

any other force, threatening, or violence, whatever hath been to the contrary judged, reported, and published by any other person or persons, to the prejudice and disadvantage of the truth, and the credit of them that were called to act therein.¹

CHAP. LXX.²*Ecclesiastical affairs in the Massachusetts, from the year 1666 to 1771.*

EVER since the late Synod, held in Boston in the year 1662, for the debating the two questions, viz. about the subject of Baptism and consociation of churches, hath arisen some trouble in the country; for in the agitation and determination of those questions, several things were delivered for undeniable positions, which sundry of the ministers, and many of the members of the churches throughout the country, were ready to reflect upon, as innovations without Scripture warrant, and that would have a direct tendency to undermine the liberty of the churches, as well as to abate, if not corrupt, the purity of them, which occasioned much opposition against the receiving the foresaid determinations in many of the churches of the Massachusetts, as well as in some of the neighbor Colonies. And peradventure the controversy was at times managed with too much animosity, until, by degrees, in many of the churches within the respective Colonies of New England,³ viz. as to the owning of those for members of the particular churches they belong to, who were baptized in their infancy, and when they ||come|| to adult years, are willing to submit to the discipline of the church, and are found orthodox in their judgments, and without scandal in their lives.

They who are willing, in that whereto they have already attained, to walk by the same rule, and mind the same thing, i. e. peaceably and orderly, according to what they have received, may expect that though they are, at the present, in some things otherwise minded, that God shall even reveal this unto them in his own time and way.

The controversy mentioned was not a little strengthened and revived by an occasion about that time, or not

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¹ Reference is here probably made to the strictures of John Josselyn, the voyager, who resided with his brother Henry at Black Point, 1663-1671.—H.

² LXIX in the MS.—H. ³ Something appears to be wanting.—H.

long before, falling out : for after the church of Boston was destitute of a teaching elder, by the sudden and unexpected death¹ of Mr. John Norton, they having made sundry fruitless endeavors to supply themselves, at last, by a general consent of the principal part of the church, they addressed themselves to the reverend and worthy Mr. John Davenport, the pastor of New Haven, a person beyond exception and compare for all ministerial abilities, and upon that account highly esteemed and accepted in either Englands. The reverend person, as was understood by them that were most solicitous to gain him to Boston, was strongly bent in his spirit to remove from the place where he was settled before, in regard of alteration like to ensue in their civil government, that whole Colony being accidentally wrapped within the bounds of the Patent, not long before obtained for Connecticut Colony. Not many motives need be used to draw them that have a natural propension to come. On the other hand, some of the members of Boston church, and those not inconsiderable, either [as] to their number or other circumstances, were averse to the inviting the said reverend person, so as that they desired liberty of withdrawing, or of being a church by themselves, in case their brethren were resolved to proceed on in their choice; not out of dislike of his worth and abilities, but in regard of his declared judgment in opposition to the determination of the late Synod in 1662, which was apprehended by some like to become a ball of contention among the churches of the Massachusetts; but every consideration of this nature was swallowed up by the incomparable worth of the person, by such as had already made their choice.² In fine, much trouble was occasioned thereby, one part of the church of Boston being as resolved and fixed in their negative, as the rest were in the affirmative, so as not to be included in the choice. This difference was soon after pretty well composed, when the dissenters found a way, by the interposition and advice of the messengers of sundry neighbor churches, to gather into a distinct church-society by themselves. But many of them, who were not so well satisfied in the doing thereof, were soon after ready to think that *factum valet*.

¹ April 5, 1663.—H.

² Mr. Davenport, with Rev. James Allen as his colleague, were installed at Boston, Dec. 9, 1668.—H.

It was feared that those two churches would, like the river Davus, running betwixt the same banks of great Danubius, yet to keep their distinct channels, and hold no other communion than that of civil commerce one with another; yet, as it was then hoped, time and patience hath since that time, viz. Anno 1680, brought things about to almost a perfect coalescence.¹

But that famous and first church of Boston was not long happy in the enjoyment of Mr. Davenport, their reverend pastor, who was removed from them by an apoplectical distemper on March 16,² 1670, after they had flourished under his ministry three or four years, and sat under the shadow of his doctrine, as it were, with great delight, and found the fruit thereof sweet to their taste. It is not unworthy our notice, that though he had near attained the eightieth year of his age, yet was he of that vivacity, that the strength of his memory, profoundness of his judgment, floridness of his elocution, were little, if at all, abated in him. His loss would have been more deeply laid to heart if it had not been in a great measure made up by the seasonable supply of another reverend preacher, Mr. John Oxenbridge,³ who, not without the direction of a special Providence, was brought to the place not long before the removal of the other; by whose pious and prudent endeavors the former breach was in a likely way of healing; at least, things tended much that way all the time of his shining in the golden candlestick of that church, a double portion of whose spirit rest upon them who may succeed, he also being removed by sudden death, Anno 1675.⁴

Hitherto it had pleased the Father of Lights to bless the New England churches with the continuance of many worthy and eminent divines, not only of such who at first removed with their brethren, at the first planting of the country, but of many others who were raised up there; but about this time they were bereft of a great number of them, within the compass of a few years.

The setting of so many bright stars (and some of them of the first magnitude,) in New England's firma-

¹ For a particular account of this controversy, see Hutchinson, i. 247-51; Emerson's History of the First Church in Boston, pp. 111-20.—H.

² 11th in Ch. Records, says Emerson.—H.

³ He was installed April 10, 1671.—H.

⁴ Dec. 28, 1674, says Emerson.—H.

ment, seemed to presage a sad night of darkness and trouble not unlike ere long to ensue, which, in a great measure, hath since come to pass.

The first laborer of note who was, within this compass of years, taken out of the harvest, was Mr. John Wilson, the Apostolical pastor of the first church of Boston. Amongst New England's worthies, he well deserved to be ranked amongst the first three, sc. for his zeal, faith, holiness, humility, and Christian charity, which is the grace that crowns all other virtues, and wherein he most excelled, and without which all other gifts will render a man, of how great abilities soever, but as a sounding brass, and as a tinkling cymbal, and when faith and hope shall cease, as to the exercise of them, then shall charity, which remaineth, shine with its greatest lustre and glory.

It hath been observed by some, that a great part of New England's prosperity came along with Mr. Hooker and Mr. Cotton; it may as truly be said, that it remained there, in a great part, by Mr. Wilson's means, who, by his faith and prayers, kept off the storm from New England all his own time, as some have said of Luther, concerning Germany, and of which this good man had some secret and strong persuasions, as he did intimate to some of his most confident friends, sc. that no public judgment or calamity should come upon the country in his time; what hath fallen out since, is well known to the world.

He departed this life, August 7th, 1667, in the 79th year of his age, having been thirty-seven years pastor of the said church of Boston.

The next that, about this time, followed this aged prophet to the house of the grave, was one of the youngest of the sons of the prophets, (for death keeps no order in his assignments,) Mr. Samuel Shepard, second son of that famous preacher, well known by his zealous preaching and other learned labors, Mr. Thomas Shepard. This son of his was called from Christ's plough by an untimely sickness, as soon almost as he had put his hand thereunto, early in the spring of his life, as well as of the year, about 1668,¹ in the very flower of his youth, blos-

¹ April 7, 1668, aged 26.—H.

soming with hopes of greater fruitfulness in the vineyard, if he might have continued longer therein.

On the 9th of July, in the same year, likewise, was that faithful and painful preacher of the Gospel, Mr. Jonathan Mitchell, dismissed to his rest. He was born at Halifax, in Yorkshire, of pious and worthy parents, but transplanted in his tender years into the nursery at Harvard College, where, [in] a few years, he made such proficiency as, outstripping his equals, he was advanced to a fellowship in the same College, wherein he so behaved himself by the fame of his worth and learning, that several churches in the country bespake an interest in him, against such time as he was like to launch forth into public employment in the ministry. The church of Hartford, upon the River of Connecticut, were not without hope of redintegrating their loss of that famous pastor, Mr. Hooker, by the supply of this hopeful proficient;¹ but the church of Cambridge, in whose arms he had received his education, being altogether destitute, by the death of their eminent pastor,² the other churches were easily persuaded to quit their claim, and he came to be ordained pastor of the church at Cambridge, Anno 1650.³ It was looked upon as no small favor of God, not only to that church, to have their breach so fully made up by one of the same spirit and principles with their former pastor, but also to the country, in supplying that place with a person so well qualified with the gifts of learning, piety, zeal, and prudence, for the better seasoning those who, in their younger years, are dedicated to the service of the ministry, with the like spirit of gravity, zeal, and holiness, wherein his example and doctrine were eminently blessed, to the great advantage of sundry worthy preachers of the Gospel, bred up in that School of the Prophets in his time. He was an over hard student, such an *heluo librorum* that he could spare no time for recreation, but only for necessary repast, by which it was thought he much prejudiced his health, by the putrefac-

¹ His first sermon was preached at Hartford, June 24, 1649, and on the day following he was invited to a settlement in the ministry. Holmes's History of Cambridge, p. 48.—H.

² Rev. Thomas Shepard. See page 541.—H.

³ He preached at Cambridge, for the first time, Aug. 12, 1649, and was ordained Aug. 21, 1650. Holmes, p. 48.—H.

tion of the humors in a plethoric body, which brought upon him a putrid fever, that debilitated his vital spirits in a little time, and brought him to the very gates of death, before standers-by were apprehensive of any danger in his disease, or whither it was tending.

Not to dilate further upon his eminent worth, a neighbor minister hath given it him, in full measure, running over, as he well deserved, in this following epitaph :

Here lies the darling of his time,
Mitchell, expired in his prime,
Who, four years short of forty-seven,
Was found full ripe, and pluck'd for Heaven ;
Was full of prudent zeal, and love,
Faith, patience, wisdom from above ;
New England's stay, next age's story,
The churches' gem, the College glory.
Angels may speak him, ah ! not I,
(Whose worth's above hyperbole,)
But for our loss, were 't in my power,
I'd weep an everlasting shower.

J. S.¹

He died about the three or four and fortieth year of his age, as did his famous predecessor.

Another eminent and hopeful minister of the Gospel, which New England was bereaved of this year, was Mr. John Eliot, born and bred up in New England, the eldest son of the worthy minister of the Gospel, Mr. John Eliot,² of Roxbury, who hath taken so much pains to acquaint the Indians of New England with the religion of the English, and with the knowledge of the Gospel. This, his eldest son, (who for his years was *nulli secundus* as to all literature and other gifts, both of nature and grace, which made him so generally acceptable to all that had opportunity of partaking of his labors, or the least acquaintance with him, yet) herein was noted to excel all his contemporaries, in that, by the advice and conduct of his father, through his own industry and diligence, he had attained such skill in the Indian language, that he was able familiarly to discourse with them and instruct them, yea, frequently travelled up and down the country to take all opportunities to preach unto them the word of life. The untimely removal of himself, with some others in like manner qualified and devoted to that work, hath been to some a ground of fear, that the great harvest of converting the heathens in America is not § as § yet

¹ Perhaps Rev. John Sherman, of Watertown.—H.

² He died, says Farmer, Oct. 11, (or 13,) 1668, aged 32.—H.

fully come, although there are many hopeful and comfortable gleanings, as may be seen afterwards in what follows, not unworthy the labors and pains that hath been by any bestowed in that work.

Besides the forementioned, in 1668 and the following years were sundry other eminent ministers of the Gospel in New England removed by the stroke of death, whose memory it is thought meet in the following catalogue to commend to the notice of posterity.

Mr. Henry Flint, pastor of the church at Braintree, (his worthy colleague, Mr. Thompson, a man of great worth and learning, zeal, and piety, in his former time, having, in a dark cloud of melancholy, left the world in the year 1666,¹) [died] April 27, 1668.

Mr. Richard Mather, a solid and grave divine, teacher of the church at Dorchester, died April 22, 1669.

Mr. John Reyner, pastor of the church at Dover, died April 3, 1669.

Mr. Zechariah Symmes, pastor of the church at Charlestown, died February 4, 1670.²

Mr. John Allin, pastor of the church at Dedham, died August 26, 1670.³

Mr. Charles Chauncy, who, in the eightieth year of his age, being President of Harvard College, died February 19, 1671.*

All, or most of whom, are well known by their abilities, as well abroad as at home, in the press as well as in the pulpit, especially by their labors in and about the controversy of church government; of whose faculties, success, and skill therein, the reader may best make a judgment, by perusing their own writings, long since extant in the world.

There hath been much opposition and vehement disputings betwixt wise, learned, and holy men about this point, yet the righteous and the wise and their works are in the hand of the Lord, and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is, and therefore not to judge by prejudice, or with respect of persons; the ministers of New England have given an account to the world, of their way and of their practice, wherein they differ from

* 1671-2, i. e. 1672. Ed.

¹ Dec. 10th.—H.

² Old Style.—H.

³ 1671. Lamson's History of the

First Church in Dedham, (8vo, Dedham, 1839,) p. 26.—H.

the rest of the Reformed Churches; and doubtless no detriment will accrue to others, by leaving them to enjoy the liberty of their own apprehensions.

But not to look only on the dark side of the cloud; during the time of these sad and sorrowful occurrences, were some others called forth, either to enter upon, or to make more open and manifest progress in, the ministry, ordained for the edifying of the body of Christ, and perfecting the saints.

At the town of Portsmouth, seated on the southern banks of Pascataqua River, the inhabitants having been several years instructed by the painful and able ministry of Mr. Joshua Moody, and guided by his prudent conduct, did a considerable number of them join themselves together in church fellowship, over whom the said Mr. Moody was ordained pastor, 1671.¹

At the same time,² Mr. John Reyner was ordained pastor at the church at Dover, in the room of his father, lately deceased there in the year 1669. Much about the same time³ was Mr. Dummer ordained pastor of the church at York, in the Province of Maine.

During these intervals of time several contentious breaches, that happened in sundry of the churches of the Massachusetts, were orderly composed, though not without the interposition of the civil magistrate, who is *custos utriusque tabulæ*, which it is thought meet rather to intimate in this place, than pass over with silence, seeing thereby a full answer is given to the main objections that use to be made against the Congregational churches of New England, as if there was no way found to end differences, that might occasionally arise in or amongst the churches of that constitution.

Their usual way of ending all differences is by the improving the help of neighbor churches, who, by their elders and other messengers meeting together, are wont to deliberate and give their advice concerning any matter of difference; in which case, where there appeared an unanimous consent in the said messengers, all parties concerned were found always ready to acquiesce therein. But in case of any differing apprehensions of the said

¹ See Adams's Annals of Portsmouth, pp. 51-5.—H.

² July 12, 1671. Root's Bicentennial Sermon, (8vo, Dover, 1839.) p. 11.—H.

³ Farmer says Dec. 3, 1672; Gillett (in Am. Qu. Register, XIII. 156,) says 1673.—H.

messengers amongst themselves, or in case of any contumacy in any of the offending parties, the civil magistrates' help being implored by them that are aggrieved, that useth always to put a final end to all matters of controversy amongst any of their churches.

In like manner do all Protestant divines allow a power in the civil magistrate, not only in worldly regiment, but also in spiritual, for the preservation of the church, i. e. in cases temporal, so far as belongeth to the outward preservation, not to the personal administration of them, which is the substance of our English Oath of Supremacy, as a learned man observes.

It is true that, in the primitive times, infidels were converted to the faith, and churches established and kept up, when there was no assistance, but rather opposition, from the Princes of the earth, as saith the same author. And the benefit we have now, by Christian magistrates, was then more abundantly supplied by the miracles wrought, and the constant direction and care of Apostolic and extraordinary persons, who were gifted by Christ for the purpose; but in following times the ordinary helps and external means for the upholding and maintaining of peace and truth in the churches, sc. in way of a civil power, is only a pious and Christian magistracy, where a nation is blessed with it, so as by the help of the ecclesiastical and the civil power, acting in a way of subordination each unto other, all differences arising may easily be composed there, as well as in any other place, as instances might easily be given, of the issue of some late differences in several of the churches there of late, as, namely, at Newbury, Salem, and at Salisbury, the particulars whereof need not here be inserted. By such means hath truth and order been maintained, [and] peace restored unto the several churches within the jurisdictions of New England, in all former times, since the first planting, and may accordingly be expected for the future.