

Earliest Leases of Congregational Churches.

John Burroughs tells us that "the earliest pioneers of independent thought that we come upon in English soil are thirty weavers in the diocese of Worcester who were summoned before the council of Uxbridge as far back as A. D. 1165.["] The chronicle tells us that when these people were under examination, they answered that they were Christians, and revered the teachings of the apostles. In as much however as they made light of sacraments and priestly power they were condemned and scourged and branded as heretics, and then driven out of the city, to perish in the winter cold; and thus, says the chronicle, the four winters of this severity not only cleared the realm of England from the pestilence which had so sorely afflicted it, but also prevented it from creeping in again."

J. Burroughs. P. 17.

So you see the seed had been sown as early as 1165, about 350 years before the act of 1401 for

the burning of heretics, which states that "divers folke
and severall people of a certaine new sect....
using the office of preaching, do severally and
maliciously, in divers folke places within the
realm, preach and teach divers new doctrines and
wicked erroneous opiniones." Just what the
nature of these "divers folke and severall people"
were, and what they taught or preached, cannot be
determined, but it points to the working of the
leaven, which found its expression in the
Reformations, and Post Reformation Reforms.

The Bishop of Durham Register gives indication of this
developing movement, and the thing to notice is
that it is the same spirit, and takes the same
forms before the Reformation in England, as
we find in the Post Reformation Congregational
churches. That they were strictly congregational
churches, cannot be asserted, but they show
the germs of the congregational spirit.

The Reformation in England was in many
respects thoroughly disaffirming. So be sure

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it was something of a relief to see the step taken
to sever which would sever the connection between
England and Rome. But after all the Anglican
Church is not essentially different from the
Catholic, seeking in general terms, and for my
part if I were so constituted that I felt the
need of a church of Authority, I should do as
John Henry Newman did a few centuries later
I would go the full length, and seek shelter
in the Catholic Church. Calvinism was
but a half way reform, and substituted the
Authority of the Bible. for the authority of the Pope.
There were many people that felt the need
of this reform, but also felt that it had
not been thorough enough. For hardly had
the English Reformation been accomplished, when
men filled with the spirit of freedom, of free
inquiry, and universal Priesthood, began
well nigh to disturb the authorities.

In the Privy Council Register of October 17
is recorded the examination concerning an
assembly of some sixty persons who had met

at a private house on Sunday at晚上。⁴
in 1551. Sixteen of them on being examined,
confessed the cause of their assembly to be for
folk of Scripture, not denying that they
had refused communion (at the parish church) about
two years ago very suspicious and erroneous
purposes.¹ There are indications of other groups
of people scattered pretty largely over England,
who were meeting in the same way, and for the
same purposes.

But in 1571 we have very conclusive evidence
of a church in London in 1571. which was
distinctly a Separatist Church. In a petition
to the Queen signed by members of the church,
in which they plead for church reform, they
say. We a poor congregation whom God hath
separated from the church of England and
from the mingled and false worshipping
therein etc. Richard Fity is mentioned as
minister of this church. Now this church
can be traced back to 1568. and possibly

to the reign of Mary. To this church
the New England Congregationalists look back,
and Bradford refers to it.

But first at this point we must turn
aside from the church, and interest our-
selves in Robert Brown. He is sometimes
described as the Founder of Congregational-
ism, but and the Separatists were
often called Brownists, although Bradford
rather resents this name.

The date of Brown's birth is not known
but in 1572, (one year after the Petition of
the Separatist church in Finsbury to Queen
Elizabeth) Brown received a degree from
Corpus Christi College Cambridge. After leaving
Cambridge he went to London, where he says
"he wholly bent himself to search and ~~to~~
find out the matter of the church, as to how
it was to be guided and ordered, and what
abuses there were in the ecclesiastical

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government then used." It is a mere conjecture, but at least possible, if not probable that Robert Burne, during his three years in London came into relation with John Fity Richard Fity Separatist church. and one may suppose that from them he absorbed many fruitful suggestions in his search after the truth.

After a period of unsettled activity, Burne and a college friend went to Norwich, where they gathered a congregation of believers into church fellowship. You remember that John Robinson came from Norwich to Scrooby. But Burne was not free from his troubles, for in 1581 the Bishop of Norwich affixed Lord Burleigh, a relative of Burne's that Burne had been lately apprehended at St. Peter-mill-Bury for gathering people together in private houses for religious service. He and his friend Harrison escaped to Middleburg, and ^{sojourning} after the death of his friend Harrison in 1585, Burne returned to England. gave up the fight, and returned to the English

Anglican Church. He died in the North = 7
hampton jail some time between 1631-33.

Now Burne's prominence in the history
of Congregationalism is due to the fact
that he first gave literary expression to the
principles, and he himself appreciated
and understood the problem in hand.
The Puritans remained within the church
and attempted to work a reform from
within. The Separatists were for coming
out of the English church, and leaving the
old stock to itself. Burne expressed the
essence of the Separatist idea, in the
title to one of his pamphlets, which he very
appropriately calls "Reformation without tarrying
for any". His significance in this relation
rests in the fact that he put into writing
the ideas of the Separatist movement. He
is not the founder of Congregationalism or is
sometimes held, but its first literary exponent.

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There are two more men connected with this movement of whom we must learn something. At about the same time that Robert Barnes was being tried, and pronouncing wanting in that strength that will carry a man to death for his convictions. John Greenwood, a man of stronger type was working his way out of the Established Church into the free Congregational type. Greenwood graduated from Cambridge 1581. and was ordained by the Bishop. But the Cambridge influence was at work on him, and in 1585 he was deprived of his benefice "for the declining he had to the order of the Book of Common Prayer". He turned Puritan, and soon went the full length of reform and became a Separatist, and found his way to London. In 1587 he was arrested for being at private conventicles. After examination he was sent to Chirk Prison.

While he was confined in prison

We were visited by Henry Banwar, of whom⁹
we must get some clear conception, for he
was one of the great men of early Eng-
goticism.

Banwar, a lawyer by training and a skilled
chiropterist, a man of aristocratic con-
nections. Chancing one day or the other passing
to hear a broken church, he overheard the
priest's vice and entered. The result was
one of those remarkable conversions which
transform a man's whole life. Among his new
associates was John Greenwood of whom we
have heard. Upon hearing of Greenwood's
arrest he went to visit him in prison and
was himself arrested. After a long series of
examinations he finally landed in Fleet
prison, to which Greenwood meanwhile had
been transferred, and they were put into the
same chamber. In this prison life of ^{nearly} 5 years
they devoted themselves to writing books in
defence of their principles.

Finally Greenwood was released in 1882

but out long after he was arrested while ¹⁰
worshipping with Separatists in a private
house.

They were tried and condemned to death
on March 23, 1593, the execution to take place
the 24.th but strange as it may seem, just
at the moment a refugee came, and the
hanging deferred. The week later Baumer
says my brother Greenwood and I were
very early and secretly conveyed to the
place of execution, where being tried by
the necks we were permitted to speak
a few words: Just at this moment came
a refugee. But on April 6th 1593
they were hanged for believing in the
principles of Congregationalism.

Francis Johnson, who was arrested with
Greenwood on the night of his last arrest
Dec. 5. 1593, became factor of this colony

Sefarotit church. The hanging of Greenwood
and Banville come as a warning to the
people of this church, and they left London
and finally turned up in Amsterdam
and formed what is known as the London
Amsterdam church. which we have seen
over abevely at Amsterdam when the
Pilgrims arrived there from Scrooby.

There is one more ~~is~~ point that we
ought to note. There seems to have been
just a slight difference in the method
of government of this London church. They held
it would seem, that when the elders had
once been elected to discharge their duties
that the church thereby had given up their
voice in deciding the affairs of the church.
The Scrooby people held that the final authority
rested in the people of the church, you
see that it is the same difference that
is now bothering us in city governments

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and the agitation in favor of the separation
is a call for that policy that the Scruffy
church stood for, and which we find in
the form of Government in all New
England towns. This distinction is to be
remembered for it is the source of some
trouble in Austerlins.

I But thus far, we have noted the London
Austerlins church, which had its origin
as far back as Queen Mary's time, and
certainly can be dated to 1568. With this are
associated chiefly Greenwood & Barrow, who
were hanged April 6. 1593. After their death
the church went over to Austerlins, and became
the London Austerlins Church.

II There we have to notice the influence of Robert
Barrow, who faintly may be regarded as an
offshoot of this church, and who founded the
Church at Norwich. He is important ^{auto} for his literary
work.

III From the Church at Norwich, we trace the connection
to Scrooby, by John Robinson who became teacher
and preacher of the Scrooby Church, and went to
Scrooby from Norwich.

But like Scrooby church, which was founded in
1606, was an offshoot of the Gainsborough
Church founded in 1602, and which went
to ~~of~~ Amsterdam shortly after the Scrooby church
was established in 1606. With it went John
Smyth, who had become pastor of the
Gainsborough church in 1605. At Amsterdam
Smyth, who seems to have been a man
always engaged in petty quarrels, came under
the influence of Remonstrant theologians,
and founded what is now known as the
Baptist denomination, the interesting personal
relationship. Francis Johnson, who as pastor
of the London Amsterdam church, had gone
to Amsterdam in 1595, was tutor ~~to~~ while at
Cambridge to John Smyth, Pastor of the
Gainsborough church. This links all

three of three churches together by possible ¹⁴
Ties.

Finally in 1608, the Scrubby church went
over to Amsterdam.