

Indians, English, French, and Dutch. It began with a cold, and in many was accompanied with a light fever. Such as bled, or used cooling drinks, generally died; such as made use of cordials, and more strengthening, comfortable things, for the most part recovered.

It seems to have spread through the whole coast, at least all the English Plantations in America, for in the Island of Christophers and Barbadoes there died five or six thousand in each of them. Whether it might be called a plague or pestilential fever, physicians must determine. It was accompanied in those islands with a great drought, which burnt up all their potatoes and other fruits, which brought the provisions of New England into great request with them, who before that time had looked upon New England as one of the poorest, most despicable, barren parts of America.<sup>1</sup>

In October, 1648, some shallops of Ipswich, having been fishing all the summer at Monhiggin, in their way home were intended to put in at Damarill's Cove on a Saturday night, and three of them gat safe into the harbor's mouth before sun-down. They in the fourth shallop were not willing to put forth their oars till it was very late in the afternoon, when they were becalmed, and so it was dark night before they could reach the harbor, the entrance of which they missed, and by that means were overraked by the surf of the sea and all drowned, four Englishmen and one Indian, and the goods all perished. Their friends called to them to make haste; but the sluggard is wiser in his own eyes, than seven men that can render a reason.

#### CHAP. LVIII.<sup>2</sup>

*Ecclesiastical affairs in New England, from the year 1646 to 1651.*

THE churches in New England had now for some considerable time enjoyed rest and peace, and having had liberty, without adversary or evil occurrent, to model

<sup>1</sup> There is a slight confusion here. According to Winthrop the drought preceded the pestilence.—H.      <sup>2</sup> LVII in the MS.—H.

the frame of their churches as near the Apostolical and primitive pattern, as well might be, began to think it now high time to draw up some platform of their discipline and church government, that might be as a foundation for many generations that might be to come; especially at this time they judged it very necessary, when the way, wherein they had hitherto walked, began to be called in question, whether it were of the right stamp, and agreeable to the pattern in the Mount. For this end a bill was presented to the General Court in the year 1646, for calling a Synod to consider of that matter. The magistrates passed the bill, but some of the deputies questioned the power of the Court to require their churches to send their messengers to such a convention, as not being satisfied that any such power was given by Christ to the civil magistrates over the churches in such cases, as also because the main end of the meeting propounded, was for an agreement upon one uniform practice of all the churches, to be commended to the General Court, &c., which seemed to give power either to the Synod or the Court to compel the churches to practise what shall be so established. To this it was answered, that if the magistrate was called of God to maintain the churches within his precincts in purity, peace, and truth, (which is assented unto by all sober men that profess Christianity, else how can he be *custos utriusque tabulae*;) then the civil magistrate must have power, upon just occasion, to require the churches to send their messengers to advise in such ecclesiastical matters, whether they concern doctrine or discipline, profession of faith or practice, in point of manners; and further they were answered that the Synod was not to proceed by way of authoritative power, but by way of counsel and advice from the Word of God, and that the Court was at liberty either to establish or disannul such agreement of the Synod as they should see cause, which would put no more into the hands of the Court than it had already by the Word of God and the laws of the country. Thereupon the force of all objections on the other hand was taken away. But in tender respect to such as were not yet fully satisfied in the point,

it was ordered, that the ensuing Synod should be convened by way of motion only to the churches, and not in words of command.

But whatever gentle words the order was sweetened withal, some of the churches could not swallow it, especially because some words therein seemed to intimate that what the assembly should agree upon must be presented to the Court, that they might give such allowance to it as was meet ; from whence it was inferred that some intended to have ecclesiastical laws made to bind the church, if they should consent to such a Synod. The principal men who raised the objections were some that lately came from England, where such a vast liberty was pleaded for by all that rabble of men that went under the name of Independents, whether Anabaptists, Antinomians, Familists, and Seekers, (for the Quaker was not then formed into any particular or distinct shape out of his *materia prima*,) far beyond the moderate limits pleaded for by the Congregational divines in the Assembly at Westminster, such as Dr. Goodwin, Mr. Nye, and Mr. Burroughs, etc., (who yet, it may be, intending to double the Cape of Good Hope, then in view, as was thought, tacked about further than they needed to have done.) A great part of the Parliament also then in being inclined much that way, and had, by their Commissioners, sent word to all the English Plantations in the West Indies and Summer Islands, that all men should enjoy their liberty of conscience, and had by their letters also intimated the same to those of New England. Some few of the church of Boston adhered to these principles, which made them stickle so much against the calling of the Synod at that time, against which they raised a threefold objection. 1. That, by a liberty already established amongst the laws of New England, the elders or ministers of the churches have allowance or liberty to assemble upon all occasions without the compliance of the civil authority. 2. It was observed that this motion came originally from some of the elders or ministers, and not from the Court. 3. In the order was expressed, that what the major part of the assembly should agree upon,

should be presented to the Court for their confirmation. To the first it was answered, that the said liberty was granted only for an help in case of extremity, if, in time to come, either the civil authority should grow opposite to the churches or neglect the care of them, and not with any intent to practise the same, while the civil rulers were as nursing fathers to the churches. To the second it was answered, it was not for the churches to inquire what or who gave the occasion, but if they thought fit to desire the churches to afford them help of counsel, in any matters which concerned religion and conscience, it was the churches' duty to yield it to them, for so far as it concerns their command or request, it is an ordinance of man, which all are to submit unto for the Lord's sake, without troubling themselves about the occasion or success. *Ex malis moribus nascuntur bonæ leges*: Laws are not the worse for being occasioned by evil men or evil manners. For the third, where the order speaks of the major part, it speaks in its own language, and according to the practice of the Court, where the act of the major part is always accounted the act of the Court; but it never intended thereby to restrain or direct the Synod in the manner of their proceeding, nor to hinder them, but that they might first acquaint the churches with their conclusions, and have their assent to them, before they did present them to the Court, for that is their care; the Court's care is only to provide for their own cognizance; and for the inference which was drawn from that clause, "that the Court might give them such allowance as should be meet," it is both against the rules of reason and charity to infer from thence any such sanction of the Court as was supposed, for they say only they will give them such allowance as is meet; it cannot thence be inferred, that they will put any such sanction or stamp of authority upon them as should be unmeet.

This matter was two Lord's Days in agitation with the church of Boston, before they could be brought to any comfortable conclusion; but on a Lecture-day intervening, Mr. Norton, teacher of the church at Ipswich, was procured to supply the place at Boston, where was a

great audience, and the subject then handled was suitable to the occasion, viz. Moses and Aaron kissing each other in the mount of God, where he laid down the nature and power of a Synod as only consultative, declarative, and decisive, not coercive, &c., and shewing also the power of the civil magistrate in calling such assemblies, and the duty of churches in yielding obedience to the same; he held forth also, the great offence and scandal which would be given in refusing, and in the whole of his discourse appeared so much strength of reason and argument, as was easily able to convince the gainsayer. And on the next Lord's Day, after much debate in Boston church, it was agreed, by the vote of the major part, that the elders and three of the brethren should be sent as messengers to the Synod. It was near winter before they could assemble, and few of the elders of the other Colonies, (though they also were invited,) could be present; on which account the Synod, after they had sat fourteen days, brake up, and adjourned to the 8th of June, in the year 1647.

The inordinate love of liberty, or fear of restraint, especially in matters of religion, occasioned, at this time, divers to call in question the power of the civil magistrate in matters pertaining to the first table, and therefore was that question thoroughly debated in the first session of the Synod, then called together, who delivered their judgment about that question in the proposition following:

A proposition about the magistrate's power in matters of religion.

“The civil magistrate, in matters of religion or of the first table, hath power civilly to command or forbid things respecting the outward man, which are clearly commanded or forbidden in the word, and to inflict suitable punishments, according to the nature of the transgressions against the same.”

Several arguments, with testimonies, for the confirmation and proof of this truth, were annexed thereunto, and were printed at London, Anno 1654, together with a discourse of that nature by Mr. Thomas Allen. It was

bound up with a small treatise about the nature and power of Synods. But that which was attended principally in the next meeting of the Synod, August 16,<sup>1</sup> 1648, was a Platform of Discipline, to be commended to the churches of New England, for a rule of their practice in the government of the church, which the assembly, meeting together in the said year, agreed upon, which they endeavored to gather out of the word of God. But for a confession of faith, they wholly agreed with that set forth by the Assembly of Divines at Westminster.

The Platform of Discipline was to be presented to the churches and General ||Court|| for their consideration and acceptance in the Lord. This was done in October, Anno 1648,<sup>2</sup> for the summer of the year 1647 proving sickly, they were forced to adjourn unto the following year.

Some objections were made against some part thereof by some of the deputies of the Court in the name of [the] churches and freemen they belonged unto, which being answered by some of the elders, to whom it was left against the next sessions of the Court, they then thankfully accepted thereof, and declared their approbation of the said Platform of Discipline, as being, for the substance thereof, what they had hitherto practised in their churches, and did believe to be according to the Word of God.

In the said Platform were laid down the principles of the Congregation discipline, according to which the churches of New England have been ever since ordered. These principles are now well known in the world, and need not therefore here be inserted; but for the better information and satisfaction of the reader, and that none might judge of the said churches otherwise than § as § they really are, in their constitution and order, the sum of them here followeth:

1. Ecclesiastical polity, church government, or church discipline, is nothing else but that form and order that is to be observed in the church of Christ upon earth, both for the constitution of it and all the administrations that are therein to be performed, the parts of which are all of them exactly described in the word of God, and is

[government]

<sup>1</sup> 15th, says Winthrop.—H.

<sup>2</sup> A mistake; it should be 1649.—H.

not left in the power of any to alter, add, or diminish any thing therein ; the necessary circumstances of which, as time and place, &c. are left to men, to be ordered unto edification, and not otherwise.

2. There is a Catholic church visible, viz. the company of those that profess the Christian faith, whether in church order or not ; but there is no political Catholic church, the state of the members of the visible church, since the coming of Christ, being only Congregational.

3. A Congregational church, by the institution of Christ, is a part of the visible church, consisting of a company of Saints by calling, united into one body, by an holy covenant, for the public worship of God, and the mutual edification one of another, in the fellowship of the Lord Jesus, the matter of which, as to its qualification, ought to be such as have attained the knowledge of the principles of religion, free from gross scandals, and, with the profession of their faith and repentance, walk in blameless obedience to the word of God. As to its quantity, it ought not to be of greater number than may ordinarily meet together conveniently in one place, nor fewer than may conveniently carry on church work. The form of such a church is an agreement, consent, or visible covenant, whereby they give up themselves unto the Lord, to the observing the ordinances of Christ together in the same society.

4. The fraternity or brotherhood of such a church is the first subject of all ordinary church power, which is either a power of office or of privilege. But the power of privilege is in the brethren, formally and immediately ; the other is in them no otherwise than in that they design the persons unto office, who only are to act and exercise that power.

5. The ordinary officers of the church are such as concern their spiritual and moral, temporal and natural good ; of the first sort, are pastors, teachers, ruling elders, 1 Tim. v. 17, in which latter sort most of the churches in New England, as many of the Congregational churches elsewhere, are not so well satisfied as formerly, accounting ruling elders should be able to teach.

6. It is in the power of the churches to call their own officers and remove them from their office again, if there fall out just cause, yet so as the advice of neighbor churches, where it may conveniently be done, be first had, and they who are to officiate ought to be tried and proved before they be elected. 1 Tim. v. 22.

7. Elders are to be ordained by imposition of hands, which is to be performed by the elders of the same church if it be furnished with any, or those of neighbor churches, and may be done by some of the brethren deputed thereunto; which latter also is not disapproved by Dr. Hornbeck, the learned Professor of Divinity at Leyden, from Numb. viii. 10.

8. The power of government in a Congregational church ought to proceed after the manner of a mixt administration, for in an organic church no act can be consummate without the consent both of the elders and the brethren; so as the power of government or rule in the elders prejudice not the power of privilege in the brethren, nor the power of privilege in them prejudice the power of rule seated in the elders, seeing both may sweetly agree together.

9. For the maintenance of the ministers of the church, all that are taught are to communicate to him that teacheth in all good things; and in case of neglect, the magistrate ought to see that the ministry be duly provided for.

10. For the admission of members, those that have the weakest measure of faith, it ought to be accepted in them that desire admission, either by a personal relation in public, or by the elders acquainting the church with what satisfaction they have received from the persons in private. The things wherein satisfaction is required are faith and repentance, which ought to be found in all church members.

11. Where members of churches are called to remove from one church to another, it is convenient, for order's sake, that it be done by letters of recommendation or of dismissal.

12. The censures of the church, which are for the

preventing, removing, or healing of offences, are excommunication or admonition, wherein the church ought to proceed according to the rule of Matthew xviii. 15, 16, 17, wherein the offence is to be brought to the church by the mouth of the elders.

13. Particular churches, although they are distinct, and so have not one power over another, yet because they are united unto Christ, not only as a mystical but as a political head, they ought to have communion one with another, by way of mutual care, consultation, admonition, and participation in the same ordinances.

14. Synods orderly assembled, and rightly proceeding according to the pattern of Acts xv., are the ordinance of Christ, and if not absolutely necessary to the being, yet necessary to the well-being of churches, for the establishment of truth and peace therein. And many churches may so assemble together by their messengers and elders, and their directions and determinations, so far as consonant to the Word of God, are to be received with reverence and submission, not only for their agreement therewith, (without which they bind not at all,) but also for the power whereby they are made, as an ordinance of God, appointed thereunto in his Word.

15. Church government and civil government may very well stand together, it being the duty of the magistrates to take care of matters of religion, and to improve his civil authority, for observing the duties commanded in the first, as well as in the second table, seeing the end of their office is not only the quiet and peaceable life of the subject in matters of righteousness and honesty, but also in matters of godliness. 1 Tim. ii. 1; 2.

In these propositions are summed up in brief the principles of the Congregational churches of New England as to church government, which is the only point wherein they differ from the rest of the Reformed Churches, whether English, Belgic, or Gallic. As for their confession of faith and doctrine in all other points of religion, they of New England vary not from the doctrine of the Church of England, which generally is received in all the Reformed Churches of Christ in Europe.

In drawing the aforesaid Platform, the hand of Mr. Thomas Hooker, the famous minister of Hartford, was wanting, who had been not a little helpful in the former Synod, 1637, being, July the 7th, 1647, called to his rest and to receive his crown amongst those who have turned many to righteousness, and to shine as the stars forever and ever. Of whose eminent worth the less may be said here, considering what is ascribed to him by a reverend brother of his own order, in this following epitaph, wherein there is enough, if some do not think too much, said, for the setting forth his praise.

EPITAPHIUM IN ORBITUM R MI FRATRIS

MR. THO: HOOKERI.

America, although she doth not boast  
Of all the gold and silver from this coast,  
Lent to her sister Europe's need, or pride,  
(For that's repaid her, and much more beside,  
By one rich jewel, which th' Heavens did thence afford,  
As pious Herbert gave his honest word,)  
Yet thinks she may into the catalogue come,  
With Europe, Afric, Asia, for one tomb.\*

Ez. ROGERS.<sup>1</sup>

For piety, prudence, wisdom, zeal, and learning, and what else might make him serviceable in the ||place and time|| he lived in, he might be compared with those of greatest note. He needs no other praise than the fruits of his own labors in both Englands, which shall preserve an honorable and happy remembrance of him forever.

August 25, 1649, put a period to the days of that fervent and powerful preacher of the Gospel, Mr. Thomas Shepard, the worthy pastor of the church of Christ at Cambridge. To him may be in his measure applied the words of David, "The zeal of thine house hath consumed me," for he died in the 44th year of his age. In whom was found the zeal, fervor, piety, and learning of an eminent, worthy preacher of the Gospel.

|| time and place ||'

\* VARIATIONS. [From Mather's Magnalia.] ED.

Line 4. . . . . and much gain beside,

5. In one rich pearl, which Heaven did thence afford

7. Yet thinks, She in the catalogue may come.

<sup>1</sup> Rev. Ezekiel Rogers was the first minister of Rowley, where he died Jan. 23, 1661.—E.