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A SUMMER VISIT
OF
THREE RHODE ISLANDERS
TO THE
MASSACHUSETTS BAY IN 1651

AN ACCOUNT OF THE VISIT OF DR. JOHN CLARKE,
OBADIAH HOLMES AND JOHN CRANDALL, MEMBERS
OF THE BAPTIST CHURCH IN NEWPORT, R. I., TO
WILLIAM WITTER OF SWAMPSCOTT, MASS., IN JULY,
1651: ITS INNOCENT PURPOSE AND ITS PAINFUL
CONSEQUENCES

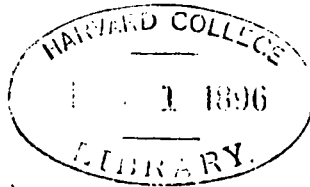
BY
HENRY MELVILLE KING
PASTOR OF THE FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, PROVIDENCE, R. I.

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PREFACE

THE substance of this paper was presented at the midwinter meeting of the Backus Historical Society, held in Boston, Dec. 8, 1879. It was published (Boston, 1880), by vote of the Society, under the general title—"Early Baptists Defended, a Review of Dr. Henry M. Dexter's Account of the Visit to William Witter in 'As to Roger Williams.'" It has been quoted frequently as an authority in reference to the historical incident which it discusses. Dr. Dexter found a copy of it in the Library of the British Museum. For several years it has been out of print, and the demand for it, on the part of the increasing number of students of colonial history, could not be met.

The history of the visit has been carefully re-examined, and the paper has been considerably lengthened by the addition of new

matter, and made to include a consideration of the incident as symptomatic of the Puritan spirit, and as shedding light upon the cause of the banishment of Roger Williams—a question which a few writers and speakers are not willing to allow to remain settled. The recent discovery of incontrovertible documentary evidence will confirm the belief that has been generally held as to the religious nature of Williams' offence, and ought to be able to remove all doubts from all minds.

This paper was read, in its enlarged form, before the Rhode Island Historical Society at its meeting, March 5, 1895, and before the Veteran Citizens Historical Association of Providence, April 11, 1895.

A SUMMER VISIT

OF THREE RHODE ISLANDERS TO THE MASSACHUSETTS BAY IN 1651.

THE memorable visit of Dr. John Clarke, Obadiah Holmes and John Crandall, members of the Baptist church in Newport, to William Witter, one of the early settlers in the Massachusetts Bay, took place in July, 1651. It is proposed in this paper to review the history of that visit, that we may ascertain, if possible, the object of it, the alleged criminal conduct of which these troublesome visitors were guilty, and the severity of the punishment which they received at the hands of the Puritan magistrates.

This service has been undertaken solely in the interests of historic truth, and not in the spirit of a partizan or a controversialist. A difference of opinion having been manifested of late in high quarters, and views put forward in opposition to those which had been universally held, it seems desirable that there should be a thorough and candid re-examination of the facts in the case which are accessible. When such historians as Dr. J. G. Palfrey ("History of New England") and Dr. H. M. Dexter ("As to Roger Williams") who follows Dr. Palfrey closely and even outstrips him in the positiveness of his convictions, call in question accepted opinions in matters of colonial history, it is due that those opinions be reviewed in the light of all the evidence, old and new, that can be presented.

A high regard for the many sterling

qualities of our Puritan ancestors, and admiration and gratitude for the noble service which they rendered, and the inestimable benefits of which we are enjoying, make us desirous to judge them fairly in all things, and even charitably where they were undoubtedly in error. We certainly would not misjudge their spirit or their acts, and if any false judgments have come down to us, transmitted through ignorance or prejudice, it is high time they were abandoned. On the other hand, a sacred regard for the truth of history should keep us from any disposition to conceal the errors of the Puritans or to extenuate their sins. Great and good as they were, they were not perfect; and he who undertakes to justify all the acts of his fathers, natural or denominational, will find himself burdened with a grave responsibility.

It should be remembered that we are dealing with events nearly two centuries and a half old, when truths now well developed, full grown and generally accepted, were in their infancy and acknowledged by few. We should be careful lest we unconsciously carry back to that early period of our history the standard of to-day, and measure events which occurred then by the fuller wisdom which we now possess. We should be no less careful lest, forgetting the growth and advancement that have been made, we seek to bring past events into closer harmony with present views and wishes than the facts will warrant. The duty of the historian is simply to write history, not to modify it or make it appear different from what it is. The truth may be judged charitably; but the truth is history, and nothing else is.

Let us consider, first, what was the object of the visit which Clarke, Holmes and Crandall, members of the Baptist church in Newport, made to William Witter, a farmer residing in Swampscott, about two miles from Lynn proper. Backus introduces the account of this visit with the following statement ("History of the Baptists," Vol. I., 178): "On July 19, 1651, Messrs. Clarke, Holmes and Crandal, 'being the representatives of the church in Newport, upon the request of William Witter of Lynn arrived there, he being a brother in the church who, by reason of his advanced age, could not undertake so great a journey as to visit the church.'" Backus gives as his authority the Newport church papers, from which the statement is a quotation. Arnold says in similar language ("History of Rhode Island," Vol.

fully planned to that end ; that owing to local disagreements in the Providence Plantations, and the supposed fear of Clarke and his friends that an attempt was about to be made to unite Newport and Portsmouth to the colonial confederacy, or possibly to annex them to the Massachusetts Bay, it was determined to prevent such a union ; and this method was deliberately chosen to call forth an exhibition of the persecuting spirit of the authorities of the Bay, that the breach might be widened and the suspected designs of those who were thought to be laboring for the annexation, might be frustrated.

It will be necessary to sketch briefly the situation. William Coddington, who in 1648 was elected the second President of the Providence Plantations (though at that time certain charges were brought

against him, the nature of which is unknown), had indeed manifested a desire for a union with the Colonies. There is much about Coddington's conduct which is veiled in mystery. He was evidently a wily, determined, ambitious man. In a letter of his to Winthrop, under date of Aug. 5, 1644, a letter which Dr. Palfrey calls "a curious letter," written, it will be noticed, five months after the signing of the charter given to Roger Williams for the incorporation of the Providence Plantations, he said: "I desire to have either such alliance with yourselves or Plymouth, one or both, as might be safe for us all, I having chief interest on this island, it being bought to me and my friends; and how convenient it might be, if it were possessed by an enemy, lying in the heart of the plantations, and convenient for shipping, I cannot

but see; but I want both counsel and strength to effect what I desire. I desire to hear from you, and that you would bury what I write in deep silence: for what I write I never imparted to any, nor would to you, had I the least doubt of your faithfulness that it should be uttered to my prejudice." The intent of this letter is obvious. It was written about the time the knowledge of the charter to Roger Williams was received in this country, and one month before the second meeting of the Commissioners of the four Colonies. It reveals Coddington's character, and his ambitious purpose. We cannot dwell upon the details of Coddington's conduct. Four years later—in 1648—in another letter to Winthrop, he disclosed his growing alienation from the people of Providence and Warwick. In Septem-

ber of that year he applied, in connection with Alexander Partridge, to the Commissioners of the Colonies for a union of the Island with them. The application declared that it was endorsed by "the major part of our island"—a statement which was proved false by subsequent events. This application was refused. The Commissioners were unwilling to recognize the island as a distinct colony—the thing which Coddington evidently desired—and offered their protection only on condition that the island should place itself under the government of Plymouth—the thing which Coddington evidently did not desire. That would have defeated his ambitious purpose. He declined the proposition; and here the matter ended. Four months afterward he sailed for England, where he remained at least

two years and a half. His design in going to England he succeeded in keeping a profound secret. This is acknowledged by all. The exact time of his return is uncertain. It was probably very soon after the visit to Witter. It could not have been before. When, however, he did return, it was found that he had succeeded, at the very end of his visit, in obtaining a "commission" from the Council of State to institute a separate government over the islands of Rhode Island and Conanicut—thereby setting aside the patent of the Providence Plantations given to Roger Williams, March 14, 1644. This commission appointed Coddington governor for life. He was to be assisted in the government by Councilors, "not exceeding the number of six," who were to be chosen annually, but must be approved by the

governor. Having accomplished his ambitious purpose, and procured a division of the Providence Plantations, and the appointment of himself for life as well-nigh the supreme ruler of Newport and Portsmouth, he arrived home possibly in August, 1651.

This act of Coddington is supposed to furnish the probable occasion of the visit of the three Newport worthies to Mr. Witter, in which they found Massachusetts about as hot a place as a fiery furnace heated to a seven-fold temperature.

Dr. Palfrey says: "If Massachusetts was intolerant of Baptists, and if the execution of Coddington's scheme would place the Rhode Island Baptists more or less under her control, the necessity of self-defence admonished them that, if possible, that scheme should be defeated. Clarke had known for seven years that

his presence would not be allowed in Massachusetts. During that time a law had existed which his presence would affront. [This was the intolerant law of 1644 banishing all persons who should oppose infant baptism or deny the right of the magistrates to punish the outward breaches of the first table.] And indeed seven years earlier yet, he had gone away under circumstances which made it next to certain that had he not departed voluntarily he would have been expelled.

“Fourteen years he was content to stay away from Massachusetts: in the fifteenth he was prompted to go thither. The considerate reader may see a significance in the time of this movement. The precise day of Coddington's arrival from England with his ‘Commission’ is not known; but it seems to have been when his arrival was expected from

week to week, or even from day to day, that Clarke undertook his journey. Clarke was a man of influence and authority. His personal character, his sacred office, and his newly acquired position of Assistant in the government, placed him prominently before the people. He was a man of discernment and resolution, and felt no reluctance to expose himself to personal inconvenience for the furtherance of what he accounted a good public object. And he judged well that, at this moment, some striking practical evidence of the hostility of Massachusetts to Baptists would be efficacious to excite his Rhode Island friends to oppose the ascendancy of Coddington.

“Clarke took with him two companions, one of whom, he could promise himself, would, at the moment, be almost as unwelcome a visitor as himself.

John Crandall was so far a person of consideration that we find him to have sometimes served in the General Court of the Colony as Commissioner (or Deputy) for Newport. But Obadiah Holmes was a man of more importance. He was minister of the congregation which had occasioned the application from Massachusetts to Plymouth; and he had been recently presented by the Grand Jury of that Colony for a disorderly meeting with others on the Lord's day. "The three proceeded together to Lynn, ten miles on the further side of Boston."

Dr. Palfrey continues the narrative with the use of such words and phrases as "perhaps," "it may easily be believed," "as is probable," showing that while he regards his theory as probable he does not present it as a fact capable of proof. It is a conjecture of his own,

for which he offers no authority beyond what he thinks he finds in the conjunction of events.

We pause to point out two or three errors in Dr. Palfrey's narrative. He says that Clarke left Massachusetts "under circumstances which made it next to certain that, had he not departed voluntarily, he would have been expelled." This language casts an unwarranted reproach upon Clarke and his conduct, when first in Massachusetts. He himself says: "In the year '37 I left my native land, and in the ninth month of the same, I, through mercy, arrived in Boston. I was no sooner on shore but there appeared to me differences among them touching the Covenants &c." He goes on to say that "seeing they were not able so to bear each with other in their different understandings and con-

sciences, as in those utmost parts of the World to live peaceably together," he himself proposed "for as much as the land was before us and wide enough," to seek out some other place. Very likely had this peace-loving citizen remained in the Bay he would have been banished, even as Roger Williams and a dozen others were; but no reproach should be cast upon the record of "the modest and virtuous Clarke," as Bancroft calls him, "whose whole life was a continued exercise of benevolence," and who "left a name without a spot." Having left the Bay in order to avoid strife, it seems utterly inconsistent that he should return to the Bay in order to stir up strife.

Moreover, Dr. Palfrey has fallen into an error when, in holding up Dr. Clarke's conspicuous character as well calculated

to call forth the religious hostilities of the authorities of the Bay, he speaks of "his newly acquired position of Assistant in the government," for according to the official table given by himself (*i. e.* Palfrey) Dr. Clarke had been an Assistant for the two previous years, but in 1651 did not hold the office; so that what little force this point seems to have, falls to the ground utterly.

We now turn to Dr. Dexter's account of this matter. He shows himself to be the more than willing disciple of Dr. Palfrey. He swallows him bodily, conjectures, errors and all, although the palfrey is hardly less than a moderate-sized camel. In his dexterous treatment suppositions become established facts, and conjectures become accredited history. Having alluded to the remonstrance which the General Court of

Massachusetts sent to the General Court of Plymouth in regard to its mild treatment of Holmes, he proceeds :

“Some months before this, William Coddington, sick of the unsettled state of civil affairs, which proved to be the result of the unorganized individualism which was then the key-note of the Rhode Island Plantations had gone to England to see if something could not be done in the way of remedy. He then obtained leave from the Council of State to institute a separate government for the islands of Rhode Island and Conanicut, he to be Governor, with a Council of not more than six Assistants. In the autumn of 1650 it was understood that he was on his way home with this new instrument; and it was further understood that it was Mr. Coddington's desire and intention

to bring about under it, if possible, the introduction of Rhode Island into the Confederacy then existing of the other Colonies, if not absolutely to procure its annexation to Massachusetts. . . . When the crisis approached, Clarke seems to have felt that a little persecution of the Anabaptists—if such a thing could be managed—by Massachusetts, might serve an important purpose in prejudicing the Rhode Island mind against Coddington's scheme. An occasion appears accordingly to have been made, by which the red flag of the Anabaptistical fanaticism could be flouted full in the face of the Bay bull." And so Dr. Dexter continues: "Knowledge of Mr. Witter's case reaching Mr. Clarke, a pilgrimage was determined upon for the purpose of public sympathy with this person, if not his open

rebaptism and reception into the Newport fellowship. Such an expedition had in itself a promising look. It would lead through Boston, yet not far enough beyond it to imperil the desired publicity. . . . The scheme succeeded perfectly," etc.

Dr. Dexter represents the knowledge of Mr. Witter's case as reaching Dr. Clarke just at this crisis, as if it was a happy juncture of events. But he must have been acquainted with it for years, for it had been eight years since Mr. Witter's first arraignment for holding Baptist views, and five years since his second arraignment. Dr. Clarke could not have remained uninformed about it all this time, inasmuch as Witter was a member of the church of which he was pastor. Dr. Dexter attempts to cover up the real character

of Mr. Coddington's design by keeping out of sight two points, viz., that he secured in his commission for himself a *life appointment* as Governor, and, secondly, that the election of his Councilors was not valid *unless confirmed by himself*.

But the principal criticism upon this quotation from Dr. Dexter is to be made upon the very remarkable statement that "In the autumn of 1650 it was understood that he (Coddington) was on his way home with this new instrument; and it was further understood that it was Mr. Coddington's desire and intention to bring about under it, if possible, the introduction of Rhode Island into the Confederacy then existing of the other Colonies, if not absolutely to procure its annexation to Massachusetts." It will be noticed that in this theory

the question of time is a very important one. Coddington's supposed design and its successful accomplishment must have been understood sufficiently early before the visit to Mr. Witter to allow Dr. Clarke and his companions to mature their plans as to the best course to be pursued. Dr. Dexter, in his anxiety to give time enough, says it was understood that Coddington was on his way home with his Commission "in the autumn of 1650." Now, it so happens that this was at least six months before the Commission was given. Coddington, whose purpose in visiting England, it will be remembered, he had kept a profound secret, must have reached there soon after the execution of Charles I. and the downfall of the British monarchy. The Council of State under the Commonwealth held its first meeting,

Feb. 17, 1649, in the third week after the beheading of the king. Such were the agitations in England, and such the pressure of home business, that two full years elapsed before any attention was given to the Colonies, or, in other words, before Coddington could obtain a hearing. At a meeting of the Council, Feb. 18, 1651, a committee was appointed "to consider of the business of plantations," and six weeks later, April 3, 1651, by a vote of the Council, Coddington received his Commission.

As has been already remarked, the time of Coddington's return to this country is a matter of uncertainty. It was probably soon after the visit to Witter, and is generally put down as in August, 1651. He would have been likely to return as quickly as possible after accomplishing the object of his visit, and

may have brought the news of his Commission with him: so that it could not have been understood "in the autumn of 1650" that Coddington was on his way home with his Commission; and no more could it have been understood that "it was his desire and intention" to bring about under it the introduction of Rhode Island into the Confederacy of the Colonies or its annexation to Massachusetts. Setting aside the question of time, which makes strongly against the new theory, Coddington's "desire and intention" must be determined by his previous conduct in declining the annexation, and by the nature of the Commission which he asked for and procured.

In general, then, it may be said against the theory that the visit to Mr. Witter had a political purpose:—

I. There is not a scintilla of proof of it, and no authority for it whatever. It is a specimen of hypothetical history, with all the known facts squarely against it. Dr. Dexter cites Dr. Palfrey, and Dr. Palfrey cites nobody.

II. If Coddington's design was such as this theory supposes, and the defeat of which is supposed to be the object of the visit to Mr. Witter, it could not have been understood by Dr. Clarke and his companions before their visit was planned and made.

III. If Mr. Coddington's design was such as this theory supposes, there was no necessity whatever for this visit as a method of defeating it. The hostility of the authorities of the Bay to Baptist principles, their intolerance and persecuting spirit, were too well known already to require any new exhibition.

The severe law of 1644, condemning to banishment all persons who "shall either openly condemn or oppose the baptizing of infants, or go about secretly to seduce others from the approbation or use thereof, or shall purposely depart the congregation at the administration of the ordinance, or shall deny the ordinance of magistracy, or their lawful right or authority to make war, or to punish the outward breaches of the first table," had been put on the statute book, and kept there in spite of the "Petition and Remonstrance" of a few prominent citizens. Thomas Painter, of Hingham, had been cruelly whipped for refusing to have his child baptized. Complaints against such proceedings had been sent over from England, and Mr. Winslow had been commissioned to go to England and answer them. Mr. Witter himself had

been twice arraigned before the Court. Mr. Holmes and two others had been brought to trial at Plymouth, and when they had been treated leniently and bound over, a remonstrance from the Court at Boston had been sent "urging the Plymouth rulers to suppress them speedily." And all this in addition to the treatment which Roger Williams and many others had received. Surely there was no doubt as to the spirit and temper of the Massachusetts Bay, and no occasion for any new demonstration.

Moreover, Mr. Coddington had few friends and sympathizers in Rhode Island in any scheme he might propose. It would have been voted down by an overwhelming majority. His statement, when seeking an alliance with the Colonies in September, 1648, that a major part of the Island desired it, is not

sustained by facts which are known. When the character of his Commission was discovered, a request was presented to Dr. Clarke, signed by sixty-five of the inhabitants of Newport and forty-one of the inhabitants of Portsmouth, who, it is said, constituted nearly all the free inhabitants, that he would go to England to secure the rescinding of Mr. Coddington's Commission. Dr. Clarke yielded to this request, and, in connection with Roger Williams, who was sent by Providence and Warwick, made such representations before the Council of State that on October 2, 1653, it voted "to vacate Mr. Coddington's Commission and confirm their former charter."

IV. The facts in the case do not warrant the belief that Mr. Coddington's "desire and intention" in procuring his Commission was to bring Rhode

Island into alliance with the four Colonies, and, much less, under the influence and control of Massachusetts. He had, indeed, three years before, for reasons not fully explained, sought a division of the Providence Plantations and a friendly league with the Confederacy. It is possible that he may have looked upon the league as the only method, at that time, of accomplishing the division on which he seemed bent. When, however, annexation to Plymouth was recommended, he positively declined any such condition of protection. His journey to England was successful. He fully accomplished his object. The result disclosed the full extent of his design, so far as we know. Rhode Island was separated from Providence and Warwick. It became an independent colony, and he was to be its Governor

for life, with the powers almost of dictator.

V. There was little ground to fear that Massachusetts and Plymouth would consent to a league with Rhode Island, on account of their unrelenting hostility to the principles and practices of its inhabitants. The application for such a league had been refused again and again. "In truth," it has been said, "these Rhode Island people grew, from the beginning, more and more intolerable to the Boston brethren. It was bad enough that they should obstinately maintain the rights of independent thought and private conscience; it was unpardonable that they should assume to be none the less sincere Christians and good citizens, and should succeed in establishing a government of their own on principles which the Massachusetts General Court

declared were criminal. Even in a common peril the Massachusetts magistrates could recognize no tie of old friendship,—hardly indeed of human sympathy,—that should bind them to such men.”

VI. Causes quite sufficient are discoverable to account for the opposition to Mr. Coddington. There were religious differences between him and the other leaders, which “grew to such heat of contention that they made a schism among them.” Moreover, affairs in England, which were now approaching a crisis, had undoubtedly no little influence on the state of things in the Plantations. Coddington was a royalist,—while Clarke, Nicholas Easton and other leaders were republicans, and the republican party was the dominant one. And still further, there was a very general determination to resist the division of

the Providence Plantations, and to stand by the original charter. Coddington's ambitious scheme was enough, in itself, to arouse the most bitter and determined opposition.

VII. If Dr. Clarke and his companions had planned their visit for a political purpose, viz., to draw forth the intolerant spirit of the magistrates of the Bay, and had been so anxious to succeed in it, as they are represented to have been, it is perfectly amazing that they did not go directly to Boston or even to Salem, in one of which places they would be much more likely to find the "Bay bull" kept than in such a quiet, obscure, out-of-the-way place as Swampscott, which was two miles even from Lynn. That this place should have been the terminus of their journey is strangely inconsistent with any such motive as is ascribed to them.

Their supposed shrewdness seems to have failed them in the most vital point of their plan. Having determined to seek persecution, they took the surest method to escape it.

VIII. We are told distinctly by what ought to be good and sufficient authority that the object of the visit was to minister Christian sympathy to an aged brother in the church. The visit was made to Swampscott because the brother whom they came to comfort, lived in Swampscott. This statement rests upon the authority of the Newport Church Papers, on which Dr. Dexter attempts to throw discredit, in order to break down their testimony. He says: "Backus, indeed, professes to quote (Vol. I, 215) from the Newport Church Papers," which looks very like a charge against Backus of wilful deception. And then he adds:

“But one cannot help thinking that those ‘Papers’ must have been written long after the date of the occurrence . . . and that their author confused the order of events.” That those Papers are altogether trustworthy will be acknowledged when it is remembered that they were “gathered by the painstaking John Comer in 1726,” and “were derived from Samuel Hubbard and Edward Smith, both members of the Newport Church, and contemporary with the events narrated.” At any rate this testimony may be accepted as valid until some evidence to the contrary is presented more substantial than the unreasonable and preposterous conjectures of Dr. Palfrey and Dr. Dexter.

IX. Finally, the purpose of the visit to Mr. Witter, as thus declared and uniformly accepted to be the true one, is

entirely sufficient to account for it, and harmonizes with all the circumstances. Here was an old man far removed from his brethren in the church, and needing Christian sympathy and spiritual consolation, but by reason of age and infirmity unable to make the long journey to Newport. Dr. Dexter is disposed to sneer at Witter's age and inability to make the journey. But Witter was within three years of three score and ten. He is spoken of as being disabled by infirmity such as "advanced age" often brings with it, and moreover as being blind. The journey from Lynn to Newport, for such a man, in those days, was no slight undertaking. It was very suitable that the church should remember him in his loneliness and feebleness,—surrounded by those who were hostile to his faith, and probably soon

to die. It is quite possible that Dr. Clarke and his companions may have thought that in visiting so remote a place as Swampscott they would escape all observation. However that may have been, they passed quietly through Boston, and having timed their journey so as to reach Witter's house on Saturday evening, there they lodged. It was a brave, loving, Christian deed, in which can be traced no shrewd policy other than the prompting of a Christlike sympathy, and no defiant purpose other than a courageous willingness to endure perilous exposure in order to minister to one of Christ's imprisoned and needy disciples.

Dr. Clarke published in England a truthful account of this visit and the treatment which the visitors received—to make known, as he said, “how that

spirit by which they [the Massachusetts authorities] are led, would order the whole World, if either brought under them or should come in unto them." And when Dr. Dexter says that Clarke was careful to declare that one purpose which he had in view in it all, was to show how they would treat Rhode Island Baptists, were they to be annexed to their colony, he makes an utterly unwarranted, and it is difficult not to say a wilfully false, inference from Clarke's language. For the language was not intended to apply at all to the visit and its motive, but only to the published account of the visit; and even then contains no such meaning as Dr. Dexter interprets into it. Dr. Clarke was showing simply how he and his companions were treated, and how all who differed religiously from the Massachu-

sets authorities, would be likely to be treated, if they should fall into their hands. We have here an illustration of how an unresisted bias may disqualify a historian for his high office, and how a weak theory may seek to bolster itself up by a fallacious deduction.

It will be necessary to consider more briefly the two remaining points, viz., the alleged criminal conduct of Mr. Witter's visitors, and the punishment which they received at the hands of the Bay magistrates.

Having arrived at Mr. Witter's on Saturday evening, they thought it best "to worship God in their own way on the Lord's day" in Witter's house. Dr. Clarke, in his narrative, thus describes the scene: "Finding, by sad experience, that the hour of temptation spoken of was coming upon all the World (in a

more eminent way) to try them that are upon the Earth, I fell upon the consideration of that Word of Promise, made to those that keep the Word of his Patience, which present thoughts, while in conscience towards God and good will unto his Saints, I was imparting to my Companions in the house where I lodged, and to 4 or 5 Strangers that came in unexpected after I had begun, opening and proving what is meant by the hour of Temptation, what by the Word of his patience," &c. But the presence of these heretics had been discovered. The scent of heresy was marvelously acute. The quiet service in that remote place was suddenly interrupted by the entrance of two constables with a warrant, signed by Robert Bridges, for the arrest of "certain erroneous persons, being strangers." The warrant, of course, was issued

before the service was held ; therefore the only offence thus far of Dr. Clarke and his companions was that they were there. Their polite request to be allowed to complete the service was impolitely refused. They offered no resistance to their arrest and were taken to the "ordinary" for safe-keeping. In the afternoon they were compelled, against their protest, to go to the public religious service.* They manifested their disapproval by silently reading during the

* Dr. Clarke said : "If thou forcest us into your assembly, then shall we be constrained to declare ourselves that we cannot hold communion with them." Their opposition to going to this public service, and their discourteous conduct while there, are to be accounted for on the ground of that intense and narrow conscientiousness which characterized the times. It prevailed everywhere. Whatsoever was not of faith, in their judgment, was sin. They could not even appear to fellowship and indorse it, or to show any sympathy with it. Clarke and his companions could not, in conscience, be present at this Sunday afternoon service without giving expression to their disfellowship and disapprobation.

service, and by failing to remove their hats, which the constable removed for them. When the service was over, Dr. Clarke rose and said: "I desire as a stranger, if I may, to propose a few things to this Congregation, hoping, in the proposall thereof, I shall commend myself to your consciences to be guided by that wisdom that is from above, which, being pure, is also peaceable, gentle, and easie to be intreated." He was not allowed to proceed, and the prisoners were remanded to the "ordinary." They were sent to prison in Boston by the *mittimus* of Mr. Bridges under date of Tuesday, July 22d.

The language of the *mittimus* is significant as disclosing the nature of their offences, viz.: "for being at a Private Meeting at Lin upon the Lord's day, exercising upon themselves," "for of-

fensively disturbing the peace of the Congregation at their coming into the Publique Meeting," "for saying and manifesting that the church of Lin was not constituted according to the order of our Lord &c, for such other things as shall be alleged against them concerning their seducing and drawing aside of others after their erroneous judgments and practices, and for suspicion of having their hands in the rebaptizing of one, or more, among us."

The magistrates, in the exercise of their judicial watchfulness against the awful sin of Anabaptism, *suspected* that there had been a baptism. Dr. Clarke was charged also with having administered the Lord's Supper while there. Such was the nature of their offences. It is not necessary to consider at this time whether the suspicions of the au-

thorities were well-founded or not. The probability is that they were only suspicions.* But, in any event, there was no disturbance of the peace, no violation of any civil law,—only the exercise of the right to worship God in their own way, and gather comfort from his truth and ordinances within the sacred temple and castle of a man's private dwelling.

We now come to the concluding and most distressing part of this transaction, viz., the punishment which was inflicted upon these three offenders, and especially upon Mr. Holmes. Having been taken to Boston, they were arraigned the following week, on Thursday, July 31st. Dr. Clarke says: "In the forenoon we were examined; in the afternoon, without producing either accuser, witness,

* This question is fully considered in my "Early Baptists Defended," p. 82-87.

jury, law of God or man, we were sentenced." During the examination Governor Endicott charged them with being Anabaptists; to whom Clarke replied that he was "neither an Anabaptist, nor a Pedobaptist, nor a Catabaptist." The Governor lost his temper, and declared they "deserved death, and he would not have such trash brought into their jurisdiction"; also insinuating that they had influence over weak-minded persons only, and daring them to hold a discussion with the ministers. This challenge Dr. Clarke promptly accepted, and endeavored to bring about the desired discussion. The magistrates seemed at first to consent, but after some delay it came to naught. The excitement at the time of the so-called "trial" must have been intense,—not that it would take much "to put John Endi-

cott in a towering passion at any time." But even John Wilson, the pastor, struck and cursed Holmes, saying: "The curse of God or Jesus goe with thee," because Holmes had meekly said: "I blesse God I am counted worthy to suffer for the name of Jesus."

The sentences of the three men varied in severity. Crandall was sentenced to pay five pounds or to be well whipped, Clarke to pay twenty pounds or to be well whipped, and Holmes to pay thirty pounds or to be well whipped. Crandall's punishment was the lightest, because he was the least prominent. Holmes' was the heaviest undoubtedly because he had been excommunicated from the church at Rehoboth, and having been guilty of baptizing had been dealt lightly with by the Court at Plymouth. Massachusetts sent a remon-

strance at the time. They now had the criminal in their own power, and felt themselves called upon to make amends for Plymouth's leniency, and to see that justice was meted out. Criminals of such a dangerous character must not go unpunished. Not only his present transgression but the sins of "other times" were charged against him; and now that he was in their jurisdiction they would make him suffer for sins committed out of their jurisdiction. So reasoned these self-appointed guardians of the new world's faith and peace, who looked upon themselves as God's ministers of justice,—for their neighbors as well as for themselves.

The fines imposed upon Crandall and Clarke were paid by "tender-hearted friends, without their consent and contrary to their judgment," though the

matter has an entirely different and untruthful aspect in the accounts of John Cotton and Dr. Dexter. Cotton, who justified the whole transaction, said Clarke "was contented to have his fine paid for him," and Dr. Dexter represents him, notwithstanding his alleged eagerness to suffer persecution according to his theory, as "very willing to leave for home."

There were those, too, who would have paid the fine of Holmes; but, to use his own words, he "durst not accept of deliverance in such a way." His conscience compelled him to refuse the friendly offer, lest he should appear to confess himself a transgressor.* It seems

* Cotton's letter to Sir Richard Saltonstall in defence of the Puritan magistrates is a remarkable document. In it he seeks to throw the responsibility of the whipping upon Holmes himself: "As for his whipping, it was more voluntarily chosen by him than inflicted on

certain from the narrative, not only that he was unwilling to allow the fine to be paid, but that, as he was the greatest offender in the judgment of the authorities, they were not willing to allow it to be paid, as they had been in the case of the others. They made his case an exception, and held him to the letter of

him. His censure by the Court was to have paid (as I know) thirty pounds, or else be whipped; his fine was offered to be paid by friends for him freely, but he chose rather to be whipped; in which case, if his suffering of stripes was any worship of God at all, surely it could be accounted no better than will-worship." To which Governor Jenks replies: "Although the paying of a fine seems to be but a small thing in comparison of a man's parting with his religion, yet the paying of a fine is the acknowledgment of a transgression; and for a man to acknowledge that he has transgressed, when his conscience tells him he has not, is but little, if anything at all, short of parting with his religion." Cotton seems to have been incapable of understanding that there could be a great principle involved in Holmes' unwillingness to consent to have his fine paid, and sees in it, or pretends to see in it, only a spirit of wilful obstinacy, which chose the whipping rather than to be released.

the penalty,—inflicting upon him the cruel punishment of thirty stripes,—which was the penalty for the crimes of adultery, rape, and counterfeiting, and was, within ten stripes, the maximum number allowed by law.

The account of the cruel whipping is given in very touching Christian language in Holmes' letter to the brethren in London. Having been kept in prison until September, he was led forth to his punishment, cheerfully trusting in God and in the righteousness of his cause, and taking his Testament in his hand as being the substance of his faith and the source of his comfort and strength. When he had been stripped of his clothing,—he neither assisting nor resisting, and telling them that for all Boston he would not give his body into their hands thus to be bruised upon

any other account, yet upon this he would not give the hundredth part of a wampum peague (the sixth part of a penny) to free it out of their hands, and that he made as much conscience of unbuttoning one button as he did of paying the thirty pounds,—the executioner was commanded to “doe his office.”

“As the man began to lay the stroaks upon my back,” wrote the sufferer, “I said to the people, though my Flesh should fail and my Spirit should fail, yet God would not fail; so it pleased the Lord to come in and to so fill my heart and tongue as a vessel full, and with an audible voyce I brake forth, praying unto the Lord not to lay this Sin to their charge, and telling the people that now I found he did not fail me; and therefore, now I should

trust him forever who failed me not; for in truth, as the stroaks fell upon me, I had such a spirituall manifestation of God's presence, as the like thereunto I never had, nor felt, nor can with fleshly tongue expresse; and the outward pain was so removed from me, that indeed I am not able to declare it to you; it was so easy to me that I could well bear it, yea, and in a manner felt it not, although it was grievous; as the Spectators said, the Man striking with all his strength (yea, spitting on his hands three times, as many affirmed) with a three-coarded whip, giving me therewith thirty stroaks. When he had loosed me from the Post, having joyfulness in my heart, and cheerfulness in my countenance, as the Spectators observed, I told the Magistrates— You have struck me as with Roses; and said

moreover Although the Lord hath made it easie to me, yet I pray it may not be laid to your charge.”

Such is the plain, pathetic story of his sufferings, as told by Holmes himself, in which he sought to exalt the wonderful grace of God which sustained him, and manifested in a remarkable degree the spirit of a Christlike forgiveness. So severe was his punishment that the hearts of the spectators were moved to a sympathy which they could not repress, although the expression of it put them in peril of like punishment. A former acquaintance visited him, when taken back to prison, and, as he said, “poured oyl into my wound and plaistered my sores.” That it was a cruel punishment, inflicted with unmitigated severity, no candid reader of the narrative will question for an instant.

Governor Joseph Jenks, writing in the first third of the last century, so that he must have received his information from contemporaries of Holmes, describes it thus: "Mr. Holmes was whipped thirty stripes, and in such an unmerciful manner, that in many days, if not some weeks, he could take no rest but as he lay upon his knees and elbows, not being able to suffer any part of his body to touch the bed whereon he lay." In similar language Callender, Arnold, Oliver, Bancroft, Gay, Adams, Straus and others describe the whipping.

But Dr. Dexter in a remarkable note* says: "Arnold thinks he was 'cruelly whipped.' But Clarke says [he ought to have inserted 'that Holmes said'] 'It was so easie to me that I could well

*As to *Roger Williams*, p. 121.

bear it, and in a manner felt it not'; and that he told the magistrates after it was over 'You have struck me as with Roses.' Dr. Palfrey suspects the executioner had orders 'to vindicate what they thought the majesty of the law at little cost to the delinquent.'"

Dr. Dexter would have his readers understand that Holmes' punishment may not have been very severe, after all; that it may have been little more than a farce, an apparent vindication of the majesty of the law; and he throws back the responsibility of the insinuation upon his great master, Dr. Palfrey, who, he says, "suspects" that it may have been so. Having had our confidence in Dr. Dexter's fairness seriously shaken, we feel compelled to verify his quotations, even when he quotes from Dr. Palfrey. Turning to Palfrey's His-

tory, we read: "When he (Holmes) relates that the scourging which he endured 'was so easy to him that he could well bear it, yea, and in a manner felt it not, and that he told the Magistrates 'You have struck me as with Roses,' the reader ventures to hope that the executioner had been directed by his superiors to vindicate what they thought the majesty of the law, at little cost to the delinquent."

The phrase used is, it will be noticed, "the reader ventures to hope." To be sure, to ordinary readers such a hope is considerable of a venture, in the face of the facts as narrated, which both Dr. Palfrey and Dr. Dexter must have had before them. If it was only a humane "hope," it might be allowed to pass unnoticed. But the "hope" of Dr. Palfrey, unwarranted as that is, is magnified and

perverted into a "suspicion" in the process of quotation by Dr. Dexter; and when he seeks to ground that suspicion upon the pathetic words of the patient sufferer, and to ascribe the effect of the sustaining grace of God to the imagined grace of the executioner or the magistrates, he is guilty of a palpable, gross and unpardonable misrepresentation.

Such a note as Dr. Dexter's, the intent of which is so manifestly uncandid, and which presents a monstrous distortion of the truth, is sufficient to destroy confidence in any volume, or in the honest purpose of the author to write history fairly.

The Puritan magistrates were in no mood to play a farce; they were in dead earnest. They were bent on tragedy. In their judgment Holmes was guilty of a most serious crime. Governor En-

dicott had told him he deserved death, and the meek pastor, John Wilson, had "struck and cursed" the prisoner in holy indignation, in "the exquisite rancor of theological hatred." The executioner is represented as "striking with all his strength, yea, spitting on his hands three times, as many affirmed." Warrants were issued for no less than thirteen persons who were unable to repress their compassion for Holmes at the time of the whipping. The most of them, however, escaped. Two only,—John Spur and John Hazel, who had taken the bleeding sufferer by the hand as he was led away from the whipping-post,—were arrested; and it is more than intimated that there would have been more whipping had not the executioner taken himself out of the way so that he could not be found.—having probably had

enough of the bloody work. There is only one possible conclusion to be accepted, viz., that never was sentence of court executed more literally, never did executioner do his work more faithfully.

It has not been a pleasant duty to dwell upon these painful details. But the memories of men who were loyal to their convictions of truth and the rights of conscience, and to their more perfect views of soul-liberty, are as sacred as the memories of those who made them to suffer, and as worthy of being protected from sacrilegious assault. Better that this whole transaction should be passed by in silence—as it was by Captain Johnson in his “History of 1654,” by Mr. Morton in his “New England Memorial of 1669,” by Mr. Hubbard in his “History of 1680,” by Cotton Mather in his “History of 1702,” and by Gover-

nor Hutchinson in the first two volumes of his History—than that, for the sake of justifying the persecutors, the motives of the persecuted should be maligned, and their sufferings for the sake of conscience and liberty should be made light of. John Clarke, the learned physician and able pastor of the Newport Baptist Church was in some respects the peer of Roger Williams, though less widely known and honored.* Obadiah Holmes,

*Rev. John Callender says of Dr. Clarke : “ He was a faithful and useful minister, courteous in all the relations of life, and an ornament to his profession and to the several offices which he sustained. His memory is deserving of lasting honor for his efforts toward establishing the first government in the world which gave to all equal civil and religious liberty. To no man is Rhode Island more indebted than to him. He was one of the original projectors of the settlement of the Island, and one of its ablest legislators. No character in New England is of purer fame than John Clarke.” It is not known where Dr. Clarke was educated ; but the following item in his will shows him to have been a man of wide learning and studious habits : “ Unto my loving friend, Richard Bayley, I give and bequeath my

the martyr of heavenly spirit and triumphant faith, was Dr. Clarke's honored successor in the pastoral office for thirty years.* The unchristian and inhuman treatment of these worthies called forth remonstrances on both sides of the Atlantic. Sir Richard Saltonstall, one of the first magistrates of the Massachu-

concordance and lexicon thereto belonging, written by myself, being the fruit of several years' study, my Hebrew Bible, Buxtorff's and Parsons' lexicons, Cotton's Concordance, and all the rest of my books." He did not return from his mission to England till 1664, having remained there as the agent of the Colony. He died April 20, 1676.

*Obadiah Holmes was born at Preston, Lancashire, England, about the year 1606, and came to this country about 1639. He belonged to a family of considerable means and of acknowledged respectability. He said of his parents: "They were faithful in their generation, and of good report among men, and brought up their children tenderly and honorably." Three sons were educated at Oxford, one of whom was probably Obadiah. This is evidence that the family was in ample circumstances and of more than ordinary culture. Obadiah Holmes died in 1682, leaving a large posterity, some of whom have obtained distinction in the learned professions.

setts Bay, who was at the time in England, wrote sharply rebuking Cotton and Wilson for their "tyranny and persecution in New England as that you fine, whip and imprison men for their consciences. . . . We pray for you and wish you prosperity every way; hoped the Lord would have given you so much light and love there, that you might have been eyes to God's people here, and not to practice those courses in a wilderness which you went so far to prevent." And Roger Williams—the great apostle of religious liberty, whose voice, from before his banishment until the day of his death, ceased not to proclaim the sublime principle of which his name will ever be the illustrious exponent—wrote to Governor Endicott such characteristic words as these: "Sir, I must be humbly bold to say 'tis impos-

sible for any man or men to maintain their Christ by their sword, and to worship a true Christ! to fight against all consciences opposite theirs, and not to fight against God in some of them, and to hunt after the precious life of the Lord Jesus Christ.”

The true philosophical historian cannot treat this incident, which we have been considering, as an isolated phenomenon. It was symptomatic of a social condition and of a prevailing religious spirit. It reveals to us the attitude—conscientious, indeed, but nevertheless the attitude—of the ruling minds among the Puritans. It was not necessary for a man to be a disturber of the peace in order to be whipped or banished; or rather, whoever differed from them in religious faith or practice, and claimed the right to indulge the exercise thereof,

was, in their judgment, a disturber of the peace. Uniformity of religious belief was the animating purpose of their government, the sacred end of their legislation, a principal object of their social compact and existence. The language of James I. expressed their sentiment towards all dissentients: "I will make them conform, or I will harry them out of my kingdom." There are men to-day who boast of their descent from the Puritans, and laud their excellencies—and rightly so—who would not have been allowed to remain within their borders twenty-four hours unmolested.

This incident throws its light upon that long series of persecutions, in which the Puritan magistrates solemnly delighted themselves, of Church of England men, Antinomians, Quakers, and Anabaptists. This incident throws light—if any is

needed—upon the cause of the banishment of Roger Williams, which somewhat memorable event took place only fifteen years before. The spirit of the Puritan magistrates had suffered no change in that interval of time. It was neither better, nor worse, nor different. They tried to be consistent, and to make their principles of Church and State triumphant, though no candid man is now rash enough to say that those principles were right. Dr. George E. Ellis has truly said: "Intolerance was a necessary condition of their enterprise. They feared and hated religious liberty." In parallel words Professor J. L. Diman describes them as "intolerant of difference of opinion, regarding liberty of conscience with equal fear and hate." And so they feared and hated Roger Williams, who not only entertained

broad and correct views of religious liberty, but advocated them as opportunity offered itself.

To make a distinction between a man's religious opinions and his disposition, whose only offending was that it defended those opinions, is to make a distinction without great difference. The phrase "disturber of the peace" did not then signify any such thing as it means to-day. None of those offenders had been guilty of any overt acts against civil laws, but only of violation of religious laws which were incorporated into civil legislation. To hold religious opinions different from those of the magistrates and the body of the people, and to be disposed to advocate them, was to be wickedly contentious and criminal according to their standards. Religious offenders were politi-

cal offenders. It is evident enough to candid students of colonial history that it was not Roger Williams' disposition, in distinction from his religious views, that caused his banishment, but the disposition of the Puritan magistrates.

They indulged in no such hair-splitting and specious methods. To them Roger Williams represented views and ideas of liberty which they "feared and hated." He was already accused of anabaptism. It is recorded that Elder Brewster, in 1633 or 1634, prevailed with the church in Plymouth to grant Williams' request for dismissal, "fearing that he would run the same course of rigid separation and anabaptistry which Mr. John Smyth at Amsterdam had done," and that at Salem, where the church though warned against him had received him, "in one

year's time he had filled that place with principles of rigid separation and tending to anabaptism."

Anabaptism was the synonym of religious liberty. It had been before Christendom as a distinct movement for a hundred years,—in Switzerland and Germany, in Holland, and in England. Its first confession of faith, issued in 1527 at Schleithheim, a little town near Schaffhausen, openly claimed and proclaimed religious liberty. In the Netherlands, during all the fierce struggle for civil liberty, these people, it is said, "kept intact their ideas of religious liberty." The confession of faith issued by the Anabaptists in London in 1611 contained the enunciation of the same great principle; and in all these lands their fidelity cost them their lives. Mark Pattison, in his biography of

John Milton, whose broad views of toleration are well known, says, that on that account "every Philistine leveled at him the contemptuous epithet of Anabaptist most freely." So thoroughly was anabaptism identified with religious liberty, that, if any man advocated a more generous toleration, this epithet was hurled at him, and not only in the old world, but in this new world as well.

Roger Williams was, if not already an Anabaptist, fast tending to it. The Puritan magistrates understood perfectly what he stood for,—if some of their modern misinterpreters do not. Arnold says: "To fasten upon Roger Williams the stigma of factious opposition to the government is to belie history, by an effort to vindicate bigotry and tyranny at the expense of truth." In the charge

against Williams—under which he was tried, convicted and banished—the first item, which may be supposed to contain the gravamen of their accusation, is: “That the magistrate ought not to punish the breach of the first Table except when the civil peace is endangered.” While announcing the doctrine of the separation of Church and State, instead of being “a disturber of the peace,” he is represented as carefully guarding it. In a summary of the charges against him, prepared by Williams himself in 1644, occurs the following specification: “That the civil magistrate’s power extends only to the bodies and goods and outward state of men.” Governor Haynes was still living, and the most of the others also who had had a hand in the banishment; but no denial of this specification was ever made.

Again in 1652, in the letter of Williams to Governor Endicott — already quoted — which was occasioned by the cruel treatment of these peaceable Rhode Island visitors, the writer says: “At present let it not be offensive in your eyes that I single out another, a fourth point, *a cause of my banishment also*, wherein I greatly fear one or two sad evils which have befallen your soul and conscience; the point is that of the civil magistrate dealing in matters of *conscience* and *religion*, as also of *persecuting* and *hunting* any for matters merely *spiritual* or *religious*.” Notice the phrase “a cause of my banishment also,” as determining the fact that the same spirit of religious persecution which whipped Holmes banished Williams.

Moreover, in order to remove all question or doubt, if any remain in the minds

of any persons, as to the cause of Williams' banishment, and to establish conclusively the fact that it was a difference of religious opinion that made him obnoxious to the Puritan magistrates, and that it was religious persecution that drove him out into the wilderness, we may cite an Act passed by the Council of Massachusetts, March 31st, 1676, conditionally revoking the original act of banishment. It is only recently that attention has been called to this act. It was published by Massachusetts in 1859 in Vol. II. of the "Acts of the Commissioners of the United Colonies." It was discovered in the Massachusetts archives after the printing of the body of the volume, and placed in the Introduction, and so was not properly indexed. It reads as follows :

"Whereas, Mr. Roger Williams stands

at present under a sentence of Restraint from coming into this colony, yet considering how readily & freely at all tymes he hath served the English Interest in this time of warre with the Indians, and manifested his particuler respects to the authority of this Colony in several services desired of him, and further understanding how by the last assault of the Indians upon Providence his house is burned and himself in his old age reduced to an uncomfortable and disabled state—Out of compassion to him in this condition the Council doe Order and Declare that if the sayed Mr. Williams shall see cause and desire it, he shall have liberty to repayre into any of our Towns for his security and comfortable abode during these Public Troubles, he behaving himself peaceably and inoffensively and *not disseminating*

and venting any of his different opinions in matters of religion to the dissatisfaction of any."

Forty years had gone by. Some of the actors in 1636 had undoubtedly—like Williams—been spared to 1676. He had gone out of their borders, but not out of their knowledge or out of their necessity. Twice at least, by his friendly interposition with the Indians, he had probably saved the inhabitants of the Bay from annihilation. He had heaped coals of fire upon their heads. He had asked the privilege of simply crossing their territory on the way to England, and had been refused. He had been their neighbor, but was still "feared and hated." They kept him at arm's length, lest the pestilential principles which he advocated and fostered across the line should infect them.

John Winthrop, who had assented to his banishment, had indeed shown a disposition to recall him, and to "confer upon him some mark of distinguished favor for his services." But adverse counsels long prevailed, until at length touched to some slight appreciation of his generous and self-sacrificing services in their behalf, and to some slight sympathy for his age and supposed suffering and poverty, but not to any marked degree of penitence for their past conduct, they were prompted to revoke the act of banishment, and to permit him to return temporarily "during these public troubles,"—still, however, remembering the nature of his offence by adding this significant condition, that he shall "not disseminate and vent any of his different opinions in matters of religion." Dr. Dexter, whose reputation as an ex-

plorer of colonial literature was very great, confessedly wrote his monograph "because of the limited acquaintance of some of the earliest historians with the facts," and because they did not go back to "the only original authorities." This act of revocation must have escaped this careful and boastfully thorough investigator,—or, perhaps we should come nearer the truth if we said, he seems to have escaped it. As a revocation it could not have amounted to much to Roger Williams, for we cannot conceive of him as accepting such liberty at the price of stifled convictions, and as surrendering the priceless principle for which he had once suffered the loss of all things. But this act of 1676 ought to settle all dispute as to the cause of the banishment of Roger Williams, and to settle it forever.

APPENDIXES

APPENDIX I

Warrant for the arrest of Clarke, Holmes and Crandall.

“By virtue hereof, you are required to go to the house of William Witter, and so to search from house to house, for certain erroneous persons, being Strangers, and them to apprehend, and in safe custody to keep, and tomorrow morning by eight of the Clock to bring before me.

ROBERT BRIDGES.”

Copy of the Mittimus.

“To the Keeper of the Prison at Boston,

By virtue hereof you are required to take into your custody from the Constable of Lin, or his Deputy, the bodies of John Clark, Obediah Holmes, and John Crandall, and them to keep, untill the next County Court to

be held at Boston, that they may then and there answer to such complaints as may be alleged against them, for being taken by the Constable at a Private Meeting at Lin upon the Lords day, exercising among themselves, to whom divers of the Town repaired, and joyned with them, and that in the time of Publick exercise of the Worship of God; as also for offensively disturbing the peace of the Congregation at their coming into the Publique Meeting in the time of Prayer in the afternoon, and for saying and manifesting that the Church of Lin was not constituted according to the order of our Lord, &c., for such other things as shall be alleged against them, concerning their seducing and drawing aside of others after their erroneous judgements and practices, and for suspition of having their hands in the re-baptizing of one, or more among us, as also for neglecting or refusing to give in sufficient security for their appearance at the said Court; hereof fail not at your perill, 22. 5. 51.

ROB. BRIDGES."

The sentence of Holmes, (the sentences of Clarke and Crandall were drawn up in similar language, there being slight variations in the accusations and the penalties.)

“Forasmuch as you Obediah Holmes, being come into this Jurisdiction about the 21 of the 5th M. did meet at one William Witters house at Lin, and did hear privately (and at other times being an Excommunicate person did take upon you to Preach and to Baptize) upon the Lords day, and other dayes, and being taken then by the Constable, and coming afterwards to the Assembly at Lin, did in disrespect of the Ordinance of God and his Worship, keep on your hat, the Pastor being in Prayer, insomuch that you would not give reverence in veiling your hat, till it was forced off your head to the disturbance of the Congregation, and professing against the Institution of the Church, as not being according to the Gospell of Jesus Christ, and that you the said Obediah Holmes did upon the day following meet again at the said Williams Witters, in contempt of Authority, you being

then in the custody of the Law, and did there receive the Sacrament, being Excommunicate, and you did Baptize such as were Baptized before, and thereby did necessarily deny the Baptism that was before administered to be Baptism, the Churches no Churches, and also other Ordinances, and Ministers, as if all were a Nullity; And also did deny the lawfulness of Baptizing of Infants, and all this tends to the dishonour of God, the despising the ordinances of God among us, the peace of the Churches, and seducing the Subjects of this Commonwealth from the truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and perverting the strait waies of the Lord, the Court doth fine you 30 pounds to be paid, or sufficient sureties that the said sum shall be paid by the first day of the next Court of Assistants, or else to be well whipt, and that you shall remain in Prison till it be paid, or security given in for it.

By the Court,

ENCREASE NOWELL."

APPENDIX II

*Extracts from the letter of Holmes to friends
in London, addressed—*

“Unto the well beloved Brethren, John Spilsbury, William Kiffen, and the rest that in London stand fast in that Faith, and continue to walk stedfastly in that Order of the Gospell which was once delivered unto the Saints by Jesus Christ. Obediah Holmes an unworthy witness that Jesus is the Lord, and of late a Prisoner for Jesus sake at Boston, sendeth greeting.” After giving an account of his conversion, change of religious views and arrest by the Plymouth court, in connection with two others, all of whom were severely reprimanded and discharged without punishment, the letter continues—

“Not long after these troubles I came upon occasion of businesse into the Colony of the

Mathatusets, with two other Brethren, as Brother Clark, being one of the two, can inform you, where we three were apprehended, carried to the prison at Boston, and so to the Court, and were all sentenced; what they laid to my charge, you may here read in my sentence: Vpon the pronouncing of which I went from the Bar, I exprest my self in these words: I blesse God I am counted worthy to suffer for the name of Jesus; whereupon John Wilson (their Pastor as they call him) strook me before the Judgement Seat, and cursed me, saying, 'The Curse of God or Jesus goe with thee; so we were carried to the Prison, where not long after I was deprived of my two loving Friends; at whose departure the Adversary stept in, took hold on my Spirit, and troubled me for the space of an hour, and then the Lord came in, and sweetly releved me, causing me to look to himself, so was I stayed, and refreshed in the thoughts of my God; and although during the time of my Imprisonment, the Tempter was busie, yet it pleased God so to stand at my right hand, that the motions were but

sudden, and so vanished away; and although there were that would have payd the money if I would accept it, yet I durst not accept of deliverance in such a way, and therefore my answer to them was, that although I would acknowledge their love to a cup of cold Water, yet could I not thank them for their money if they should pay it: so the Court drew neer, and the night before I should suffer according to my sentence, it pleased God I rested and slept quietly; in the morning many Friends came to visit me, desiring me to take the refreshment of Wine, and other Comforts, but my resolution was not to drink Wine, nor strong drink that day untill my punishment were over, and the reason was, lest in case I had more strength, courage and boldnesse than ordinarily could be expected, the VVorld should either say he is drunk with new VVine, or else that the comfort and strength of the Creature hath carried him through, but my course was this: I desired Brother John Hazell to bear my Friends company, and I betook myself to my Chamber, where I might communicate with

my God, commit myself to him, and beg strength from him.
.
. And when I heard the voyce of my Keeper come for me, even cheerfulnessse did come upon me, and taking my Testament in my hand, I went along with him to the place of execution, and after common salutation there stood; there stood by also one of the Magistrates, by name Mr. Encrease Nowell, who for a while kept silent, and spoke not a word, and so did I, expecting the Governours presence, but he came not. But after a while Mr. Nowell bad the Executioner doe his Office, then I desired to speak a few words, but Mr. Nowell answered, it is not now a time to speak, whereupon I took leave, [permission] and said, Men, Brethren, Fathers, and Countrey-men, I beseech you give me leave to speak a few words, and the rather, because here are many Spectators to see me punished, and I am to seal with my Blood, if God give me strength, that which I hold and practise in reference to the Word of God, and the testimony of

Jesus; that which I have to say in brief is this, Although I confesse I am no Disputant, yet seeing I am to seal what I hold with my Blood, I am ready to defend it by the Word, and to dispute that point with any that shall come forth to withstand it. Mr. Nowell answered me, now was no time to dispute, then said I, then I desire to give an account of the Faith and Order I hold, and this I desired three times, but in comes Mr. Flint, and saith to the Executioner, Fellow, doe thine Office, for this fellow would but make a long Speech to delude the people.

. And in the time of his pulling of my cloathes I continued speaking, telling them, That I had so learned, that for all Boston, I would not give my bodie into their hands thus to be bruised upon another account, yet upon this I would not give the hundredth part of a *Wampon Peague* to free it out of their hands, and that I made as much Conscience of unbuttoning one button, as I did of paying the 30l. in reference thereunto; I told them moreover, the Lord having manifested his love towards

me, in giving me repentance towards God, and faith in Jesus Christ, and so to be baptized in water by a Messenger of Jesus into the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, wherein I have fellowship with him in his death, buriall, and resurrection, I am now come to be baptized in afflictions by your hands, that so I may have further fellowship with my Lord, and am not ashamed of his sufferings, for by his stripes am I healed; And as the man began to lay the stroaks upon my back, I said to the people, though my Flesh should fail, and my Spirit should fail, yet God would not fail; so it pleased the Lord to come in, and so to fill my heart and tongue as a vessell full, and with an audible voyce I broke forth, praying unto the Lord not to lay this Sin to their charge, and telling the people, That now I found he did not fail me, and therefore now I should trust him forever who failed me not; for in truth, as the stroaks fell upon me, I had such a spiritual manifestation of God's presence, as the like thereunto I never had, nor felt, nor can with fleshly tongue expresse, and the outward

pain was so removed from me, that indeed I am not able to declare it to you, it was so easie to me, that I could well bear it, yea and in a manner felt it not, although it was grievous, as the Spectators said, the Man striking with all his strength (yea spitting on his hand three times, as many affirmed) with a three-coarded whip, giving me therewith thirty stroaks; when he had loosed me from the Post, having joyfulness in my heart, and cheerfulness in my countenance, as the Spectators observed, I told the Magistrates, you have struck me as with Roses; and said moreover, Although the Lord hath made it easie to me, yet I pray God it may not be laid to your charge. After this many came to me, rejoycing to see the power of the Lord manifested in weak flesh; but sinfull flesh takes occasion hereby to bring others in trouble, informs the Magistrates hereof, and so two more are apprehended as for contempt of authority, their names were John Hazell and John Spur, who came indeed and did shake me by the hand, but did use no words of contempt or reproach unto any; no man

can prove that the first spoke any thing, and for the second, he only said thus, Blessed be the Lord; yet these two for taking me by the hand, and thus saying after I had received my punishment, were sentenced to pay 40 shillings, or to be whipt. Both were resolved against paying their Fine: Nevertheless after one or two dayes imprisonment, one payed John Spurs Fine, and he was released, and after six or seven dayes Imprisonment of Brother Hazell, even the day when he should have suffered an other payed his, and so he escaped, and the next day went to visit a Friend about 6 miles from Boston, where he the same day fell sick, and within 10 dayes he ended this life; when I was come to the Prison, it pleased God to stir up the heart of an old acquaintance of mine, who with much tendernesse, like the good Samaritan, poured oyl into my wound, and plaistered my sores; but there was present information given what was done, and inquiry made who was the Chirurgion, and it was commonly reported he should be sent for, but what was done, I yet know not. Now thus it hath pleased the

Father of Mercies so to dispose of the matter, that my Bonds and Imprisonments have been no hinderance to the Gospel, for before my return, some submitted to the Lord, and were baptized, and divers were put upon the way of enquiry ; And now being advised to make my escape by night, because it was reported that there were Warrants forth for me, I departed : and the next day after, while I was on my Journey, the Constable came to search at the house where I lodged, so I escaped their hands, and was by the good hand of my heavenly Father brought home again to my neer relations, my wife, and eight children, the Brethren of our Town and Providence having taken pains to meet me 4 miles in the woods, where we rejoyced together in the Lord. Thus have I given you as briefly as I can, a true relation of things : wherefore my Brethren, rejoyce with me in the Lord, and give all glory to him, for he is worthy, to whom he praise for evermore, to whom I commit you, and put up my earnest prayers for you, that by my late experience, who have trusted in God, and have not been de-

ceived, you may trust in him perfectly : wherefore my dearly beloved Brethren trust in the Lord, and you shall not be ashamed, nor confounded, so I also rest,

Yours in the bond of Charity,

OBEDIAH HOLMES."