

## NORFOLK PRESBYTERIANISM IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

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TO understand the Presbyterianism of the seventeenth century one must first take a brief look at the preceding sixty years; much had happened in both Church and State within the span of a lifetime.

Henry VIII had broken with the Pope, and declared himself to be the Supreme Governor of the Church of England. Yet the man who had received the title of Defender of the Faith, because of his writing against Luther, was still quite content with the old ways. The great Protestant movement, however, was influencing England, and during the short reign of Edward VI it made great progress. After the violent reaction under Mary, the Church of England finally became Protestant in its doctrine. The reformers who had fled to the Continent had met with more vigorous strains of Protestantism in Switzerland, Germany, and France, and they came home hoping that even in doctrine, but still more in discipline and organization, the Church of England might become more fully reformed. The Parliament was in strong sympathy with them, but the masterful Queen Elizabeth told its members sharply that she was head of the Church, and it was none of their business. She treated her bishops with as little ceremony, telling them plainly that they should do as she wished, or it would be the worse for them.

Having thus failed to bring in reforms from above by help from Parliament, the Puritans (for that was the name given to those who desired fuller reform) tried another plan. Inside the Church, as a purely voluntary thing, they began to set up a Presbyterian system. The "Presbytery of Wandsworth" in 1572 (really not a Presbytery but a Church session) is its best-known example; but not only were sessions formed, ministers also met in voluntary conferences called "classes", corresponding to Presbyteries; and in 1584 they drew up a Book of Discipline, setting out the system, to which many ministers subscribed, promising to observe it "so far as it may be lawful for us so to do by the public laws of this kingdom, and by the peace of our church". They were most careful not to do anything contrary to the existing laws of the Church, and to keep the whole movement on a voluntary basis. Their hope was that the excellency of the plan might secure its steady growth and its ultimate adoption. But severe repressive measures were at once taken, and it was found impossible to continue such meetings. The whole movement went underground, so to speak.

The Puritans, who were indeed the party of hope, did not disappear; but another party appeared, the Separatists, represented at first by the Brownists, and later by the Independents. They were the party of despair; they gave up

the Church of England as hopelessly corrupt, shook her dust off their feet, and departed out of her.

When James I came to the throne, there was a revival of hope among the Puritans, but not for long. The King succumbed to the flattery of the bishops, so pleasant to him after the plain speaking of the Scottish ministers. Repressive measures were continued under Archbishop Bancroft and increased under Laud, who brought in innovations in ritual and imposed them on all alike. Vacant sees were filled with men of like temper and views to his own. Norwich had already had bishops of similar spirit in the days of Elizabeth, such as Edmund Freake and Edmund Scambler; now she was to have Matthew Wren and Richard Mountague. Puritanism had but a sorry chance in that diocese, and the severity of treatment drove many into Separatism, so that in the seventeenth century Norfolk was almost more Independent than Presbyterian.

Let us turn back and briefly consider Norfolk in Elizabethan times. In 1571, as Bishop Parkhurst was favourable to the Puritans, Archbishop Parker sent a special commission to the diocese, which suspended some 300 Nonconformists. In 1573, the year after the Queen had administered her snub to Parliament, the Rev. William Sanderson, lecturer at Lynn, was in trouble, among other things, for exhorting people to pray God to turn the Queen's Majesty's heart to set forth true sincerity and doctrine, and for criticizing the Prayer Book.

The next bishop was Edmund Freake, who in his first visitation suspended many good men, and during his nine years in the see did not relax his efforts against the Puritans. In 1576, the year after his installation, six Norfolk ministers, having learned that the Queen "is fully bent to remove all those that cannot be persuaded to conform", sent a petition to the Lord Treasurer Burleigh. In it they said: "This grieveth our souls very much, considering what desolation is like to come to the poor flock of Christ, who shall be thereby bereaved of so many excellent pastors that dare not yield to that conformity", and they declare themselves to be of that number. They were promptly suspended from the ministry; but on petitioning in 1578 they were restored, during the bishop's pleasure, being told not to raise contentious points about doctrine or ceremonies in their sermons.

But the six were not alone. In 1584 the names of several of them are in the list of sixty-two Norfolk ministers who would not subscribe to Archbishop Whitgift's "Articles". By these every minister had, among other things, to acknowledge the Queen's supremacy in the Church, to say that the Prayer Book had nothing in it contrary to the word of God, and that everything in the Thirty-nine Articles was agreeable to Scripture. Edmund Scambler had just become bishop, and evidently the new broom was determined to sweep clean. Twenty of the ministers petitioned the Privy Council, emphasizing that they had laboured to preserve the unity of the Church in all quiet toleration of rites and ceremonies established; but had resisted with all their powers both papists and other heretics, and "the late schismatics of the faction of Browne", that is, the Separatists. They had had "much adoe" to keep their people from becoming Brownists. It has been said that "the severe measures that were resorted to in order to repress the Puritan clergy produced a revulsion in the minds of many, who even went the length of denying that the Church of England was a true

Church; they therefore separated altogether from her communion" (Browne, *Hist. of Congregationalism*, p. 34).

There is but little to be related about the next half-century. Dr. Jegon, who became bishop in 1602, had been diligent in suppressing Nonconformity in Cambridge University, and this fact was a recommendation for his appointment to the see. He was a poor type of man, and it is said that he "was much despised and hated, being inhospitable and penurious". He certainly was not well disposed to the Puritan party.

Soon after James I came to the throne in 1603 he held the famous Hampton Court Conference, where nine bishops, eight deans, and a couple of other dignitaries were confronted by four Puritans. It was practically a farce; the Puritans were browbeaten by the bishops, and it ended by the King remarking: "If that be all your party have to say, I will make them conform, or I will harry them out of the land, or worse."

In such circumstances the Puritans had to keep quiet. But they were in favour with the people. In 1629 the town bailiffs of Great Yarmouth elected as town preacher John Brinsley. He was nephew to one of the best bishops Norwich ever had, the learned and devout Joseph Hall (1641-56). It is recorded of him that his conversation was facetious, especially in suitable company; in the pulpit he had a more reverend aspect and discovered a greater degree of seriousness. But his career was soon interrupted; the Dean and Chapter of Norwich claimed that they had rights in the appointment, and he was removed. In 1632 he was presented to the rectory of Somerleyton by Sir John Wentworth, and here he remained, attracting large congregations from Yarmouth and neighbourhood, until 1644 when, after the abolition of deans and chapters by Parliament, the Corporation of Yarmouth recalled him as town preacher.

In 1635 Matthew Wren became bishop. Three years later he went to Ely. He was the uncle of Sir Christopher Wren, who got some architectural ideas for the support of the dome of St. Paul's Cathedral from Ely Cathedral. During his three years at Norwich he was severe; indeed by his actions there and at Ely he became the most hated of all bishops except Laud himself. His visitors in the Norwich diocese, Dr. Paul and Mr. Nowell, were very strict; "they menace much conformity by their presence, which I doubt," says Gawdy, "will be as soon forgot in their absence". He introduced communion rails in the churches, insisted on the eastward position in worship, turned communion tables into altars; he charged high fees—as much as £30, a large sum in those days—for consecrating churches. He is said to have suspended over eighty men in his diocese for preaching longer than an hour; and fifty-two families in Norwich went to New England "by Bishop Wren's pressing their consciences with illegal oaths, ceremonies, observations, and many strange innovations". He suspended ministers for not reading the *Book of Sports*, that proclamation which encouraged the people after Sunday morning service to spend the day in games. He also excommunicated fifty ministers for not reading the second service from the altar.

One of his victims, Christopher Amiraut, rector of Wolterton, was an interesting man. Born in Protestant Germany in 1601, he was educated at Heidelberg University and in Exeter College, Oxford. He came to Norfolk as a teacher of

classics when he was twenty-two, and settled at Hillington. In 1624 he was ordained and became rector of Irmingland, and later of Wolterton. Wren suspended him in 1636 for "open contumacy", namely, not bowing at the name of Jesus. He then went to Holland as an army chaplain, and became minister of the Presbyterian Church in Utrecht. But he refused to join the Presbytery, presumably because of his episcopal ordination. As soon as the Long Parliament met, he returned to England and gave evidence against Bishop Wren. Parliament valued his scholarship enough to ask his opinion as to the accuracy of an English translation of *Luther's Last Discourses*. He was beneficed in Essex in 1644, when the Westminster Assembly exempted him from appearing before them for the regular examination. He became vicar of East Dereham in 1648, and rector of Wanstead in Essex in 1654, but was preaching in Ireland, at Carrick on Suir, next year. Calamy reports him as ejected in 1662 from Mundesley, but there is no evidence of his having held that benefice; he may have been temporarily preaching there, for the rector had died in 1661.

In 1640 the long-repressed Puritan party came to the surface again. The Long Parliament which met in November that year laid before the King a list of grievances in which the religious situation took a prominent place. None of the eight members from the county of Norfolk and the boroughs in it was a man of distinction; one of them went off to Oxford with the King when war broke out; four of them were Covenanters; the other three died early in the struggle.

The times were full of excitement and rumours. On the one hand, in November 1641, there was an alarm that the papists were plotting to set fire to Norwich; on the other hand, in February 1642, the cathedral authorities seem to have been unduly alarmed by the apprentices of the town. The story is told in a pamphlet of eight pages with the long title, "True Newes from Norwich: Being a certaine Relation how the Cathedrall Blades of Norwich (on the 22. of February, 1641-2, being Shrove Tuesday) did put themselves into a posture of defence, because that the Apprentices of Norwich (as they imagined) would have pulled down their Organs. In which relation the foolishnesse of these Cathedrall men are to be understood, and deserve to be laughed at for their silly enterprise; there being no such cause to move them thereunto."

Another pamphlet, dated 16 August 1642, just four days after the King had opened the Civil War by raising his standard at Nottingham, tells of cavaliers, about 150 horse and 300 foot, plundering in the Norwich district, but says that there are 2,000 armed men in the city. The writer adds: "I do know for certain that this county will live and die in defence of the Parliament and for the maintenance of the Protestant Religion." It was known that many Roman Catholics were flocking to the King.

Norfolk had been one of twelve counties which petitioned in January 1640-1, only about a couple of months after the meeting of the Long Parliament, for the abolition of episcopacy, and 2,000 names were appended to the petition. But things went slowly; in July 1641 the famous "Root and Branch Act" was passed, and the entire hierarchy of the Church of England was abolished. Nothing, however, was put in its place, and two whole years elapsed before the Westminster Assembly of Divines was summoned to advise as to what should

replace it. Meanwhile, Parliament struggled manfully with the detailed management of the Church, itself removing unsatisfactory ministers and replacing them by others.

During the eight years 1641 to 1648 there were eighteen presentations by Parliament to Norfolk livings. Eleven of the presentees are recorded as having been approved by the Westminster Assembly, usually after examination, but occasionally on their reputation. Two of them had unusual experiences. William Selby, presented to Anmer, had been designated for Sundridge (Kent) in March 1644-5, but the House of Lords, for some reason not stated, declared that he was not to be inducted till further order. In June 1646 he was presented to Horsley (Surrey), but one John Platt put in a counterclaim, which was recognized as valid on 4 December. Selby fortunately had not long to wait, for on 22 December he was presented to Anmer, where no difficulty seems to have arisen.

The other case was of a different nature. Robert Congham was presented to Blofield on 15 June 1647. It seems to have been of the nature of a family living, for it had become void by the death of Ambrose Congham, D.D. Apparently there was a rival in the field, one Alexander Shipdham, vicar of South Walsham St. Mary who, no doubt, had local influence; and Congham's chances did not seem too good, for on 2 March the Westminster Assembly deferred its approval and after further examination three weeks later, he was found "insufficient". But he was granted yet another examination on 31 May, and was approved the next day, just a fortnight before his presentation to Blofield where he was still minister in 1653.<sup>1</sup>

Some of the financial details are interesting. During the Protectorate, augmentations to stipend were given. Of those recorded by Shaw from manuscript records, the smallest is £10 per annum at Stanfield, and the largest are £50 per annum at Swaffham and at Lynn, and £60 per annum at Alby. The reason for the large figure at this unimportant place is not ascertainable. Some of the money for these augmentations came from the sale of lands belonging to deans and chapters; the sales of those lands belonging to Norwich realized £1,023 10s.

The Westminster Assembly drew up a plan of church-government on Presbyterian lines, and presented it to Parliament to be put into practice. Parliament accepted it, with the important modification that they would not leave the ultimate control to the Church. In the spring of 1646 matters came to a deadlock between Assembly and Parliament, and on 17 April the latter printed a long declaration of its intentions. It emphasized the time that it had devoted to the consideration of the plan, and the fact that it had already passed several ordinances for putting it into execution, but it flatly refused to grant "an arbitrary and unlimited power and jurisdiction to the Church".

This position caused a curious storm in Norwich. On Tuesday, 16 June, the day on which the mayor was sworn in, a Mr. Thornback<sup>2</sup> preached a sermon before the magistrates, according to custom, and "the whole city generally" came to hear him. He urged people to take some action "which might conduce

<sup>1</sup> *East Anglian: Notes and Queries*, IV, 61.

<sup>2</sup> John Thornback was one of the lecturers at St. Andrew's Church, Norwich, 1640-47.

to the public good, and to the settlement of truth and peace'. On Wednesday he and seven other ministers of the town went to the Court of Mayoralty, asking for an Assembly next day to which they would submit a draft petition to Parliament. The usual course, that the town clerk should read the petition, was not followed, because the only copy was "imperfect, interlined, blotted out in many places"; but one of the ministers read it three times publicly in court. An anonymous pamphleteer, evidently an Independent, criticized the whole proceeding and attacked the personal character of the ministers in a pamphlet with the pompous title, "Vox Populi; or, the People's Cry against the Clergy". The fact that the Parliament had definitely decided on a Presbyterian church, and thus dashed the hopes of the Independents, was what galled him, and any move to strengthen the hands of Parliament was distasteful to him. He was answered by fifteen citizens, in a pamphlet called, "Vox Norwici; or the Cry of Norwich, vindicating their Ministers". They claimed that the contents of their pamphlet were "the general vote of the whole city; and if any man desire to be satisfied herein, they may repair to the house of Hamond Craske in the said city of Norwich, where they may see that all the inhabitants of the said city have subscribed their hands to several papers that testify the same". It was in the latter part of August that "Vox Populi" had come out, and on Wednesday, 2 September, the Norwich Common Council disclaimed any share in it, as a "scandalous pamphlet", and recorded their wish that its author "may be found out, and punished according to the law of the land".

"Vox Populi" had claimed that the ministers were turncoats and men who sought fat livings, and "Vox Norwici" effectually disposed of this charge by short biographical accounts of some interest. Thornback himself had preached against prelacy and ceremonies, and when at Steeple Bumpstead in Essex had been excommunicated for nonconformity; he was known to have refused an attractive promotion. Carter had been minister of St. Peter's for seventeen years, save when he was persecuted by Wren and deprived. "If he have varied in anything, it hath been in the increase of his detestation of superstition and prelacy". Bond, "a hopeful and learned young man", who had preached in the afternoon of the mayoralty day had for two years been Carter's assistant, and had not sought preferment; he had never worn a surplice nor used the cross in baptism. Stukeley had but recently come to the town, but had declared against the prelatical ceremonies. Toft and Mitchell were both Norwich born and bred; neither of them wore the surplice. Toft's living, where he had been for five years, was not worth more than £22 per annum. Mitchell had no benefice, and had "refused places affording good means". These fifteen citizens said that they had taken up the cudgels because the ministers, being reviled would not revile again, and "if we should hold our peace the stones would speak".

Thanks to Mr. Percy Millican's great work on the Freemen of Norwich, it is possible to form a picture of the standing of these fifteen citizens:—

Benjamin Baker was the son of a clergyman and had been apprenticed to a namesake (probably a relative) as a grocer in 1628, and admitted in 1636. He had already taken an apprentice in 1644.

Violet Benton had been admitted as a cordwainer in 1632.

Nehemiah Bond had been admitted as a hosier in 1613.

Thomas Brown was admitted as a worsted weaver in 1627; he had a son who succeeded him.

William Brown is not identifiable.

Hamond Craske was admitted as a hosier in 1640.

Thomas Hoth belonged to a family who had been worsted weavers since the time of Edward VI, and had two uncles in the same trade. He had been apprenticed to his father in 1621 and was admitted immediately (an unusual thing) after completing his seven years.

John Pleasants was admitted as worsted weaver in 1620. He was certainly a relative of the next, but the exact degree is not clear.

Robert Pleasants was admitted as saddler in 1644, and had a son who became an upholsterer.

Sampson Saberton was apprenticed (probably to his father) as a tanner in 1619, and admitted in 1631.

Peter Thacker was apprenticed as a scrivener in 1629, and admitted in 1636.

William Tooke was at least the third generation of bladesmiths. He was apprenticed in 1610 and admitted in 1628.

Sampson Townsend was admitted as worsted weaver in 1633.

Edward Woodyard was apprenticed as grocer in 1621 and admitted in 1630.

These men had been freemen of the city for periods from two to eighteen years, having served as apprentices and journeymen for periods of seven to ten years before admission; so their ages would be from twenty-five to forty. They were well established and several of them at this time, or shortly afterwards, had apprentices of their own. Some of their businesses were family affairs; so it is evident that these fifteen signatures represented an important element in the life of the city.

In August 1646 there appeared also, apparently inspired by this same controversy, a pamphlet called "Truth Vindicated from the Unjust Accusations of the Independent Society in the City of Norwich". It was by "T. S.", who admitted that at one time he had desired to be admitted among them, but had come to see that he was wrong. His main contention was that the Church of England as then existing was a true church; he uses strong but not scurrilous language against the Independents generally, and against what he knew of the working of their Norwich congregation.

These pamphlets are the local evidence of the struggle of the Independents, in a curious alliance with the Erastians in Parliament, to prevent the setting up of Presbyterianism. Owing largely to the growing power of the army, they were successful, not only in Norfolk, but in many other parts of the country. Only in London and eight other counties (Durham, Essex, Lancashire, Shropshire, Somerset, Suffolk, Surrey, and Middlesex) were complete systems set up; but there are definite traces of organization in another ten (Cheshire, Derbyshire, Devon, Hants, Lincoln, Northumberland, Sussex, Warwick, Wiltshire, and Yorkshire). Under the Protector, Presbyterians, Independents, and even Baptists were presented to benefices in the Church of England.

In 1648 the London ministers issued "A Testimony to the Truth of Jesus Christ and to our Solemn League and Covenant". This was a document protesting against the extravagances of the numerous sects which had sprung up during

the period when there was no established form of church government. Norfolk was one of thirteen counties whose ministers issued documents of "Consent", "Joint Testimony", or "Attestation". The "Attestation of the Ministers of Norfolk and the City of Norwich" has thirty-nine names, who describe themselves as "stedfast to our Solemn League and Covenant", which was a definitely Presbyterian agreement.

The non-existence of any presbyterial organization in the county produced difficulties in the matters of ordination of ministers, and of maintaining a reasonably uniform practice in granting or refusing admission to communion. This state of affairs led to the formation of a voluntary association of ministers about 1658. There were some eighty members, and they held local meetings and a general meeting; and in 1659 they issued a pamphlet giving the basis of their association. It may perhaps be described as a Presbytery without authority if such a thing can exist.

And so we reach the Restoration. Charles II is on the throne, the man who at Breda in Holland had promised "that no man shall be disquieted or called in question for differences of opinion in matters of religion, which do not disturb the peace of the kingdom". To the Presbyterians, at any rate, who were all Royalists and had worked for his return, this seemed satisfactory. Charles appointed no less than twelve Puritans as royal chaplains, but only four of these—Reynolds, Calamy, Spurstowe, and Baxter—ever preached before him. Bishoprics were offered to several of them, but the only one who accepted, trusting to Charles's declaration, was Edward Reynolds, who was made Bishop of Norwich, and held the see till his death in 1676. Reynolds was a staunch Royalist, and had been turned out of the Deanery of Christ Church College, Oxford, for refusing to take the Cromwellian Engagement. It was said of him that "in the City of London he was the pride and glory of the Presbyterian party", and his influence there had been of much importance in securing the support of that Puritan city for General Monk in his endeavour to bring back the King. Yet he cared little for politics; it was his spiritual work that was his chief concern; he was always faithful to his task, constantly residing in his parish, his college, or his diocese, "a man of singular affability, meekness and humility".

But the reaction in the country was too strong. Charles's Parliament would not pass the legislation which he had promised, and he was indifferent in the matter. Act after Act was passed against the Puritans, the first being the Act of Uniformity in 1662. By this Act, in order to retain their livings, ministers must be re-ordained, thus implying that their Presbyterian ordination had not been valid; must assent to every detail of the new Prayer Book (which many of them had not even had time to see); must accept the canons of the Church, which, among other things, compelled the wearing of the surplice and required ministers to baptize any child, without exception, brought to them; and finally must expressly abjure the Solemn League and Covenant, which they had sworn, and declare it to be an illegal oath.

In Norfolk sixty ministers were conscientiously unable to do this, and were ejected from their benefices on Bartholomew Day, 24 August 1662. Eight of them saw their way to conform later on, and re-entered the Church of England. The fact that this proportion was half as much again as the average for England



is probably due to the mild rule of Bishop Reynolds. It is not possible to tell the ecclesiastical connection of all the remaining fifty-two; but a study of the full information given by Matthews in his *Calamy Revised* shows that 21 were definitely Presbyterian, 16 Independents, and 1 a Baptist. Of Francis English, rector of St. Laurence, Norwich, John Lucas, vicar of Stalham, Nathaniel Mitchell, vicar of North Walsham, Richard Moore, rector of Diss, Benjamin Snowden, rector of St. Clement's, Norwich, and Thomas Worts, rector of Banningham, we shall hear later.

Some others need mention. The most distinguished of them was John Collinges, ejected from St. Stephen's, Norwich. He also had supported General Monk in restoring Charles II to the throne; and while an unsparing controversialist, he was a most brotherly man in personal relationships. At his death he was described as having been a blessing to the city of Norwich for above forty years. At first (1646) he was vicar of St. Saviour's, then (1654-62) of St. Stephen's, and we shall hear of him later as minister of a Presbyterian congregation in the parish of St. John Maddermarket.

Of John Brinsley we have already heard; it is reported that he had been guaranteed an income of £80 a year if he did not conform; he did not live long to enjoy this, dying in January 1664/5. John Allen also, who was curate at Yarmouth, was similarly offered £60 a year; he also died in 1665 of the plague. Miles Burkit, who died in 1689, had been rector of Irstead with Neatishead for little more than a year, but in years gone by had been in prolonged trouble under Laud when vicar of Pattishall, Northamptonshire. Elias Crabtree, rector of Dickleburgh, who died within a few weeks of ejection, had been in similar trouble in London.

John Lougher of Baconsthorp is described as "a man of great moderation of a catholic spirit, and a diffusive charity, much beloved and respected by sober persons of all denominations". He had been less than a year at Baconsthorp, but had previously been six years rector of Letheringsett, where he succeeded his father.

One must admit that language was used by all parties in those times which to-day seems not only extravagant but even unallowable. Sometimes it was almost solely abusive; but it could be clever, even when unfair. Early in 1663 John Winter, curate at East Dereham, appended a four-line postscript to a pamphlet whose title was "Honest Plain Dealing". The pamphlet was sold by William Oliver, next door to the Castle and Lion at Norwich. Winter's postscript is a geometrical definition of a nonconformist: "The height of impudence, the depth of maliciousness, the length of wilfulness, and the breadth of licentiousness are the four dimensions of a fanatic body, which hath neither right side nor right end." One wonders whether this was the same John Winter who, when he was minister of Clifton in Westmorland in 1645, was described as "one who formerly complied with the enemy, but has since taken the Covenant", and whether he had now returned to his first love.

A word concerning William Oliver. After serving his apprenticeship to a stationer he became a freeman of Norwich in 1662. He had three sons: John (of St. John's College, Cambridge) who became a Norfolk parson; Edward (of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge) who became an eminent divine, a doctor of

divinity and a prebendary of St. Paul's Cathedral; and Samuel who probably succeeded to his father's business. All three sons became freemen of Norwich by patrimony 1 March, 1689. William Oliver's sympathies are indicated by the fact that two of his sons entered the church after the Restoration.

Our next information is as to the secret meetings for worship, spoken of as "conventicles", held by ejected ministers. A return in 1669 gives particulars: there were also, of course, meetings of Independents, Baptists, and Quakers; the following were all Presbyterian. In Norwich itself there were three such meetings. One was at the house of Mr. John Willison, chemist, in the parish of St. Stephen, where some 200 persons, mostly women, met once or twice a week, and were preached to by Mr. Lucas and others. There were Independents as well among the 200. The second, which also contained Independents, was in the house of John Barnham, hosier, in the parish of St. John Maddermarket; some 300 people attended the ministry of Dr. John Collinges and Mr. Benjamin Snowden, both Presbyterians. The third was in the house of John Morley, worsted weaver, in the parish of St. Mary Coslany; no numbers are stated, the minister was Francis English. All three of these men were substantial tradesmen whose sons followed them in their businesses.

In other parts of the county the meetings are recorded thus: at Catton, Nathaniel Mitchell, who had been ejected from North Walsham, held services in his own house; the attendance was small, only twenty, and the return describes them as "inconsiderable persons". At Trunch, Presbyterians and Independents, to the number of some fifty, worshipped together. The regular meeting-place was the house of Robert Wright, but, doubtless to evade detection they met sometimes in that of John Gage. They had considerable choice of preachers, two Independents and two Presbyterians, Lougher and Worts. At Sidestrand, in the house of John Clarke; at Overstrand, at the Hall Place belonging to Mrs. Reimes; and at Northrepps, where the preacher was one Samuel Lane, the numbers are not recorded; nor are they at Diss, where Richard Moore preached. It will be noticed that the Presbyterians were specially strong in the north-east of the county.

Of course, though there was this special report in 1669, these meetings were going on all the time, and we hear of Francis English again the next year at Yarmouth. One of the churchwardens reported that he had tried to disperse a conventicle of 400 to 500 persons listening to English, but that the preacher refused to stop, the company to disperse, and the local authorities to act.

In 1672 Charles II tried to mitigate the effects of the Acts of Parliament by issuing, on his royal authority, licences for such meetings to be held, in definite places and addressed by specified persons. The meetings had almost exclusively to be held in private houses, so the number attending could not be large in any one case; but rooms were filled to capacity, and the congregations overflowed to lobbies and staircases. In Norwich there were at least seven such meeting-places, one each in the parishes of St. Stephen, St. Martin at Oak, St. Peter Mancroft, St. John Maddermarket, St. Andrew, and two in St. Peter Hungate. One of the latter was the house of Nathaniel Mitchell, who had also a house in Catton which was duly licensed for services. The only other places where there was more than one meeting-place were Northrepps and Trunch, with three

places each, used jointly by Presbyterians and Independents, and Cawston and Diss, with two places each. There were a dozen other places where worship of the Presbyterian type was carried on, namely, Lynn, Holt, Bodham, Southrepps, Bunwell, Pulham St. Mary, Tibenham, South Lopham (where it was in the house of the minister, John Jessup), Fersfield, and Hanworth (where the Presbyterians and Independents worshipped together).

It must be remembered that neither then nor even after the Revolution of 1688, when Toleration was finally granted, were the Presbyterians granted anything but the right to worship unmolested. They were not allowed to set up Presbyteries or any other part of their characteristic organization; so that it was in theory only, and not in practice, that they differed from the Independents. Doctrinal differences had not at that time developed to any marked extent.

In 1690, two years after the Revolution, there is a record of help given from a central fund in London to the poorer congregations. It is not a complete record of all Presbyterian places of worship. In Norwich, John Collinges was still preaching, though he died in that year; he is reported as having £56 per annum; John Lucas was "preaching a lecture" and "may get £40". This perhaps indicates that he was assisting Collinges. Benjamin Snowden's name is also mentioned, as colleague to Collinges, with apparently a similar salary. So this congregation was paying over £150 in all. But it is known that the rates of stipend were larger in Norfolk than anywhere else except London. There was a joint congregation at Yarmouth, whose minister, James Hannot, had been ordained in 1688 by Congregational and Presbyterian ministers acting together. He had £100 a year, and his assistant Samuel Wright, a young man, had £50. Anthony Williamson at Lynn had £30 a year, while Thomas Worts at East Ruston "preacheth constantly to a poor people, and hath 5s. the Lord's Day from a good gentlewoman". Two notes deal with North Walsham and South Walsham respectively; of the latter it is said "discontinued, but not certain", of the former "fit to raise a congregation in, supplied by several". It is also recorded that there was a young man, Thomas Steward, being educated for the ministry under Collinges; he was Norwich born, but exercised his ministry in Dublin and afterwards in Bury St. Edmunds, and received the honour of a D.D. from Aberdeen. Another (but unnamed) student although only fifteen years old, was "teaching twenty children Latin". The record ends with the somewhat pathetic note: "Ministers cannot live under £50 per annum like ministers. £200 per annum would supply it to the thirteen congregations [that is, both Presbyterian and Congregational] and keep six children at education [for the ministry]."

Let us take a mere glance into the next century to conclude. About 1720 there were eight Presbyterian congregations in the county; not one of them remains. Four became Unitarian: Norwich, Lynn, Filby, and Hapton; one became Congregational, Guestwick; and the other three, Colkirk, Southrepps, and Long Stratton, faded out.

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