

General be required to call for the said Patent of the Massachusetts; and accordingly a letter was sent by Mr. || Meautis || in the name of the Lords of the Council, as is above expressed. But nothing more was done therein during the former King's reign; and his Majesty now reigning, since his coronation, confirmed the Charter of the Massachusetts anew, in one of his letters.¹

CHAP. XXXVII.

Ecclesiastical affairs in the Massachusetts, from the year 1636 to 1641.

THE affairs of the church in this next lustre of years were carried on after the same manner, and in the same method and order, as in the former, but not with the same quietness and peace; nor could it be said, that there was no voice of axe or hammer in their temple work, in this space of time. The enemy was sowing tares in God's field, and therefore it was to be feared some of the servants were asleep; of which themselves were not insensible, after they were awakened by the great troubles that were occasioned thereby. Yet notwithstanding, there were many churches gathered, and ministers ordained in them, many differences composed and healed; and, at the last, error being suppressed, the churches were again established in truth and peace.

The first attempt of gathering any church in the year 1636, was at Dorchester, on the first of April; when, the former pastor and most of the old church being removed to Connecticut, Mr. Richard Mather, with several christians that came along with him out of Lancashire, having settled their habitations there, and intending to begin a new church, desired the approbation of the magistrates and of the neighboring churches, (whose ministers and messengers used to be always present on such occasions,) and were at this time there assembled for that end. When Mr. Mather, their intended teacher, and the rest of them designed for that work, had made confession of their faith, they proceeded to give an account

[Meawtes]

See the letter, dated June 28, 1682, in Hutchinson's Collection of Papers, pp. 377-80.—H.

of the work of God's grace on their hearts; wherein, through unacquaintedness with the nature of the thing desired, that which was held forth by the most of them did not amount to full satisfaction; so as they were advised not to join together in church fellowship without some further consideration, and accordingly they did forbear at that present.¹ But on the 8th of September*² following, being better informed about the nature of that which was expected from them, sc. a declaration of the work of their repentance, how they were brought by the ministry of the word, not only to look upon sin as hurtful, but as hateful, and to close with the Lord Jesus by a lively faith, as the Lamb of God, that came to take away the sin of the world, etc., they were gathered into a church state, with the approbation of the messengers of the churches, then assembled for that end.

The 6th of April, 1637, those of Concord set a day apart for the ordination of their two ministers, viz. Mr. Jones to be their pastor, and Mr. Bulkley³ to be their teacher. But neither the Governor, Mr. Vane, nor Mr. Cotton, nor the two ruling elders, nor any other of Boston church would be present, because the two forementioned ministers were looked upon, in that hour of temptation, as too legal preachers, and therefore they would not be present to give approbation to their ordination.

The 20th of February, Mr. Ward, of Ipswich, having laid down his pastoral office, Mr. Rogers and Mr. Norton were ordained, the one pastor, the other teacher of the said church.⁴

The 9th of January, 1637, divers of the ministers went to Weymouth, to reconcile the differences between the people and Mr. Jenner,⁵ whom they had called thither, with intent to have him their pastor, and had good success of their prayers. For the 30th of January, 1638, there was a church gathered there, with the approbation of the magistrates and ministers. They had a church gathered there at Weymouth before, but could not hold together, nor could have any elder join or hold with them,

* August 23. Dorchester records. Ed.

¹ See Sav. Win. i. 183-4.—H. ² Ibid. 194.—H. ³ Rev. John Jones and Rev. Peter Bulkley. See p. 233; Sav. Win. i. 187, 169, 189, 217.—H. ⁴ And so says Felt's Ipswich, pp. 220, 222; but others place Norton's ordination in 1636.—H. ⁵ Rev. Thomas Jenner.—H.

because they did not begin according to the rule of the Gospel, as was judged; but at this time humbling themselves for it, and beginning again upon a new foundation, they went on with a blessing.¹

The people of this town of Weymouth had invited one Mr. Lenthall² to come to them, with intention to call him to be their minister. This man, though of good report in England, coming hither, was found to have drunk in some of Mrs. Hutchinson's opinions, as of justification before faith, &c., and opposed the custom of gathering of churches in such a way of mutual restipulation as was then practised. From the former he was soon taken off by conference with Mr. Cotton, but he stuck close to the other, that only baptism was the door of entrance into the visible church, &c., so as the common sort of people did eagerly embrace his opinion; and some labored to get such a church on foot, as all baptized ones might communicate in, without any further trial of them, &c. For this end they procured many hands in Weymouth to a blank, intending to have Mr. Lenthall's advice to the form of their call; and he, likewise, was very forward to become a minister to them in such a way, and did openly maintain the cause. But the magistrates, hearing of this disturbance and combination, thought it needful to stop it betimes, and therefore they called Mr. Lenthall, and the chief of the faction, to the next General Court, in March; where Mr. Lenthall, having before conferred with some of the magistrates and ministers, and being convinced of his error in judgment, and his sin in practice, to the disturbance of their peace, &c., did openly and freely retract, with expression of much grief of heart for his offence, and did deliver his retraction in writing, under his hand, in open Court; whereupon he was enjoined to appear at the next Court, and, in the mean time, to make and deliver the like recantation in some public assembly at Weymouth. So the Court forbore any further censure by fine or otherwise, though it was much urged by some. At the same Court some of the principal abettors were censured; as

¹ See Sav. Win. i. 250-1, 267.—H.

² Rev. Robert Lenthall. See page 343; and Sav. Win. i. 267-9.—H.

one Smith,^a and one Silvester,^a and one Britten, who had spoken reproachfully of the answer which was sent to Mr. Bernard's book^b against their church covenant, and of some of the ministers there, for which he was severely punished; but not taking warning he fell into grosser evil, whereby he brought capital punishment upon himself, not long after.¹

The 7th of September, 1639, there was a church gathered at Braintree, formerly Mount Wollaston, and Mr. Wheelwright, (whom the people of Boston, that were concerned in that place, had intended to be the minister thereof,) being, by the order of the Court, removed out of the jurisdiction,² Mr. Thompson,³ that came out of Lancashire, a pious and learned minister, and had for a time been preacher at Agamenticus, where he had been an instrument of much good, was ordained the pastor thereof, the 19th of November following; with whom was joined Mr. Henry Flint, as teacher.⁴ Mr. Ezekiel Rogers, son of Mr. Richard Rogers of Weathersfield, December 3d of the same year, was ordained pastor of a church at Rowley, where was a Plantation newly erected, between Ipswich and Newbury. Mr. Eaton and Mr. Davenport labored by all means to have drawn him, with his people, to New Haven, and had so far prevailed with him, (being newly come, and unacquainted with the state of the country,) as to engage him to go with them, upon propositions which they could not well fulfil; whereupon, by the advice of the ministers about the Bay, he took himself released from his foresaid engagement, and then came with his people to that place beyond Ipswich, where he was ordained their pastor, as is said before.⁵

On the 18th of March, 1639, Mr. Norris⁶ was ordained teacher of the church at Salem, all the elders of the other churches being present.

The 19th of December Mr. Knowles, sometimes fellow of Emanuel College, in Cambridge, was ordained second pastor of the church of Watertown; the former yet surviving, so as at this time they had two pastors⁷

¹ See page 426.—H.
was William.—H.

² See page 280.—H.

³ His baptismal name

⁴ See Sav. Win. i. 169, 247, 308, 313, 323.—H.

⁵ See page 236.—H.

⁶ Baptismal name, Edward.—H.

⁷ Rev. George Phillips and John Knowles.—H.

and no teacher, therein differing from the practice of the rest of the churches; as they did also in their private way of proceeding, not giving notice thereof, either to the magistrates, or neighbor churches, as the common practice was then, and still is, by an order, established by the General Court for that end; but that was the humor of some in chief place of that church. And so apt are the best of men oft times to come in danger of Scylla, that they may be sure to keep clear of Charybdis.

One Hugh Bewet was, at the next Court of Assistants, March the 1st, sent out of the jurisdiction for holding publicly, and maintaining, that he was free from original sin; it being justly to be feared, that if he had staid still, he would have made himself, and others too, guilty of more actual sin than his neighbors, (as is ordinarily found by experience of those great pretenders to perfection and holiness,) although he did also affirm, that for half a year before, he had been likewise free from actual sin.¹

The church of Dorchester, not contenting themselves with a single officer in the ministry of their church, invited one Mr. Burr,² (who had been a minister in England, and of very good report there, for piety and learning,) with intent also to call him to office. And accordingly, after he was received a member of their church, and had given good proof of his piety and other ministerial abilities, they gave him a call to office, which he deferring to accept upon some private reasons, known to himself, some of the church took some exception at some things which he in the mean time delivered, (his expressions, possibly, either not being well understood, or so far wire-drawn as that they seemed too much inclining to the notions then prevailing much at Boston,) and they desired him to give satisfaction, and he not seeing need for it, it was agreed that Mr. Mather and he should confer together, and so the church should know where the difference lay. Accordingly Mr. Burr wrote his judgment in the points of difference in such manner and terms as, from some of his propositions, taken singly,

¹ See Sav. Win. ii. 19.—H.

² Rev. Jonathan Burr; he was admitted to the church Dec. 21, 1639.—H.

something that was erroneous might be gathered, and might seem naturally to follow therefrom; but was so qualified in other parts, as might admit of a charitable construction. Mr. Mather reports to the church the seeming erroneous matter that might be collected, without mentioning the qualification, or acquainting Mr. Burr with it before hand. When this was published, Mr. Burr disclaimed the erroneous matter, and Mr. Mather maintained it from his writings. Whereupon the church was divided about it, some joining with the one, and some with the other, so as it grew to some heat and alienation of mind, and many days were spent for reconciliation, but all in vain. In the end they agreed to call in help from other churches; so as, the 2d of February, 1640, there was a meeting at Dorchester of the Governor, and another¹ of the magistrates, and ten of the ministers of the neighboring churches, wherein four days were spent in opening the cause, and such offence as had fallen out in the prosecution; and in conclusion they all declared their judgment and advice in the case to this effect:

That both sides had cause to be humbled for their failings—Mr. Burr for his doubtful and unsafe expressions, and backwardness to give clear satisfaction; Mr. Mather for his inconsideration, both in not acquainting Mr. Burr with his collections, before he published them to the church, and in not certifying the qualifications of the erroneous expressions which were in his writings; for which they were advised to set a day apart for reconciliation. Upon this both Mr. Mather and Mr. Burr took the blame of their failings upon themselves, and freely submitted to the judgment and advice given, to which the rest of the church yielded a silent assent, and God was much glorified in the close thereof; and Mr. Burr did fully renounce these errors of which he was suspected, confessing he had been in the dark about those points, till God, by occasion of this agitation, had cleared them to him, which he did with much meekness and tears. But that holy man¹ continued not long after,

¹ Winthrop.—H.

being observed to express so much of Heaven in his public ministry, as his hearers judged he would not continue long upon the earth, as it came to pass.¹

About that time,² viz. November 8th, a church was gathered at Dedham, with good approbation; and, the 28th of the same month, Mr. Peck³ was ordained teacher of the church at Hingham.

Concerning other ecclesiastical matters which fell out in this lustre, being of such a nature as they require a more particular discourse, viz. divers errors prevailing in and about Boston, and so violently carried on, as did need the help of the civil power to redress them, they shall be treated of in the following chapters; only let it be here noted, that as well Boston, as many other churches, having received the infection of many dangerous errors, by the application of due means, like athletic bodies, did in a little time either work out the contagion themselves, or, by the discipline of the church, did purge out the leaven of corrupt and unsound doctrine and practices, and so became a new lump, as the Apostle speaks.

The hands of those on that side of the country, near Connecticut, were strengthened by the coming over of Mr. Fenwick, a gentleman of great estate, and eminent for wisdom and piety, July 15th, 1639, he arrived at New Haven with a ship of three hundred and fifty tons, with his lady and family. His intent was to make a Plantation at Saybrook, about the mouth of Connecticut river. He laid the foundation thereof, and within a few years after returned to England.⁴ Two other Plantations were begun at that time beyond New Haven; but every one stood so much for their liberty, that every Plantation almost intended a peculiar government of themselves, if they could have brought it about; but those designs tended to the weakening of the country, and hinderance of the general good of the whole.

¹ He died Aug. 9, 1641, aged 37. See Blake's Annals, and Harris's History, of Dorchester.—H.

² A mistake; it was in 1638.—H.

³ Rev. Robert Peck.—H.

⁴ See page 309.—H.