

Puritans, Baptists and Nonconformists in Salisbury

John and Angela Magee

Puritans

THE period from the end of the sixteenth century to the end of the seventeenth century stands in a unique position in the history of the Christian Church in England. It was in this century that God graciously raised up multitudes of men who were eminent in personal piety and theology, and who preached from the pulpits, colleges, universities, and even high-ways of this land the whole counsel of God. In so doing they called men and women, and boys and girls, to render due obedience and worship to God in every sphere of life. These men, however, came forth from the furnace of affliction, having been proved and tried by God. But, coming out of this furnace, they shone like gold, as men who were familiar with God and who could impart his gracious truths to their hearers.

Many of these men had been in exile on the Continent, and were no longer content with a national church that emphasised form and externals. Instead, they desired the Church to be purified and for her to set forth an experimental Christianity that engaged the heart and the mind. These men came to be known as ‘Puritans’. Rightly considered, ‘puritanism must be understood in two ways: first as the endeavour to effect thorough-going reforms of ecclesiastical practice, and secondly, as the attempt of a godly way of life’.

Not everyone was in favour of purifying or reforming the Church of England. Despite the fact that the need in the land was all pervasive and the vast majority of the clergy ‘were generally illiterate, and often of scandalous lives and incapable of preaching’, opposition to reform was vigorous. ‘In

ten thousand parishes only two thousand parishes had “Preaching Ministers”, including many of “slender gift”, and less grace. Eight thousand parishes rarely, if ever, heard a gospel sermon.’

By the beginning of the seventeenth century the Church of England was evidently comprised of two distinct parties: the Puritans and the non-Puritans. Although the Elizabethan reign made provision for some measure of reform within the Church, it was not sufficient to meet the Biblical requirements proposed by the Puritans. The veritable antagonism to these men led by Whitgift and his supporters, resulted ultimately in a time of persecution in the hope of suppressing all traces of Puritan influence. The Act Against Puritans (1593) was passed with this purpose in view.

With the dawning of the Stuart monarchy there was an expectancy among the Puritans of better things to come. James I, who has been described as ‘the wisest fool in Christendom’, was unable to resolve the profound division which existed in the Church of England, ‘and determined to make the Puritans conform [to episcopacy and many of the rites of the Church], or else harry them out of the land’. Despite being a suppressed body, once again, the Puritan party continued to make ‘steady, indeed rapid, progress in England.’ As Puritan numbers grew in Parliament, James had to take a more conciliatory line towards them. His open support for the Synod

of Dort (1618-19) was considered to be a welcome overture towards the Puritan party.

Salisbury in the Seventeenth Century

The seventeenth century in Salisbury was noteworthy for its profound diversity of events:

1. In 1604, Salisbury was once again visited by the Plague. There was great loss of life, with large numbers of people escaping to the countryside. This left the city, for a time, in a somewhat destitute state.

2. Godly men of international renown (e.g. John Davenant, Bishop of Salisbury from 1621-1641), preached clear, Calvinistic doctrine.

3. The Civil War of 1642-48 had a great effect upon Salisbury.

4. The Westminster Assembly in 1643, appointed one of Salisbury's Puritan ministers, John Strickland (1601- 1670), to be a member of its Assembly of Divines.

5. The Great Ejection of 1662 took its toll upon the city, removing from its pulpits several Godly, Nonconformist ministers.

Anglican Divisions in Salisbury

In Salisbury at this time there was a division growing among the churchmen. Men such as John Jewel, John Davenant, Tobias Matthews, and George Herbert (whose ministry was at Bemerton) practiced and preached Puritan and Reformed theology without equivocation. They saw Rome as the great enemy of the Church. For them, the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England was a true reflection of their doctrinal position.

Others saw clearly the need to go beyond the emphasis on defending the truths rediscovered at the Reformation and to apply these truths more widely, in order to reform the Church in her ecclesiastical politics, and to awaken the unconverted to their need

of a Saviour. These men became the 'theologians of the Christian life'.

That Richard Hooker, vicar of Boscombe, within the diocese of Salisbury, was considered the Church's 'chief vindicator against the Puritan' suggests that the growing influence of Puritanism gave rise to great concern in the Church. His multivolume work, Ecclesiastical Polity, was at least completed at Boscombe, if not partly written there. Kelbe, in his introduction, remarks, 'The current was setting strongly in favour of the Puritan party, or innovators, up to the time when Whitgift became archbishop'.

Two Puritans of note must be mentioned in connection with Salisbury and its growth in gospel light.

Richard Alleine (1611-1681), a Puritan minister 'known for his piety and soul-searching ministry', was ordained in the Salisbury diocese on March 2nd, 1634. The following year he was licensed to preach in the Salisbury area. His writings, while not prolific, are 'spiritual and practical in nature'. They include his four volume work, Vindication of Godliness (which initially was refused license); Heaven Opened: The Riches of God's Covenant; Instructions About Heart Work; and The World Conquered by the Faithful Christian.

In The World Conquered by the Faithful Christian, the battle between the world and the Christian is enlarged upon:

'It is impossible that God and the world should be supremely loved together. That both should be our aim and good is a contradiction. It is irrational for any to conclude that they have any proper respect for God if they are strongly attached to the world.'

If his works in any way reflect the preaching brought before his congregations then his brief period of ministry in the diocese of Salisbury provided Godly and practical instruction for his

hearers. The greater part of his ministry was in Batcombe, Somerset, where he remained until he was ejected in 1662.

Edward Dering (1540-1576) an earlier Puritan had an excellent education at Christ's College, Cambridge. He obtained his B.A. in 1560, his M.A. in 1563, and a Bachelor of Theology in 1568. Because of his reputation as a Greek scholar he was singled out in 1564 to present Queen Elizabeth I 'with a congratulatory copy of Greek verses he had written'.

His assent to Puritan teaching at the college gradually became evident. This was demonstrated in his sermon preached before the royal court on February 25th, 1569. His text was Psalm 78:70.

Dering reproved Queen Elizabeth to her face for tolerating clergy whose practices and lives were objectionable. He described the ministers as 'ruffians and dizers, blind guides and foolish dogs that will not bark'. 'And yet you', he told the Queen, 'sit still and are careless, and let men do as they will.' The Queen, outraged, suspended him from preaching. It was in Salisbury Cathedral, the following year, that he was restored to the pulpit. That same year, 1571, he was appointed as prebend to the Cathedral. 'He obtained high reputation both as a preacher and as a scholar, and used his abilities and influence to great purpose against the High-Church and Romanizing party.' He died in 1576, at the early age of 36.

Dering's writings are compiled in one volume, entitled *M. Derings Workes*. They were first printed in 1597. The volume is divided into four sections, comprising: 1. A sermon on Psalm 78:70 2. A sermon on John 6:34 3. Lectures on the Book of Hebrews 4. A collection of his letters with a Brief and Necessary Catechism.

Consider here his clear, Biblical exegesis of the substitutionary work of the Lord Jesus and his

perfect humanity from a portion of his lectures on Hebrews chapter 2:

'Our sins are not imputed unto us, but they were imputed unto him. The punishment of them is forgiven us, but it was not forgiven him. Righteousness is freely given us, but it was not freely given him. He obeyed the law of his Father every jot and tittle, that he might fulfil all righteousness. He bare the condemnation of Hell and death, that he might abolish it. He took upon him the guiltiness of our sins, and bare them in his own body, that he might nail them upon his cross. When it pleased God our heavenly Father, of his great mercy, to accept the obedience of his law for our perfect righteousness, and to give unto it the recompense of eternal life; and when it pleased God to accept this for a full punishment of all the sins of Man, if any man could be found to bear it before God and overcome it, our Saviour Christ craved no more but this; the residue he performed all in his own body, and by his eternal spirit overcame it; for that in him is life, in him is righteousness, in him is immortality, in him is the reconciled good will of God, and that excellent wisdom which has made us by faith one with him; the same has made us partakers of all his honour and glorie.'

His catechism, entitled *A Brief Catechism Containing a Declaration of the True Way to Life Everlasting: Very meet to be known of everyone, before they be admitted to the Lord's Supper, is a detailed question and answer system of the Ten Commandments, The Creed, and The Lord's Prayer.*

Q. What meanest thou concerning this, that Christ descended into Hell?

A. Where it is said that Christ descended into Hell, thereby I believe that Christ did not only suffer in his body, the punishment due to my body, but also in his soul the punishment due to my soul, which was the torments of Hell, second death, sorrows of death and abjection from God: as it doth appear, by

the anguish of his soul in the Garden, when drops of blood issued out of his body, and also upon the Cross, by his lamentable cry to his Father. For in a miserable case had we been, if he had suffered only the punishment due to our bodies, and not to our souls.

The Effects of Puritanism

While history does not record the names and lives of many of those who came under the faithful ministry of Puritan preachers, it is proper to acknowledge that under the influence of the Holy Spirit many would have left a savour of Christ among their daily acquaintances, as they sought to live Godly in Christ Jesus. “The Puritan preachers gathered round them congregations of earnest believers who desired to live in a manner well-pleasing to God. These believers - many of them obscure persons - “attempted a greater sobriety of life than was customary in England””.

This Godly living and the unease with Episcopalian church government and Romish liturgy was to act as a catalyst in the formation of new churches and denominations in Salisbury. In Salisbury during the early decades of the seventeenth century, the strong-hold of the Church of England was weakening and the Church was on the threshold of being fragmented.

Baptists

It was inevitable that among those who urged for reform within the Church of England, there would develop a body which could no longer stay within its structures.

Towards the end of Elizabeth’s reign small groups appeared among the Puritans who had come to feel how hopeless it was to stay within the State Church, working and hoping for better days. They decided to go out of it and to seek for a thorough reformation ‘without tarrying for any’.

Audacious attempts had been made to suppress those who wanted to purify the Church

by legislation, persecution, and exile, but it was impossible to stamp out of the hearts of these men the supernatural work of reform. ‘Men’s thoughts had been imprisoned and chained for centuries, but they began now to expand in a new universe. The Separatists, the Baptists, the Brownists, the Barrowists, as they were called in contempt, saw plainly that the true Church could not be coincident with the whole baptised population. Despised and proscribed by all, expressly excluded from every act of toleration, they were yet the children of freedom and light.’ We will now consider one group of these men, the Baptists, and trace their development in the city of Salisbury.

General and Particular Baptists

‘The origins of the Baptist denomination can be traced back to the beginning of the seventeenth century. Two major groups of Baptists emerged in England in the early 1600’s. These two groups were not formed as the result of a split, but came about through different circumstances and in different places. While they shared much in common, they differed in their views of the atonement and church organization.’ These two groups comprised the General Baptists and the Particular Baptists. The General Baptists followed the teaching of Arminius, who especially opposed the Calvinistic teaching of limited atonement. The Particular Baptists heartily embraced the ‘Five Points of Calvinism’ and were clearly influenced by these Reformed principles.

John Smyth, who is considered to be the founder of the first Baptist congregation, was ordained an Anglican minister in London in 1594. He was, however, not completely at ease with all of the practices of the Church of England, and found himself more in agreement with the views of Francis Johnson, a teacher at Cambridge who was later to be counted among the Separatists. ‘Not a man to compromise, Smyth often used strong language in his criticisms. He considered many Anglican priests as “too papist” ... and he was known to

rebuke prominent sinners by name from the pulpit.' By 1600, he had rejected infant baptism. While in Gainsborough in 1606, Smyth started meeting with a group of Separatists who asked him to become their preacher. Among these men was Thomas Helwys. Helwys and Smyth took flight to Amsterdam in 1606 because of religious persecution by James I.

'The community of English Separatists in Holland had first settled there in the last year of the reign of Elizabeth I, and some twenty names from Wiltshire coming from such places as Westbury, Bradford, Chippenham, Salisbury, etc., show that in Wiltshire the soil was ready for the seed which was no doubt sown by some who returned from Amsterdam after being influenced there by John Smyth.' 'At first the Smyth group formed one more church of English refugees ... [and were] in fellowship with the Ancient Church.' Before long, differences developed between Smyth and one of their men, Johnson. His book, *The Differences of the Churches of the Separation* (1608), addresses issues such as true worship, the liturgy, finances, and the ministry.

'Smyth startled friend and foe alike when he decided in 1609 that baptism should be applied to believers only and that this voluntary confession baptism should form the basis of the church.' His own baptism gave rise to contentious arguments then and subsequently because he was said to have baptised himself - however, not all are in agreement with this.

On the subject of the administration of baptism in a new founded church, John Tombes says: 'If, ... no continuance of adult baptism can be proved, and baptism by such persons in wanting, yet I conceive what many protestant writers do yield, when they are pressed by the Paptists to show the calling of the first reformers; that after a universal corruption, the necessity of the thing doth justify the persons that reform, tho' wanting an ordinary regular calling, will justify in such a case, both the lawfulness of

the minister's baptising, that hath not rightly been baptised himself, and the sufficiency of that baptism to the person baptised.' And this very thing, says he, that in a case where a baptised minister cannot be had, it is lawful for an unbaptised person to baptise, and his baptism is valid, is both the resolution of Aquinas, and of Zanchius, an eminent Protestant.

In 1610, Smyth's church published a Confession of Faith consisting of twenty-six Articles. The following year Smyth died and the pastorate of the church was taken over by Mr Helwys. Under his pastorate, the immigrants returned to England. On their return it was soon obvious that religious toleration had not advanced very far. The Victoria County History of Wiltshire records that between 1630 and 1632, 'Anabaptists' in Salisbury were fined for absence from church. A similar incident is worthy of mention also. 'On December 5th, 1631, the churchwardens and overseers of St. Thomas presented "Jone Slowe, wife of Richard Slowe, Abraham Cade and his wife, and James Oakeford to be Anabaptists, recusants, and that they have been absent from the parish Church one month last past."'

Porton Baptist Church

In 1655, a Baptist church was formed in Porton, near Salisbury. This fledgling work was led by John Rede, who was a Justice of the Peace and an ex-Parliamentarian. His influence in the growth of Baptist churches was somewhat remarkable. During the Civil War, 'Colonels Rede and Deane traversed South Wales to stamp out a rising in Pembroke, and Baptist churches sprang up along their route.' John Rede was a Particular Baptist and he gathered round him brethren of likeminded doctrine. The first meeting of this new congregation was held on April 3rd, 1655, at John Rede's home in Porton. There were one hundred and eleven people in attendance. Records document that there were 12 brethren and sisters who came from Salisbury. Twenty villages

from Wiltshire and Hampshire were represented at this new Baptist church.

In 1657, at a meeting of the church at Porton it was resolved that the monthly meetings should be continued as they were at Amesbury, Stoford, Broadchalke and Porton, by course, and that at every one of these meetings the next meeting to succeed should be appointed to be either at Sarum, Amesbury or Burcombe. That meant that at least once a month, perhaps more often, the whole united church met at Salisbury. In 1676, there was an election of elders and Walter Penn from the Salisbury group was appointed an elder.

The Bishop of Salisbury at this time, Seth Ward, displayed an inflexible animosity towards all nonconformists and exercised a vindictive regime of punishment towards all who would not conform. 'In the diocese of Salisbury the persecution was hottest; by the instigation of Bishop Ward many hundreds being prosecuted with great industry, and driven from their family and trades.' Walter Penn, a stalwart for Baptist doctrine refused to yield to the unpalatable demands of Seth Ward and suffered great persecution under this notorious bishop. He spent several years in prison for holding conventicles, yet despite such a plight remained resolute in his convictions.

A new development occurred for the Baptist church at Porton in 1690. 'At a meeting at Sarum of the Brethren, formerly bearing the denomination of the church of Christ at Porton, being there and then met together, to consult which would be the most effectual method in order to promote the public interest of Christ in converting souls and in building up one another in the faith and order of the Gospel, do jointly agree that in order to accomplish this their design, it will be most expedient for time to come to sit down in two distinct congregations, viz. those in and about Sarum, to sit down together, having brother Penn to their pastor, who formerly belonged to the whole in that capacity, and the other

part to sit down in the country, at what places they think most for their convenience, having brother Rede to their pastor.'

This new church at Sarum is still here in Salisbury today and is known as Salisbury Baptist Church. However, the present day Salisbury Baptist Church no longer identifies with the Particular Baptist creed of its forefathers but openly acknowledges itself to be a General Baptist church, 'denying such of the narrower doctrines as we feel contrary to the Nature and Will of God.'

John Tombes (1602-1676) pastored a church at Leominster. Prior to his call to the ministry he often attended public debates where the Gospel was proclaimed and doctrinal issues disputed. It was at one of these events that Tombes was said to have been converted. Tombes had a university education and gained a reputation as an effective public disputer. He argued for believers' baptism and religious liberty. Between 1643 and 1660 he is said to have engaged in at least nine public disputes against infant baptism.

Tombes studied and searched the Scriptures on the doctrine of baptism for 15 years before he declared himself a credo-baptist. As the leading exponent of his day on believer's baptism, Tombes was called upon by the Westminster Assembly of Divines to contend for the Baptists. Ensuing from that occasion was his work, *An Exercitation About Infant Baptism*. None have equalled Tombes in the number of pages he had published on baptism.

He caused some unrest in his own parish when he refused to turn the table altarwise, and stopped using the surplice and the sign of the cross in baptism. He was among those ejected in 1662, and found refuge in Salisbury. Having settled here, he married a rich widow in Salisbury and lacked for nothing in his latter years. He maintained a tenuous link with the Church of England, being a lay communicant, but declined all the benefits of the Church that could

have been his if he had joined. He was known to have preached in St. Edmund's Church. Lambeth Palace library has a document on record entitled, 'Sarum Diocese, with the Peculiars of the Dean of Sarum Conventicles in 1669', and has John Tombes entered as one of the 'Heads and Teachers' of the post ejection conventicles.

After the Act of Indulgence in 1672, Tombes' home was licensed as a meeting place, which gave greater liberty to all who wished to come and hear him preach. He died in 1676, and is buried at St. Edmund's, Salisbury. He is said to have had twenty-eight works published, many of which are a defence of believers' baptism and an examining of the paedobaptist position in the light of Scripture. In these writings he establishes the groundwork for other Baptists, and helped establish a clear doctrinal basis for Baptist theology.

Francis Bampfield (?1616-1683/4) was a man of remarkable piety who blessed the lives of countless numbers of people by his excellent preaching and godly living. He was brought up in a Christian home, and from an early age was set apart for the Church. His first parish was in Dorset, and here, with a zeal for doing good to the souls of men and women, he endeavoured to promote a heart religion among his people. However, at this time 'he began to see that the Church of England in many things needed reformation, in regard to doctrine, worship and discipline; and therefore, as became a faithful minister, he heartily set about it; making the laws of Christ his only rule.' Such preaching was not well received, and eventually he moved to Sherborne, Dorset where he remained until the Ejection of 1662.

Although Bampfield was a Royalist, he suffered much persecution as a nonconformist and was imprisoned in Dorchester jail for eight years. Unable to neglect his calling as a minister, he preached in prison every day and twice on the Sabbath. His release from prison was short-lived. As he continued to preach and travel, he was arrested once again in

Wiltshire and this time imprisoned in Salisbury for eighteen weeks. 'During that time he wrote a letter, which was printed, giving an account of his imprisonment, and the joy he had in his sufferings for Christ.' Despite all these cruelties and hardships he remained steadfast in faith and would not capitulate to the enemies of the Gospel.

A.G. Matthews in Calamy Revised, records that Bampfield became a Baptist during his time in Salisbury. Bampfield eventually moved to London where he pastored a congregation at Pinner's-Hall. Not desiring to make any compromises in his preaching he was often imprisoned, and died in Newgate prison on February 16, 1683. His writings are not very numerous. Included in them are the following: A Letter Containing His Judgement For Observing the Seventh-day Sabbath (he did hold to the Jewish Sabbath) and The Open Confessor and the Free Prisoner: a pamphlet written while he was in Salisbury jail.

Salisbury and the Civil War

Both the city Corporation and the people of Salisbury were divided between support for the King and support for Parliament, although supporters of Parliament made up the majority. The Earl of Pembroke (who resided in Wilton, near Salisbury) was a strong supporter of Parliament.

The effects of the Civil War upon life in Salisbury were considerable. However, Salisbury saw no major battles, and as it was lacking fortifications it was not used as a stronghold by either side. Nevertheless, armies often passed through Salisbury due to its strategic location. Salisbury was held by the Parliamentary forces of Sir Edward Hungerford in February 1642 and those of Sir William Balfour, the Earl of Essex, and Colonel Ludlow all within 1644. In 1645 a number of Parliamentary armies going to the West passed through Salisbury. There were Royalist occupations by forces under Prince Maurice and the Duke of Marlborough in October 1642, Lord

Hertford in May 1643, King Charles 1st in 1644 and Goring in 1645.

Most, if not all, of these military occupations caused some degree of hardship to the citizens of Salisbury, particularly those whose sympathies were known to be contrary to those of the current occupying force. By far the worst episode was when Salisbury was held in March 1645 by Royalists under Goring, who not only exacted contributions from the supporters of Parliament, but oppressed friends and foes alike and left with about £30,000 worth of property. During the Civil War Salisbury suffered not only the depredation of the opposing armies, but saw faction-fighting in the streets between the residents themselves.

The Battle of Salisbury

The only actual fighting in Salisbury took place in late December 1644 and early January 1645. In December, the two regiments of Royalist horse quartered there under Colonel Coke were attacked by a party of Ludlow's troops under Major Wansey. Wansey's men set fire to the city gates, forced the Royalists out, and took their officers prisoner.

Shortly afterwards, around the turn of the year, Colonel Ludlow was involved in a skirmish with superior Royalist forces near Amesbury, and returned to Salisbury to await a Royalist attack. That night, Royalist horsemen entered the city by Castle Street, resulting in sharp fighting in the city. Ludlow, with only thirty troopers, charged the Royalists in the market square and put about three hundred of them to flight. The bulk of the Royalists tried to retreat down Endless Street (a cul -de-sac), where Colonel Middleton was taken prisoner. Ludlow, on hearing that there were now about 600 more Royalists outside the city, prepared for the inevitable attack. A large body of Royalists under Sir Marmaduke Langdale poured in by the north gate. Ludlow and his men resisted with great courage but his small force of cavalry and his garrison in the

Close were forced to yield. Ludlow, with a party of his men, escaped to Southampton.

Nonconformists

During the period of the Commonwealth and Protectorate, England enjoyed a measure of religious liberty. This came about through necessary constitutional change which strengthened parliamentary powers while weakening those of the monarchy. Such liberty was further assisted by Cromwell's sympathies with Puritanism and his desire for toleration. It is said that he, 'made Independents and Baptists and Presbyterians lie within one fold.'

The Book of Common Prayer had been replaced by the Directory of Worship drawn up by the Assembly of Westminster Divines (1643). Although it became illegal to use the Book of Common Prayer, it was not punishable as it was hoped to win men 'by sound doctrine, and the example of a good conversation.' Cromwell sought to address the moral laxity of the nation by promoting sound education and Biblical worship. Religious liberty did not, however, extend to 'popery or prelacy' and this resulted in an increasing discontent among many. This discontent remained under check until Cromwell's death in 1658.

The Clarendon Code

The opposition to Puritanism was not the only driving force to the downfall of the Commonwealth. Once the Presbyterians regained the majority among the Puritan body, they sought to assist the exiled Charles II to return to the throne of England. Charles II concealed his allegiance with Rome and pledged to uphold the Solemn League and Covenant of 1643, and the Presbyterians, supposing he meant what he promised, brought about his return to England in 1660. It was not long before the unreliability of the King's word was evidenced. His antipathy to Protestantism and to non-Conformity

in particular, was expressed in the Clarendon Code. This code comprised three Acts:

1. Act of Uniformity (1662), which required all clergymen to fully endorse the Book of Common Prayer.

2. The Conventicle Act (1664), which forbade meetings which did not use the Book of Common Prayer.

3. Five Mile Act (1665), which prohibited ejected clergymen to come within five miles of a city or corporate town.

With the passing of this legislation it became impossible for large numbers of clergy to remain within their churches. Consciences that had been brought captive to the Word of God could not tolerate a return to Prelacy, or a denying of the Solemn League and Covenant, or even promising never to use arms against the King. These men, who numbered about two thousand, were ejected from the Church of England. This Great Ejection of 1662 (and the earlier one of 1660) saw the Church of England forsake some of its most Godly and able ministers, leaving countless numbers of congregations without Biblical teaching and spiritual guidance.

The ejected ministers had occupied parishes throughout the whole country. In Wiltshire alone there were 57 nonconformist ministers, four of them from churches in Salisbury. How did these men respond to such an injustice?

‘Quietly and peaceably they leave their churches and homes, but not their people. They secure a hall or a shop, or a large room, and gather their people about them; or sometimes they rent a disused theatre or music hall, or the large room of an inn. Occasionally a nobleman or a great lady would open the hall of their house for the meetings. These were usually crowded until the Conventicle Act (1664),

making the attendees liable to heavy fines and transportation, thinned them out.’

Despite such heavy penalties these beleaguered brethren still wanted to hear their faithful ministers. It is estimated that there were still about one thousand one hundred conventicles being held secretly seven years after the ejection. Not only were men ejected from churches in Salisbury, but men from other parishes came here with the hope of preaching and being well-received by like-minded brethren.

Ejected Ministers in Salisbury

William Eyre was ejected from St. Thomas’ Church, Salisbury in 1660. His father was from Whiteparish and his mother from Redlynch. He obtained his B.A. and M.A. at Magdalan Hall, Oxford. After the ejection he continued to minister in Salisbury and later moved to Melksham where he further served the Lord. He was one of the assistants to the Wiltshire Commission of 1654. He died in Melksham in 1669/70. His works include, An Assize Sermon at Salisbury, 1652, on Psalm 45. Justification Without Conditions, on Acts 20:9.

Thomas Rashley was ejected from Salisbury Cathedral having preached there since 1652. He subsequently went to Devizes and preached there for a year where the church was in need of a minister. Prior to his period of time at Salisbury Cathedral he spent a number of years in New England preaching in various towns and cities. He finally moved to Abrey, near Marlborough and there continued in his Gospel calling.

William Troughton was another faithful minister who was subjected to the deprivations of anti-Puritan legislation. He was ejected from his congregation of St. Martin’s in Salisbury. He had previously spent some time as chaplain to Robert Hammond, who was governor of the Isle of Wight. During this time Charles I was imprisoned in Carisbrook Castle, and Troughton sought to address many of the King’s

erroneous views. In 1672, while living in Bristol, his house was licensed for preaching. Here he ministered to a small congregation of twenty. His latter years were spent in London.

His works include, *Saints in England under a Cloud*, 1648. *Scripture Redemption Limited*, 1652. *The Mystery of the Marriage Song*, an exposition on Psalm 45 with notes, 1656. *Cause and Cure of Disconsolate Thoughts*, 1676.

John Strickland

The name of John Strickland remains an honourable one to this day. He was one of the representatives of the Westminster Divines, and a covenanting, nonconformist. Strickland's background was that of a genteel family from the North of England. He studied at Oxford where he received his B.D. in 1632. From an early age he was noted for his puritanical disposition. His support was with the Parliamentarians during the Civil War, and he was often called upon to preach to them, 'exciting them', as Wood says 'to proceed in their blessed cause.' Reid reminds us that although he was a superadded divine to the Assembly he, 'is said to have constantly attended. He was a Covenanter; and by his fervent zeal for the interest of the Redeemer's kingdom, he has incurred the great displeasure of the Royal Party.'

Following a time in London he became minister of St. Edmund's, in Salisbury. His reputation as an expositor of the Scriptures was soon discovered and many came to sit under his ministry. In 1654 he was appointed an assistant to the Wiltshire Commission. As a covenanting minister he refused to take the oaths required under the Act of Uniformity and so in 1662 was ejected from his church. Despite several imprisonments he continued to organise and hold conventicles that the Word of God might continue to have free course. His death was sudden and unexpected. When he had completed his Sabbath day preaching engagements (2 Pet 1:11 being the text for both sermons) he felt unwell and was assisted

to a chair, there he passed away peacefully into his Master's presence.

His works include the following sermons preached before the House of Commons (a copy of which is found in Salisbury City Library): *God's Work of Mercy in Zion's Misery* (Is 10:20), December 12th, 1643. *A Discovery of Peace: or The Thoughts of the Almighty for the Ending of the People's Calamities* (Jer 29:11), 1664. *Immanuel: or The Church Triumphant in God With Us* (Ps 46:7), November 5th, 1644. *Mercy Rejoicing Against Judgement: or, God Waiting to be Gracious to a Sinful Nation* (Is 30:18) October 29th, 1645.

In his sermon *Immanuel*, which is an exposition of Psalm 46:7, the excellency of doctrinal truth and the exhortation to experiential faith harmoniously combine to give a God-honouring and edifying address:

'Our refuge or strong hold, where the Church as a Ship in quiet haven may anchor and ride safe: or it may be a metaphor from the dens or burroughs where weapon-less creatures find shelter when they are hunted and pursued by their enemies: as Proverbs 30:26: 'The conies are but a feeble folk, yet make they their houses in the rocks.' They are safe in the rock if they can get thither, though never so weak in themselves: So the Church, though pursued by bloody enemies, and though weak in herself, if yet she get under the wing of the God of Jacob, she may be fearless for she is safe there, he is our refuge.

The sense of all together is briefly thus; That God, who by a Sovereign power hath every creature at his command, is effectually with us by a special presence of his providence, whereby he will not only aid us in time of opposition and defend us in time of danger, but fight for us, and destroy our enemies; And this he will not fail to do forever, because he is engaged to us by an everlasting covenant of his own free grace. In the sense and experience of this the Church cannot choose but break out again and

again in this joyful ditty; “The Lord of hosts is with us, The God of Jacob is our refuge.”

Conclusion

When we consider how God blessed Salisbury in those days through Biblical preaching, doctrine and living and then contrast that period with the present

day, we ought to remember the words of the Lord in Jeremiah 6:16: ‘Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls.’