to the principles contained in the "Unity of the Churches," it proved abortive. The struggle continued, till those ministers, who had been brought up under Grantham, Stanley, and their associates, were called to their reward. When these had quitted the scene, that spurious liberality and laxity of principle, which too evidently leavened the general Assembly, at the close of the seventeenth century, gained the ascendancy. And, though many speculatists afterwards carried their reasonings to lengths from which Mr. Caffin and his cotemporaries would have shrunk with horror; yet few ministers or congregations were sufficiently attached to their ancient sentiments, to make any vigorous opposition.

The natural consequences followed. The attention of the people being drawn to "doubtful disputations," rather than to the doctrines of the cross, vital religion declined in individuals, and discipline relaxed in societies. The faith, the order and the prosperity of the majority of the churches of which we have been treating, were, by degrees, undermined; and not a few of them have successively become extinct. But as the painful task of tracing the steps, and recording the particulars of this affecting declension does not fall within our plan; we therefore, willingly dismiss the subject, to contemplate a more cheering prospect.

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## ADDITIONS AND CORRECTIONS.

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*Page 86.*—Since the foregoing account was sent to the press, we have met with a pamphlet, printed in 1644, which furnishes some pleasing information respecting Mr. Smyth's death. It is intitled, "Mr. Cotton's Letter lately printed, examined and answered, by Roger Williams, of Providence, in New England"—Mr. Williams had asserted that "he did not remember an hour wherein the countenance of the Lord was darkened to him." To this Mr. Cotton, whose words are quoted by Mr. Williams, replied, "Be not deceived. It is no new thing with Satan to transform himself into an angel of light; and to cheat the soul with false peace, and with flashes of counterfeit consolation—Sad and woeful is the memory of Mr. Smyth's strong consolations on his death-bed, which is set as a seal to his gross and damnable Arminianism and enthusiasm, delivered in the Confession of his Faith, prefixed to the story of his life and death. The countenance of God is upon his people when they fear him, not when they presume of their own strength; and his consolations are not found in the way of previdence and error, but in the ways of humility and truth." p. 14. This short extract, when stripped of Mr. Cotton's party comment, ascertains—that Mr. Smyth retained his distinguishing sentiments to the last—and that he enjoyed "strong consolations on his death-bed:" two facts which, we presume, the attentive readers of this History will not esteem either uninteresting or unimportant.

Mr. Williams, though differing from Mr. Smyth in many doctrinal opinions, bears an honourable testimony to his character. "To that which pertaineth to Mr. Smyth," he replies, "although I knew him not, and have heard of many points in which my conscience tells me, it pleased the Lord to leave him to himself; yet I have also heard by some, whose testimony Mr. Cotton will not easily refute, that he was a man fearing God. And I am sure that Mr. Cotton hath made some use of those principles and arguments on which Mr. Smyth and others went, concerning the constitution of the christian church." And, in the margin, the author notes, "Mr. Smith godly, and a light to Mr. Cotton and others, though left to himself in some things," p. 15. In another place he observes, that "Satan himself, the accuser of the saints, cannot but confess, that multitudes of God's witnesses, reproached with the names of Brownists and anabaptists, have kept themselves from the error of the wicked, and grow in grace and the knowledge of our Lord Jesus, endeavouring to cleanse themselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, and to finish holiness in the fear of God." p. 40. This testimony of an opponent to the character of Mr. Smyth and his followers

ought to be recorded ; and the cruel insinuations of Mr. Cotton will create no surprise, when his conduct is considered. He, who for some little difference in matters of discipline, could countenance and promote the banishment of Mr. Williams, although a calvinist, into the deserts of America, then peopled only with inhospitable savages, where he was destitute of every necessary and comfort, would feel no compunction in consigning an Arminian anabaptist to endless misery.

*Page 170.*—Since this sheet was printed off, Mr. Denne's account of his disputation with Dr. Gunning has fallen into our hands. The debate was held on the 19th. and 26th of November, 1658 ; at the request of a lady, who, having professed repentance from dead works and faith towards God, wished to obtain information respecting baptism. On the first day, Mr. Gunning was opponent, and Mr. Denne respondent : the former endeavouring to prove infant baptism to be lawful, and the latter objecting to his arguments. On the second day, Mr. Denne, as opponent, attempted to shew the unlawfulness of infant baptism ; and Mr. Gunning, as respondent, combated his reasonings. The result was " according to the affection of the auditors." " Some spake evil, and some well ; some cried victory on the one side, and some on the other " The lady, however, for whose satisfaction the conference was held, was baptized, by immersion, on the first day of the succeeding December ; though the weather was very cold.—*H. Denne's Contention for Truth, passim.*

*Page 316.*—Two pieces by Mr. T. Grantham have recently been handed to us, which we have not seen noticed in any account of the author. The first is a small quarto, of thirty pages ; published in 1675, under this title : " Mr. Horne answered ; or, Pædo-rantism not from Zion : wherein is shewed, his mistake about the reason of his writing ; and the insufficiency of his evidence, alledged to prove Infant Baptism descended from Zion, briefly discovered : together with twelve arguments by way of preface, plainly shewing, that it is as reasonable to baptize persons asleep or dead as to baptize infants."

The other is a quarto of fifty pages, which Mr. Grantham published in 1691, only a few months before his death. It is called, " A Dialogue between the Baptist and the Presbyterian : wherein the Presbyterians are punished by their own pens, for their cruel and soul-devouring doctrines, making God the ordainer of all the sins of men and devils ; and reprobating the greatest part of mankind, without any help of salvation. Whereunto is annexed a Treatise of Election, intituled, The Order of Causes :

formerly published by an eminent servant of Christ, and now republished, with some explication concerning Freewill."—When Mr. Grantham published this pamphlet, he meditated a large collection of the sentiments of the christian writers, from the Apostles to the time of Augustine, to shew that, for more than four hundred years, the dreadful doctrine, opposed by him, was a stranger to the church of Christ. But this, and all his other plans, for promoting what he esteemed the cause of truth, were interrupted by his death.—Mr. Henry Haggar, whose piece on the "Order of Causes," Mr. Grantham reprinted, on this occasion, was a minister of some eminence among the particular baptists; but, being afterwards induced to review his sentiments, he adopted the principles of the general baptists.

*Page 480.*—In the year 1793, the late Mr. Dan Taylor was requested, by the Lincolnshire Association, to write his thoughts "on the decay of christianity among the baptized churches." He complied; and addressed several long letters, on the subject, to the venerable Mr. Boyce. We presume that our readers will not esteem the following extract from this correspondence uninteresting: as it accounts, in a manner highly satisfactory and instructive, for the awful declension of the general baptist cause, recorded in the close of this volume.

"In the last century (the seventeenth) the general baptists almost universally maintained, that the death of Christ for the sins of men, was the only foundation of a sinner's hope. And what was the state of the general baptist cause then? Their churches were numerous, and many of them large. The zeal and piety of the ministers and people were celebrated; and the pleasure of the Lord prospered in their hands. Towards the latter end of the century, the sentiments of Arius and Socinus were countenanced by some of their leaders. Others were alarmed at this. Their zeal for the doctrines of the gospel was raised; they preached and wrote with vigour and earnestness, and insisted that Christ atoned for the sins of man, and that none can be saved, but through that atonement. These were calumniated and aspersed, as defective in charity. Too many of them yielded so far as to trim and temporize, and to treat these fundamental doctrines of the gospel, as if they were matters of indifference. Consequently, they were but seldom preached; and when they were mentioned, even by those who still maintained them, it was rather in a way of controversy, as their opinions; not as the only foundation on which the everlasting all of man depends. The people too much lost sight of these all-important doctrines, and their relish for them gradually dwindled. Carnality and conformity to the world prevailed in the then existing members of

churches. The gospel, the great mean of conversion, being nearly laid aside, others could not possibly be converted by their ministry. And thus one church after another came to nothing; and a great number of their meeting-houses were lost, or converted to other uses, in almost every part of the nation. In a word, they degraded Jesus Christ, and he degraded them. Nor is it possible they should ever rise to any degree of eminence in religion, till there be an entire change in the doctrines of the preachers. The reason is this. The gospel alone is the power of God to the salvation of man. Rom. i 16. There is no gospel of Christ which does not include the doctrine, that Christ died for our sins, as its fundamental doctrine. 1 Cor. v 2, 3. Till this doctrine be preached, there is no gospel preached, which is the power of God to salvation. Consequently, the work of conversion never did, nor ever will, nor ever can, go forward, without the preaching of it. So the general baptist churches, as well as other churches where the doctrine is not preached, whatever other expedient they make use of, will assuredly, must of necessity, continue in their present degraded state, or grow worse and worse, till they return to this doctrine. But, when they do return to it and insist upon it, in a plain, practical and experimental manner, God will return to them. Their religion will revive, sinners will be converted, saints will be edified and purified, and God our Saviour will be glorified."

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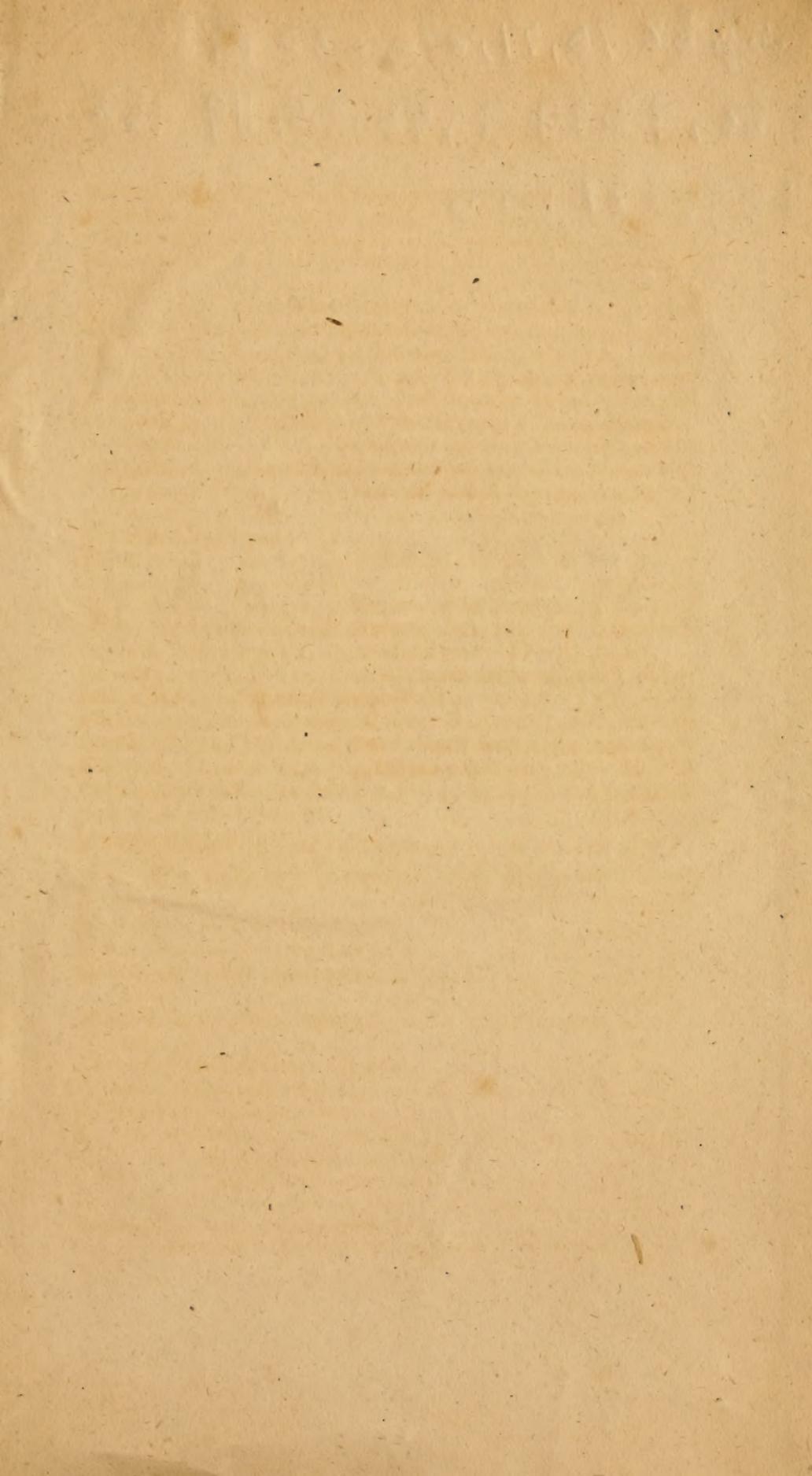
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