

[Rise and Development of the Congregational Polity and Spirit]

III. Brief Definition of Certain Terms Used in the History of
Free Churches

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The tangle of names as applied to various groups of political and religious parties in England during the period that we are now studying often leads to a rather loose and misleading use of these various terms. Only a detailed study of the history for this period can throw proper light upon the problems, but a brief citation of points will serve to draw distinctions sufficiently clear.

The Reformation in England is traced back to two sources. One the one hand, to the growth of popular feeling against the Catholic Church, a result, as we have seen, of the spirit of the times. And, on the other hand, to the personal and political complications of Henry VIII. Henry had come to the throne as a Catholic. In 1521 he wrote a book on the sacraments in which he opposed Luther's views. In return for this service he received from the Pope the title "Defender of the Faith." But in 1528 he applied to the Pope for a decree of divorce from Catherine of Aragon. His plea was denied. He appealed to the universities for opinions and his wishes were approved of by these men. In 1533 he married Anne Boleyn, and the next year Parliament confirmed the marriage, and declared invalid the former marriage. This action, of course, strained the relations between Henry VIII and the Pope, and immediately began the suppression of monasteries. Thus carrying into execution the principles that were at the bottom of the transfer of power from the Pope to Henry VIII that had taken place in

¹ Earl C. Davis wrote a good number of manuscripts concerning the history of the church. All are hand-written dating them before 1907—so Pittsfield or Harvard. Some, including this one, are pretty clearly part of a series provided to a congregation—so probably Pittsfield.

1533, just before Henry's marriage to Anne Boleyn. The English Reformation, as brought about by Henry VIII, was nothing more or less than a transfer of power from the Pope to the King of England.

The Reformation proper, which is the result of the seeds of free inquiry and universal priesthood, was not yet accomplished. The true reformation was still developing in the Puritan movement. The Puritan represents the growing spirit, but they held to the principle of remaining in the Church of England, and reforming from within. The Separatists, with whom we are most interested, believed in the principle of reform without tarrying for any.

This popular movement grew in power and became more and more political in its nature. About a hundred years later during the reign of Charles I and later these two movements came into conflict. In November 1641 the King issued a declaration affirming his loyalty to the Church, and showed evidences of a determination to resort to force. There was great excitement both in Parliament and throughout the country. Riots between the supporters of the King and Parliament occurred in London. At this time the nicknames "Roundhead" and "Cavalier" were first used. So these are terms that apply to a political party, but a party that in general stands for the same principles that the pure religious party had stood for during the days of Elizabeth when the word Puritan was first used.

About 20 years later in 1662, after the Restoration, an Act of Uniformity was passed which 2,000 clergymen refused to conform to. These two-thousand men are, strictly speaking, the "Dissenters" or "non-conformists," terms which have come to be used since that time in speaking of all who do not conform to the rules and regulations of the established Church. The Reformation in England is not yet complete, and only in 1836 were dissenters first allowed to solemnize marriage in the place of worship.

"Independents" is a name used in England as the name of a part of extreme principles, who were influenced by "the New England way," i.e., separation. During the Long Parliament assembled in 1640, Cromwell was the leading independent, and we may regard the period of the Commonwealth the

culmination of this idea of Separation working in English religion-political life.

Independents is a term now applied to Congregationalists in England.