

3 Quer. Whether ought not that right be tried on the place, ten of the towns claimed by him remaining within the Massachusetts jurisdiction, by the Chief Justices' report?

[Ans.] I think his right ought to be tried upon the place, for so much thereof as lies within the Massachusetts jurisdiction, liable to such appeal as the Charter allows, if it allows any.

4 Quer. Or, if triable here, by what Court can it properly be so, whether in one of the Four Courts at Westminster, or upon a special commission, and how, in your judgment, whether by jury or otherwise?

[Ans.] It cannot properly be tried here, by any of the Four Courts, but according to the law of the place, if it lie within any jurisdiction; and if within none, the King may erect Courts to proceed according to the law of England, unless altered by the legislative power of the place.

18 Sept. 1679.

W. JONES.

CHAP. LXXII.¹

Ecclesiastical affairs in New England, from the year 1671 to the year 1685.

THE solemn and awful dispensations of the Almighty towards the people of New England of late, have made all the wise hearted among them fear that he had a controversy with them, having written his displeasure in the dismal characters of contagious sickness, and of the sword of war, as well as other disastrous events and sad calamities. Many endeavors were used, by sundry solemn days of humiliation, to find out the cause why the Lord contended with them. They conceived that personal afflictions did oftentimes come only for probation, but as to public calamities it is not usually so, as they apprehended, especially when, by a continued series of providences, God seems to be pleading against a people as he did against Israel in David's time; and as he had seemed to do with them for divers years. At the last the General Court of the Massachusetts saw cause to assemble all the ministers and messengers of the churches within their jurisdiction in a general Synod at Boston,

¹ LXXI in the MS.—x

September 10, 1679,¹ to whom these two questions were propounded to debate upon :

Quest. 1. What are the evils that have provoked the Lord to bring his judgments on New England ?

Quest. 2. What is to be done that so || those || evils may be reformed ?

In answer to the first, it was determined by the joint consent of the whole Assembly, that beside a great and visible decay of the power of godliness, amongst many professors in their churches, there was likewise too much cause to fear, that several vices, especially pride, intemperance, and worldly-mindedness, began to bud forth amongst them, which were the evils that used to bring the wrath of God upon the Gentiles of old ; therefore it need not be wondered at, if God should bring sharp afflictions upon the country for the preventing or reforming these grosser evils, that so such noisome weeds might timely be rooted out, and not suffered to spread and take place in the garden of God. Accordingly, the said Assembly advised, that for the reforming all the fore-mentioned evils, that, in the first place, all that were above others in place, would, as to their practice, become very exemplary unto others, it being incident to the people of all ages to follow those that are above them, that so, if any of the sins of the times were found, in any degree, among those, or any of them that were leaders, either as to civil or ecclesiastical order, reformation in them would have an happy influence upon many others, as Moses and Joshua, being to reform others, began with what concerned themselves. So, also, that care should be taken for the revising of the Platform of Discipline,² drawn up by a Synod there Anno 1648, which might be a good means to recover those that had erred from the truth, and to prevent apostacy for the future, and that, by the renewing of covenant, their churches and administrations should be reduced to that their primitive pattern.

Furthermore also, forasmuch as it hath been observed, that some have reflected upon the New English churches for their defect in not publishing to the world a confes-

|| these ||

¹ This was the "Reforming Synod"; Rev. John Sherman and Urian Oakes were its "joint moderators during the biggest part of the session." See Mather's *Magnalia*, v. 5-19, 85-98.—H. ² See page 537.—H.

sion of their faith, as if their principles were unknown, although it had been long since declared, that as to matters of doctrine they agreed with other Reformed Churches, nor was any thing referring to doctrine, but what concerns worship and discipline, that caused their predecessors to remove into the deserts of America, while it was a land not sown, that there they might have liberty to practise accordingly; therefore, this Synod last convened, having in their second session, which was May 12, 1680, consulted, and considered of a Confession of Faith, they unanimously agreed, that a Confession of Faith, according to that which was drawn up by the ministers and messengers of the Congregational Churches, who met at the Savoy in London, (being for the most part, some small variations excepted, the same with that which was agreed upon first by the Assembly at Westminster, and had been approved by a General Assembly in Scotland, as well as by the Synod at Cambridge, in New England, Anno 1648,) should be compiled, which being publicly twice read and examined, was approved of.¹ The little variation which they made from the one, in compliance with the other, may be seen by those who please to compare them. But for the main, they chose to express themselves in the words of those reverend Assemblies, that they might, with one heart and mouth, glorify God and our Lord Jesus Christ. But as to what concerns church government, they refer to the Platform of Discipline, agreed upon by the messengers of their churches Anno 1648, solemnly owned and confirmed in their last Synod.

The General Court of the Massachusetts, October 15, 1679, having perused the result of the late Synod, judge it meet to commend the same to the serious consideration of all the churches and people within their jurisdiction, enjoining and requiring all persons, in their respective capacities, to a careful and diligent reformation of all those provoking evils mentioned therein, according to the true intent thereof, that so the anger and displeasure of God, that hath been many ways manifested, may be averted from his people, and his favor and blessing obtained as in former times; to that end they ordered

¹ See it in the *Magnalia*, v. 5-19.—E.

the same to be printed, as accordingly they did the Confession of Faith and Platform of Discipline, for the benefit of the churches of New England in present and after times.

Since the publishing the acts of the late Synod at Boston, one John Russell, a Wedderdop'd shoemaker at Woburn, in New England, taking notice of an expression in one clause thereof, under the breach of the Second Commandment, rendering those of that persuasion as guilty of the breach thereof, viz. that they do no better than set up an altar against God's altar, and of some expressions likewise in a small treatise, since that time published by one of the principal ministers of the country, judiciously and learnedly asserting and proving the divine right of Infant Baptism, did, in the year following, stitch up a small pamphlet, styled by him, "A brief narrative of some considerable passages concerning the first gathering and further progress of a church of Christ in Gospel order, in Boston, in New England," &c., wherein he endeavors to clear the innocency of those commonly (though falsely, as he says,) called Anabaptists.¹ Surely he was not well aware of the old adage, *ne sutor ultra crepidam*, or else he would not have made such botching work. For although the Simple Cobbler of Agawam, his countryman, who, in the year 1645, used many honest stitches to much better purpose, in helping to repair his native country, lamentably tattered in the upper leather and sole, out of which it may not be much amiss to borrow a few of his lifts, which those of his profession may make good use of, before they offer any more of their ware to an open market.

"1. To entreat them to consider what an high pitch of boldness it is for man to cut a principal ordinance out of the Kingdom of God, if it be but to make a dislocation, which so far disgoods the ordinance, I fear it altogether unhallows it; to transplace or transtime a stated institution of Jesus Christ, without his direction, I think is to destroy it.

"2. What a cruelty it is to divest children of that only

¹ The book was printed in London, in 1680, with a preface by William Kiffin, Daniel Dyke, William Collins, Hansard Knollys, John Harris, and Nehemiah Cox. See Benedict's History of the Baptists, i. 398.—H.

external privilege which their Heavenly Father hath bequeathed them, to interest them visibly in himself, his Son, his Spirit, his Covenant of Grace, and the tender bosom of their careful mother, the church.

“3. What an inhumanity it is to deprive parents of that comfort they may take, from the Baptism of their infants, dying in their childhood.

“4. How unseasonably and unkindly it is, to interturb the State and Church with their Amalekitish onsets, when they are in their extreme pangs of travail with their lives.

“5. To take a thorough view of those who have perambled this by-path. Being sometimes in the crowds of foreign Wedderdopers, i. e. Anabaptists, and prying into their inward frames with the best eyes I had, I could not but observe these disguised guises in the generality of them. 1. A flat formality of spirit, without salt or savor, in the spiritualities of Christ, as if their religion had begun and ended in their opinion. 2. A shallow slighting of such as dissent from them, appearing too often in their faces, speeches, and carriages. 3. A feeble yet peremptory obstinacy; seldom are any of them reclaimed. 4. A shameful sliding into other such tarpauline tenets, to keep themselves dry from the showers of justice, as a rational mind would never entertain, if it were not error-blasted from Heaven and Hell. I should as shrewdly suspect that opinion, that will cordially cor-
rive* with two or three sottish errors, as that faith that can professedly live with two or three sordid sins. God is as jealous of his ordinances as men are of their opinions.”

Thus far the Simple Cobbler, p. 16, 17, 18,¹ a little of whose stirrup might have served to have better endoctrinated the unstable shoemaker of Woburn, who, though himself uttered it as an argument of divine favor to his opinions, that none of them of that persuasion died of the contagious sickness of the small pox, whereof so many hundred died at Boston, yet they that survived him may take notice also, that God, in whose hands are all men's times, did not suffer him to live above a year in the said

* From Latin, *corrivoor*, “to flow together from different streams.” Plin. Ed.

¹ Pulsifer's ed. (12mo. Bost. 1843,) pp. 16-17.—H.

Boston, whither he had translated himself,¹ lest he should further translate others from the truth; yet is not that of the poet to be forgotten, *careat successibus, oplo, &c.* It is too often seen that those new sectaries, that go about to unchurch all other Christian societies, do at last unchurch themselves, and from Anabaptists become Sebaptists, then Seekers, and at last ranters; it being more usual for them, that out of a giddy, unstable mind have wandered from the truth, to run into the contrary extreme, than to close with the mean principles of truth and soberness, which they have at first deserted without cause. It hath been likewise a common observation, that these Wedderdoping new-sort of Christians have proved but the *materia prima* of all the corrupt opinions that Christian religion hath of late days, since the reformation of Luther, been besmeared withal. Let men take heed of attempting a new way to Heaven, by a ladder of lying figments of their own, lest thereby they be thrown the deeper into hell, as saith the same author.

But to return to what is in hand, and give this Gospel-ordered church (as J. Russell terms them,) what is their due from an historian. As for the persons of those seven² he apologizes for, it may more easily be granted that they were good in the main, than that it was a good work for God they were engaged in. *Boni homines* are sometimes found *malè feriatì*, i. e. good men may be found to be ill employed, as Peter was, whom Christ rebukes and calls Satan, and bids get behind him. Whether any of them ||did absolutely|| deserve to be delivered to Satan for their obstinacy in their opinions or other miscarriages, which either through weakness of their judgments or strength of their passions, which in defence of their opinions or practices, they ran into, or whether there were not more acrimony of the salt than sweetness of the Gospel spirit of peace, in those that managed the discipline of the church against some of them that had been in the communion of some of the churches thereabout, must not be here discussed, only some sober Christians that were of

|| absolutely did ||

¹ He was ordained minister of the first Baptist church in Boston, as successor to Hull, July 28, 1679, and died Dec. 24, 1680. See Benedict, i. 398-9.—H. ² The seven males who formed the church, viz. Thomas Gould, Thomas Osburn, Edward Drinker, John George, Richard Goodall, William Turner, and Robert Lambert. Beside these, there were two females, Mary Goodall and Mary Newell. Benedict, i. 383-4.—H.

their own profession, viz. in opposition to Infant Baptism, have said that they could not but look upon their way to be evil, and such as could not be justified. It hath possibly also been observed by some, that though slow-bellied Cretians, as Paul speaks to Titus, are to be rebuked sharply, that they may be sound in the faith, yet men of a grave and serious spirit and of sober conversations, as Thomas Gold and some of the rest were said to be, would easier, in all likelihood, have been reclaimed from the error of their judgments by gentler means of persuasion and long suffering, than by the corrosives of severity and sharp censures of the church, which, if it were granted, yet that can give no color to their irregular and hasty casting themselves into the mould of a particular church, under the specious varnish of a church in Gospel order, consisting only of a few giddy sectaries, that fondly conceit themselves to be an orderly church, when their very coalition is explicitly not only without, but against, the consent of all the rest of the churches in the place, as well as the order of the civil authority.

I shall conclude with the last words of the late Synod: *
 “Inasmuch as a thorough and hearty reformation is necessary in order to obtaining peace with God, and all outward means will be ineffectual unto that end, except the Lord pour down his Spirit from on high, it doth therefore concern us to cry mightily unto God, both in ordinary and extraordinary manner, that he would be pleased to rain down righteousness upon us;” and that the north wind would awake, and the south come and blow, that the spices thereof may flow out, that the whole Church of Christ in these deserts of America may be found unto her beloved, as an orchard of pomegranates with all pleasant fruits.

CHAP. LXXIII.¹

*Memorable accidents during this lustre of years, from
 1671 to 1676.*

Much hurt [was] done by thunder and lightning about these times. To those mentioned before may be added

* Reforming Synod, A. D. 1679. Ed.

¹ LXXII in the MS.—H.