

The Development of Religious Separatism

in the Diocese of Canterbury

1590 - 1660

by

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Abstract.

The first part of this study concentrates on the development of conventicling and attempts to analyse the line dividing those private assemblies of a non-separatist nature from their separatist counterparts. It is argued that although there were signs of nascent separatism in the Diocese of Canterbury prior to the reign of Charles I, the port of Sandwich being notable within this context, rapid growth of separatism was very much a feature of the late 1620s and 1630s. Much of the evidence for this part of the study is taken from an exhaustive examination of the Ecclesiastical Records in the form of Visitation Comperta and entries in the Acta Curiae Books.

Two definite areas of separatist activity emerge as a result of this investigation; the Weald and East Kent. In the case of the former, the process by which Puritan nonconformity developed into outright covenanted separatism is analysed with reference to the experience of the conventiclors of the parishes of Sutton Valence and Egerton, and the role of the Sutton Valence chandler, John Turner, is shown to be of especial importance.

The methodology that has been employed has been consciously restrictive; no attempt has been made to analyse the socio-economic determinants that might lie behind provincial dissent, nor, largely as a result of lack of manuscript evidence, has any microscopic examination of a dissenting community been attempted. The aim of the study has been to concentrate closely on the developmental aspect of separatism over a given period of time.

Consequently, the second part of the thesis looks in some depth at the growth of the radical sects and of the Congregationalists, Baptists, and Quakers in the Diocese during the Interregnum, demonstrating, where possible, the links of these various groups and denominations with their earlier separatist roots.

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PREFACE

It is a not uncommon practice amongst historians great and small to preface their work with an apologia covering their omissions, yet, given that the area of seventeenth-century political and religious radicalism has become something of a battleground in terms of perspective, methodology, and interpretation in recent years, it is perhaps appropriate that a doctoral study should open by stating clearly the precise boundaries involved.

This study, in fact, analyses no more than that which is suggested by the title and concentrates specifically on the unfolding of religious separatism in the Canterbury Diocese between the years 1590 and 1660. Whilst the background of such a phenomenon will be briefly discussed in the introduction below, the approach that has been adopted has been consciously vertical. In his recent publication, Heresy and Reformation in the South East of England 1520-1559, Dr. Davis has traced the development and fusion of Lollard and Lutheran influences in this Diocese with great scholarship, whilst Professor Collinson's monumental study The Elizabethan Puritan Movement, when supplemented by his work on Cranbrook and by his more recent publication The Religion of Protestants, leaves little room for further speculation other than to attempt to analyse, particularly following the 'Lollards to Levellers' approach of Christopher Hill, the connection, if any, between the separatists of the seventeenth century in this part of England and their dissenting predecessors. It is this which this thesis attempts to achieve.

No attempt has been made to analyse or uncover the socio-economic influences behind separatism in the Diocese, neither have any of the key parishes in this study, such as Sutton Valence or Egerton, been put under the microscope in the Spufford/Sharpe mode, nor has any MacFarlane-like 'total reconstruction' of a given community been attempted. Will-evidence, or rather lack of it, for these parishes partly lies behind such an omission; it is a regrettable, but unavoidable, fact that the wills of precisely those parishioners

who have emerged as interesting and important within the context of this research have not survived.

No detailed discussion of the political implications of separatism within this area has been undertaken. That speculation on this, and other facets, is missing demands some explanation. The whole aim of this study has been to extract and define as closely as possible any lineal connection between late-Elizabethan nonconformity and later denominationalism or sectarianism, and to analyse the thin but real line dividing semi-separatism from separatism proper. This latter distinction, it is felt, is an important one that needs to be made. Finally, the study attempts to trace the fate of those that crossed this line until the return of reaction in 1660.

Much of the study of the period between 1590 and 1640 is based on a close and thorough study of the Ecclesiastical Records in the Cathedral Archives in Canterbury. The presentments and court cases discussed represent a fraction of those that have been studied and although at least one school of historiographical thought has expressed reservations concerning the use of the 'shavings and scrapings' of historical evidence, the wealth of fascinating detail emerging from such an undertaking has amply repaid the many hours of labour involved. Hence, no apology is offered for the inclusion of such detail. In this context, it would be appropriate to indicate that a considerable debt of gratitude is owed to the Cathedral Archivist, Miss A.M. Oakley, and her staff without whose co-operation and patience such research would have been impossible.

Regarding the many citations, spelling and punctuation has been left as it was found in the original, although abbreviated forms of the word, where they occur, have been lengthened for sake of simplicity. Dating has been modernised throughout.

It merely remains to express personal gratitude to Professor Collinson for his supervision of this study.

INTRODUCTION

In coming to terms with the diversity of the radicals we face a situation which is quite common in historical work; how to treat in orderly fashion a creative period or movement which by its very nature tends to be amorphous.¹

Irving Horst's caveat would seem to be an apt embarkation point for an analysis of the development of religious separatism in seventeenth-century Kent, especially in the light of recent scholarship which has posited a continuing underground tradition of dissent and nonconformity, in England as a whole and in Kent in particular, from Lollardy through to the florescence of sectarianism following the raising of the Royal Standard in 1642.²

Much of the evidence supporting such an approach is concerned with the geographical coincidence of dissent over a lengthy period of time, an approach which, to the casual observer, may have much to commend it, and this is certainly true with regard to the Wealden parishes.

Although Kentishmen did not feature to any important extent in the Oldcastle rising, the county of Kent bulked large as a centre of Lollard activity. On July 11th, 1422, William Whyte of Tenterden was summoned to appear before Archbishop Chichele to answer the charge of heretical teaching, and Professor Thomson has concluded that

it was probably his teaching that laid the foundations of the heretical tradition which can be seen at Tenterden during the hundred years that followed.³

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1. I.B.Horst, The Radical Brethren, Nieuwkoop, 1972, p25.
 2. C.Hill, "Lollards to Levellers" in Rebels and their Causes, ed. M.Cornforth, London, 1978, pp49-69; P.Clark, English Provincial Society from the Reformation to the Revolution (hereafter E.P.S.), Woking, 1977, pp170, 177-178; M.R.Watts, The Dissenters, Oxford, 1978, pp13-14.
 3. J.A.F.Thomson, The Later Lollards, Oxford, 1965, p173.

Six years later, Whyte was burnt at Norwich, and twenty men from the Tenterden area were brought before the Archbishop. The progress of Lollardy in this part of Kent has been well documented as far as the fifteenth century is concerned by Professor Thomson and needs no repetition here. Further evidence of the predominance of Lollard beliefs in the Weald emerges with the magna abiurata proceedings of 1511. Forty-eight men and women were brought before the authorities; five of those examined were burnt. The general distribution of those investigated is demonstrated on Map 1 overleaf. Dr. Davis has shown that by and large their views were sacramentarian although two of their number rejected the efficacy of paedobaptism.¹

The subsuming of Lollard attitudes into Protestant reformism with the onset and development of the Reformation is a complex phenomenon and has been the subject of an erudite study by Dr. Davis. Established Lollard views can be seen in the evidence of dissent in Kent in 1543. On September 24th, Thomas Makeblythe was reported for refusing to bear a Palm on Palm Sunday, whilst Hamon Bett stated that

when he died he would neither have ringing nor singing nor manner of alms deed to be done for his soul, and cared not whether he were buried in a ditch

adding that he regretted wasting so much time on behalf of his father's soul. At the same time, John Riche denied that God had ordained fast-days, John Chapman of Appledore denounced creeping to the cross as idolatrous, Robert Strawghwyn

1. J. F. Davis, Heresy and Reformation in the South East of England 1520-1559, London, 1983, p4.

of Davington affirmed that

saints could neither help us nor hear us; also
that holy water was no better than other water¹

Bartholomew Joye denied the necessity of confessing to a priest, and Anthony Ager stated that

God is in no place made by men's hands.

There is little in such beliefs to distinguish these from what might be termed orthodox Lollardy.² Such statements, however, came to light as part of the Prebendaries' Plot against Thomas Cranmer and this in itself is illustrative of the growth of religious tensions in the Diocese following the onset of the Reformation. There is little doubt that at this stage the Archbishop was moving towards the left. In 1537 he had complained of the actions of conservative justices towards supporters of the 'new doctrine';

It is everywhere within Kent spoken and murmured
that the people do not apply themselves to read
God's word, for fear of your threats at sizes
and sessions³

and if the adherents of these ideas were regarded sympathetically by the Archbishop, they also benefited from the protection of his commissary, Christopher Nevinson, who permitted the future sectarian and martyr, Joan Boucher, to live under open arrest in the house of the Canterbury radical John Toftes, and who finally released her on the grounds of insufficient evidence.

1. J.S.Brewer, ed., Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII, London, 1864, Vol. XVIII, Pt. 3, pp300-311; (hereafter Letters and Papers).

2. ibid.; Davis, op.cit., pp1-3.

3. J.E.Cox, ed., Miscellaneous Writings and Letters of Thomas Cranmer, Parker Society, London, 1846, p351, (hereafter Cranmer Writings).

In the same year he told the clergy assembled at Sevington that they should dispense with holy water and candles, that auricular confession had no authority in scripture, and that they should refuse to absolve those who were unable to say the Paternoster or the Creed in English.¹

That such leniency could create the conditions in which extremer attitudes might develop is reflected in Cranmer's sermon following the upheavals of 1549 when he stated

We have dissimuled the matter, we have been cold in God's cause and have winked at than punished the contempt both of God and His laws....Consider, I pray you, by this example, how certain and present destruction cometh to commonweals because offenders against God are unpunished. And whensoever the magistrates be slack in doing their office herein, let them look for none other but that the plague of God shall fall in their necks for the same²

- a different Archbishop, this, ~~from~~ the one who some years earlier was complaining of the reactionary attitudes of the justices in Kent! He had reason for concern, not only because of the example in the form of Joan Boucher of how reformism could shade off into extreme sectarianism, but also as a result of the developments surrounding the figure of Henry Hart and his followers in the Smarden-Pluckley area during the early 1550s.

Much has been written concerning the Free-will group that gathered itself around Hart that little further elucidation is needed here, especially since doctrinal aspects of this group will, of necessity, be referred to further on in this study.³ There can be little doubt that Hart and his followers were early

1. Letters and Papers, Vol. XVIII, Pt. 3, pp312-313.

2. Cranmer Writings, p191.

3. See, for example, J.W.Martin, "English Protestant Separatism at its Beginnings", in Sixteenth Century Journal, Vol. 7, 1976; Horst, op.cit., pp122-136.

separatists and it is informative that only twelve years prior to their discovery, Cranmer in more liberal mood had written to Cromwell on Hart's behalf, urging Cromwell to release Hart and his followers from an indictment for conventicling, since their only crime as far as Cranmer was concerned was that they were 'fauters of the new doctrine.'¹ With the progress of the Protestant Reformation following the death of Henry VIII, it is interesting to see an early case of radicalism developing out of reformism, a process which is analysed closely for the later period of 1590 to 1640 in the first two chapters of this thesis.

The beliefs of Hart's group were sophisticated and of no small concern in their anticipation of some of the features of later doctrinal sectarianism in the Diocese of Canterbury. Predominant amongst them was the rejection of predestinarian doctrine. John Grey admitted that

henry harte aboute bartholomewtide laste saide
and affermed in the presence of divers that ther
was no man so chosen but that he mighte dampne
himeselfe Nether yet anye man soo reprobate but
that he mighte kepe goddes comaundments.

In addition, Hart had stated that

his faithe was not growndid apon lernyd men for
all errors were broughte in by lernyd men

a view which owes as much, perhaps, to traditional Lollard rejection of the clerical monopoly on scriptural interpretation as well as anticipating the freedom of expression which was a characteristic demand and attitude of seventeenth-century sectarianism.² Of equal interest was the adoption of a form of shunning by this group, John Plume of Lenham admitting that

1. Cranmer Writings, p351.

2. BL Harleian MS421, ff133-134.

he hath herde it divers tymes affirmed as a generall
doctryne that they oughte not to salute a synner or
a man whome they knowe not¹

a statement that has prompted Dr. Davis to suggest that this was a view much in
the tradition of the 'known men' of Lollardy, and that

these sectaries were descendants of the extreme
wing of Lollardy that existed in Kent

an interpretation which has been reinforced by a recent research study.²

It was upon this view of apartness that Hart's separatism was probably
grounded. Further admissions by members of this group revealed that some of
them had not communicated for at least two years, and when one of their number,
the schoolmaster Thomas Cole, was induced to preach a sermon of recantation
before Cranmer in 1553, he singled out as an error

the stinking flower of separation or segregation
from others, as from wicked and damned men, not
worthy to communicate the sacraments, or to eat
or drink with them.³

Hart was to remain consistent to this under the general persecution of
Protestantism that took place following the accession of Mary Tudor. Prior to
his arrest, he is known to have gathered together a Free-will group in London,
demanding that membership be conditional on the sworn acceptance of thirteen
articles of faith. Even in prison, he refused to communicate with mainstream
Protestants in spite of their common persecution, a measure in itself of the
depth of his separatism.

1. BL Harleian MS421, ff133-134.

2. Davis, op.cit., p103; C.W.Clement, "The English Radicals and their
Theology", Cambridge PhD Thesis, 1980.

3. Quoted in Horst., op.cit., p124.

The Marian persecution served only to blur the distinctions between Protestant and radical. Although Kent featured only behind London in the numbers of martyrs, we shall probably never know how many of these would have been persecuted under Edward VI's administration had that monarch lived. Once again, Dr. Davis has dealt fully with the investigations of the Kentish martyrs. It is clear that John Foxe glossed over the extremer views of some of these in order to permit their inclusion in his hagiography of respectable Protestantism, and these views will be examined within the context of Chapter 3 of this study.¹ Once again, geographical distribution is of interest here; the parishes of the martyrs, where known, and those which feature as areas of dissent in Archdeacon Harpsfield's Visitation of 1557 are shown on Map 2 overleaf - the predominance of Wealden parishes is yet again striking.

The development of Protestantism and the growth of tensions within such a religious framework with the growth of Puritanism in the first two decades of Elizabeth I's reign, have, as far as Kent is concerned, been discussed and observed by Peter Clark in his study of the county from the Reformation to the Restoration, whilst the implications of such tensions at parochial level have been analysed with considerable scholarship in Professor Collinson's study of the Wealden parish of Cranbrook.² Decisive in one sense for the shaping of Puritan forces in the Diocese during Elizabeth's reign was the elevation of Archbishop Whitgift following the fall of the more latitudinarian Grindal. Indeed, Peter Clark sees this as crucial;

Thus John Whitgift's entry to the see of Canterbury could not have come at a more critical time. By 1583 few parts of the diocese were untouched by

1. Davis, op.cit., pp105-209, 123-129; J. Foxe, The Acts and Monuments, 1877 ed., Vol. VIII, p384.

2. Clark, op.cit.; P. Collinson, "Cranbrook and the Fletchers" in Reformation Principle and Practice, ed. P. N. Brooks, London, 1980, pp173-202.

nonconformity, with the situation most acute in the Weald and East Kent.¹

One might wish for a closer definition of exactly what is meant by 'nonconformity' but it is significant that the two areas mentioned are precisely those in which later extremism was to flourish. Whitgift's insistence in 1584 that the Kentish clergy should conform to a set of articles approved by the Queen in the previous autumn, particularly to the demand for consistent and close use of the Prayer Book, provoked a reaction from those gentry with strong Puritan inclinations, and the episode ended in a major row between them and the Archbishop, implications of which can be seen in Chapter 1 below.²

This, then, in consciously abbreviated form, was the general background of religious dissent and tension in the Diocese of Canterbury prior to the period analysed in this study. If Peter Clark's statement that

it is possible to date the origins of many of the separatist congregations in Kent from the last decade or so of Elizabeth's reign³

clearly requires closer scrutiny, it cannot be denied that, in common with other parts of England, the 1590s opened as a decade with serious religious problems and definable opposition to the official religious policy of the government, and the relationship between this and the development of separatism within the Diocese in the seventeenth century forms the heart of the first two chapters of this research study.

What is clear, if only from a glance at the two maps presented above, is that the Weald of Kent provides fertile ground for students of Lollardy, emerging Protestantism, separatism under Mary Tudor, Puritan nonconformity in the

1. Clark, E.P.S. , p169.

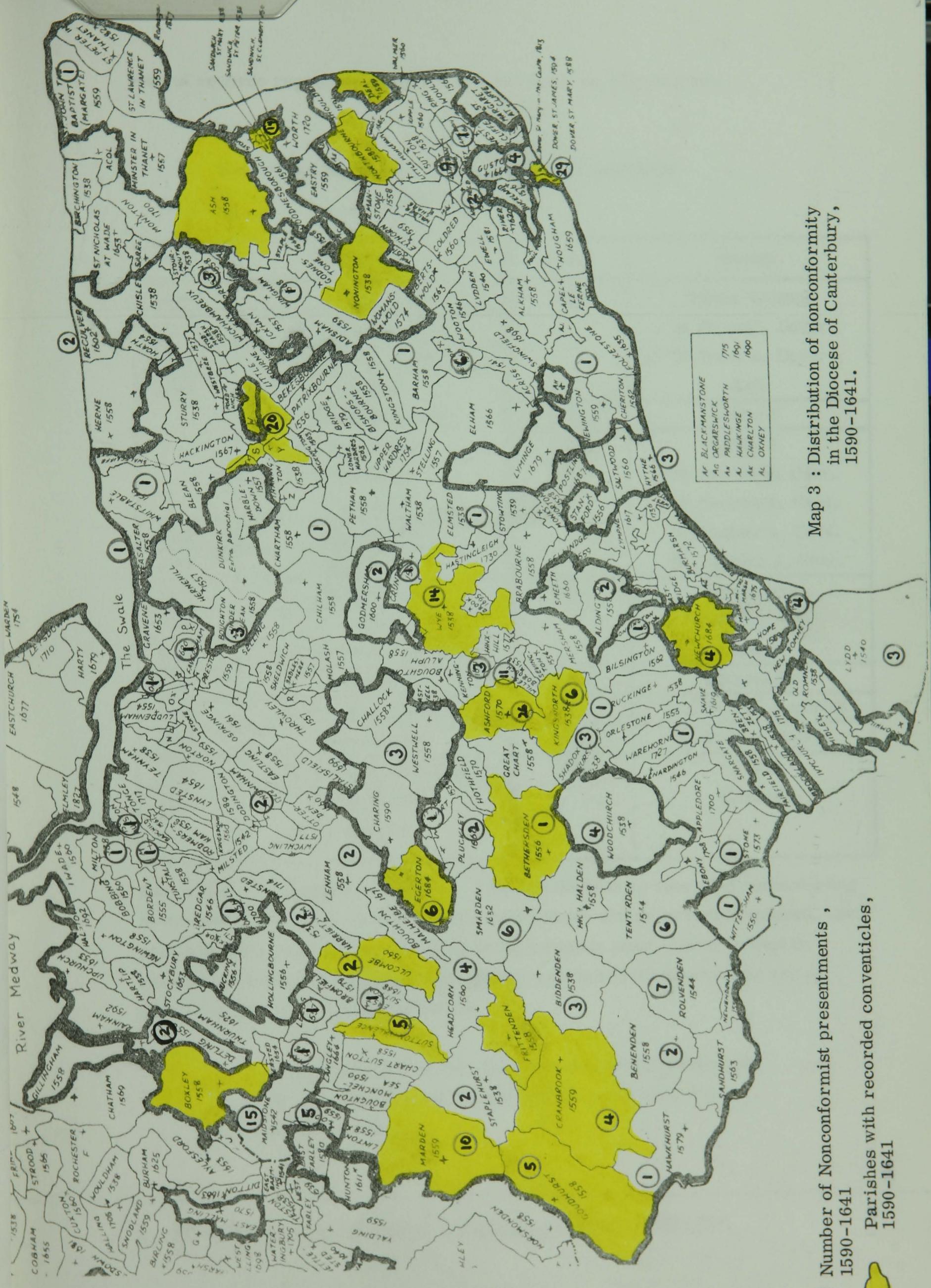
2. BL Lansdowne MS42, ff185-186, MS43 f7.

3. Clark, E.P.S. , p178.

reign of Elizabeth I, separatism under Charles I, and the birth of Dissenting Churches during the Interregnum and thereafter. The existence of identifiable dissent in such an area has attracted the attention of Professor Everitt, disposing him to ask the fundamental questions 'in what types of rural community did Dissent tend to find a foothold?' and whether there is any 'relationship between the differing species of local society and the proliferation of Dissent in certain well-defined areas, or its relative absence in others?'¹ He continues by remarking that of the Nonconformists in Kent as revealed in the Compton Census of 1676, a total of some 60% were to be found in the Weald, concluding that the characteristics of Wealden parishes fostering Dissent were their above-average size, paucity in terms of subsidiary chapels, scattered nature of settlement patterns, the relative weakness of the manorial structure, Wealden gentry being predominantly of the lesser sort within the county community, and the problems of the actual exercise of control in an area of dense woods, poor roads, and ill-defined boundaries, a conclusion that has received support from Margaret Spufford following her anatomy of the Cambridgeshire parishes of Orwell and Willingham.²

Certainly a study of Map 3 overleaf would tend to lend credence to Professor Everitt's suggestions as far as the Weald is concerned, although it is, of course, necessary to define what is meant by 'Nonconformity' as recorded on the map. In this instance, the records from which these figures have been extracted are the Act Books for the Canterbury Diocese held in the Cathedral Library, and the Visitation Records kept both there and at Lambeth Palace. The Act Books for this Diocese in particular are fairly comprehensive in recording offences against ecclesiastical discipline from 1560 onwards through to 1641, and in terms of numbers run into over a hundred volumes. A study of both these

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1. A. M. Everitt, 'Nonconformity in Country Parishes' in Land, Church, and People, ed. J. Thirsk, Agricultural History Review Supplement, 1970, pp178-199.
 2. M. Spufford, Contrasting Communities, Cambridge, 1974, pp314-315.



Map 3 : Distribution of nonconformity in the Diocese of Canterbury, 1590-1641.

14 Number of Nonconformist presentments ,
 1590-1641
 Parishes with recorded conventicles,
 1590-1641

sets of records reveals the existence of the following conventicles:

Table 1
Recorded Conventicles in the Diocese of Canterbury
1590-1641

Date	Parish	Date	Parish
1590	Wye	1626	Sutton Valence
1591	St. George's, Cant.		St. James', Dover
1598	St. James', Dover		St. Mary's, Dover
1599	Linton	1627	Ash
	Sutton Valence		Ashford
	Frittenden	1633	Ashford
	Newington		St. Martin's, Cant.
Ashford	St. George's, Cant.		
1602	Goudhurst	St. Andrew's, Cant.	
1604	Cranbrook	St. Dunstan's, Cant.	
1607	Newchurch	1635	Kingsnorth
1608	Wye		Nonington
1609	St. Clement's, Sandwich		Ulcombe
1612	Ashford	1636	Bethersden
1613	St. Peter's, Sandwich	1638	St. Peter's, Sandwich
1615	Northbourne	1639	St. Mary's, Dover
1618	St. Peter's, Sandwich	1641	Deal
1624	Sutton Valence		Marden
	Egerton		

Such a list is in no sense definitive. Although there is no record of conventicling in the Diocese between 1560 and 1590, conventicles almost certainly existed, the parish of Cranbrook during the 1570s being a case in point, and it is well to remember Professor Collinson's cautionary note with reference to the use of official ecclesiastical court material;

The reliability of the official record is compromised
by a fallible system for the detection and correction
of defaulters. ¹

1. P. Collinson, The Religion of Protestants, Oxford, 1982, p199.

The same criteria can be applied to Table 2, which records the extracted cases of nonconformist behaviour in the Diocese for the same period.

Table 2
Presentments for Nonconformity in the Canterbury Diocese
1590-1641

Year	Objections to Prayer Book	Refusing Baptism	Going elsewhere for sermons	Refusing to be churched
1590-1599	8	3	14	1
1600-1609	4	3	14	2
1610-1619	6	0	16	2
1620-1629	5	4	4	5
1630-1639	16	2	61	3
1640-1641	3	0	5	0
	Remaining covered	Refusing to kneel/stand	Stated objection to non-preacher	Conventicle
1590-1599	2	1	1	8
1600-1609	9	9	1	5
1610-1619	8	23	4	4
1620-1629	7	26	5	7
1630-1639	11	15	1	11
1640-1641	0	6	0	2

What emerges from both these sets of figures is that, even when the statistical limitations mentioned above are taken into consideration, there was an identifiable increase in dissenting activity during the decade 1630-1639, a phenomenon which must be at least in part explicable in terms of the ascendancy of Archbishop Laud. Equally, it must be stressed that, within the framework of this study, not all those who refused to stand at the Creed, or 'ran to sermons', or objected to the Prayer Book, or attended conventicles, were separatists, potential or otherwise, and it would be Laudian to see these figures as the collective tip of an enormous iceberg of religious radicalism.¹

1. S. Foster, Notes from the Caroline Underground, Connecticut, 1978, pp11-13.

Chapter 1 : Conventicles and Nonconformity in the Diocese of Canterbury,
1590-1625.

The emphasis throughout the first two chapters of this study on conventicles is arguably merited for not only did contemporary authorities see such assemblies as the embodiment of schismatic tendencies at a parochial level, but also, perhaps more than any other form of religious activity between 1590 and 1640, it was the conventicle and its evolution or development which contains the key to an accurate understanding of the religious tensions that dominated this period.

The first conventicle to appear in the Act Books for Elizabeth I's reign is that at Wye in 1590. The wife of Thomas Hudson was presented

before the Archbishop at his visitation for going from her parish church and for going to private conventicles and was never called as yet to our knowledge.¹

Such behaviour can only be appreciated, perhaps, when placed in the context of what had been taking place in the parish during the 1580s. Opposition to aspects of the established church first emerges in 1578 with a series of presentments for non-attendance of what transpires to be a Catholic group under the leadership of Sir Thomas Kempe and his wife. Absenteeism gradually gives way to a more confident assertion of catholicism when, in 1581, William Nightingale was presented for

perswading certen to wyth drawe them selves from this Religion nowe by her majestys hyghness stablished sayeng our mynysters ought to be marryed to their bookes and not their wyves and that there were learned fellowes come forth of france would sett our scholars to schole or the lyke.

1. Canterbury Cathedral Library (hereafter CCL) x-3-4 f44.

and this group, expanding in numbers, dominates the churchwardens presentments for the next five years.¹ In 1587, a series of further citations suggests the opening of a campaign of criticism of a non-catholic kind, although how much of this can be imputed to the development of definable hostility towards the catholic community in Wye resulting from a combination of the latter's overt religious attitudes and the possible increase in fears of the consequences of growing belligerence on the part of the Catholic powers abroad is impossible to say.² However, it may be suspected that, given what was to follow over the ensuing seven years, Samuel Mercer's statement that

one were as good bee at the alehouse as to bee at church to hear a minister read the service which is not a preacher

was more than a mere piece of popular scoffing, a view given credence by Thomas Hudson's wife's refusal to sit in the pew that had been newly constructed for the specific use of 'childwives', and by William Austen's

reading a chapter in the tyme of the delivery of the sacramental bread in the tyme of the communion being by one of the churchwardens forbidden.³

Suspicious that a 'godly' element was developing within the parish of Wye are confirmed by a series of presentments in 1589 and 1590, and the inference is that the impetus for such behaviour was provided by what lay behind Samuel Mercer's statement quoted above. In 1589, proceedings were instituted against one Pemble who styled himself 'curate de Wi e'

1. CCL x-1-15 ff4-5, 18, 20, 49-50, 63.

2. See the case of Robert Pett of Lynsted (CCL x-5-6 f235) who was presented in 1616 for non-reception, and who defended himself by stating that the congregation was 'unhollie' which, given the dominance of the Catholic element both there and in neighbouring Teynham, may be an example of this. I owe this point to Professor Collinson.

3. CCL x-1-15 ff304-305.

that he being curate appointed to Norton and there serving did go from thence ~~not~~acquaynting the ordinary therof and toke upon hym the service of the cure of Wie wher before and at present there was a curate lycensed and did there serve and hath also a minister and said service in the parishe churche of Eastwell, Challock and some other parishes adjoyning and hath chrystened children not wering the surplice crossed the child and the signing of the children the wordes set down in the booke of comon prayer as also in a sermon made by hym at Wie he did omytt to give her maiesties title in causes ecclesiasticall.¹

Further evidence that there was an identifiable group in Wye seeking greater edification from the priest than was available in their own parish is likewise supplied by a presentment from the parish of Aldington concerning the communion service held there on September 21st. The minister of Aldington was Mr. Jessup, who clearly was no conformist since he had already been presented by his own churchwardens for refusing to wear the surplice or to use the sign of the cross in baptism, and for unlicensed preaching. On the Sunday in question, he admitted at least eight strangers to the Aldington communion service of whom five came from Wye, the Swann family accounting for four of these. Moreover, John Titherton of Wye had taken his child to Godmersham to have him baptised, and it is no surprise to find Robert Jessup turning up there in the following year. The Godmersham churchwardens were duly charged

that they in the absence of ther mynyster have suffered one Robert Jessup to preache and say the divine service in the parish church ther the said Jessup having no lycence to preache or to serve the said cure they knowing or at least have heard say the said Jessup was inhibited to serve any cure within the said diocese and further they

1. CCL x-8-11 f164; was this the same 'Pemlie, a minister in Kent' who was savagely punished by the Star Chamber in 1607 for 'libel against bishops'? See W. P. Baildon ed., Les Reportes del Cases in Camera Stellata 1593-1609, London, 1894, pp341, 343.

knowe or have heard saye that dyvers of the parish of Wye have resorted to ther parish church of Godmersham being excommunicate and ther have heard divine service and have ther heard the sermons of the said Jessup.

The two churchwardens concerned admitted the charges, adding that the Wye parishioners were 'dyvers', and mentioning 'Mrs Swann, John Titherden, — Buckingham' by name.¹ It is also clear that, like Pemble, Jessup was active in the parishes of Eastwell and Challock, and that preaching was a regular part of his ministry. Following this, the presentments for Wye continue and multiply. Not only did Thomas Hudson's wife attend the conventicle mentioned at the opening of this chapter, but she was presented along with sixteen others for non-attendance and for resorting to other parishes, the latter behaviour being characterised by Professor Collinson as 'tantamount to schism'. John Titherton and his wife, and Thomas Hall and his wife, were all excommunicated for absenteeism, and promptly took their children to Ashford for baptism, whilst William Swann, in spite of excommunication, turned up at the church in Wye for the sermon only, his daughters sitting contemptuously in the childwives' seats. The wife of Thomas Buckingham insisted on attending church in spite of being banned for reasons, according to the churchwardens, 'more of contempe then of devotion', a tactic this group was to repeat.²

That there was a more serious side to such behaviour was emphasised by the assertion of Hugh Evans, a glover, that

there is heresies and errours in the booke of comon
praier

and that the Archbishop of Canterbury was 'a dunce'. Such threats to discipline were likewise confirmed by the behaviour of Thomas Cocke, Richard Swann, Thomas Buckingham, Thomas Hudson, and William Austen, who openly mocked

1. CCL x-8-13 ff4, 6, 94, 114.

2. Collinson, op.cit., p212; CCL x-3-4 ff44, 53-54, 57-59, 61, 65.

the minister, Henry Wood, and the wording of the citations when they were read out in court, and who began to attend church apparently with the aim of defying the sentence of excommunication placed upon them and of bringing the service to a halt.¹

By 1591, the Catholic presentments have virtually faded into the background in the face of this phenomenon. Not only were there forty-seven presentments for non-reception of which only three are known to have been recusants, but both John Collombene and Thomas Hudson were involved in a controversy with the minister over baptism, the former objecting to the use of the cross and threatening the minister that if he used it during the baptism of his child, he would do so 'upon your owne peril', and the latter refusing to bring his child to baptism until there was a service with a sermon. Collombene's wife compounded her husband's attitude by going

abroade in the market-place and other places the Thursday after her childe was baptised and before she was churched as wee think it was done rather in contempt of good order and of new fangledness then for anye neede she had to travel abroad.

In the meantime, the Swann family continued to tramp to Godmersham accompanied by the Hudson family, William Swann stating that he would 'heare Mr Wood as lyttel as he maye'.²

Such behaviour continues until 1594. The conventicle attended by Thomas Hudson's wife in 1590 was thus only part of a general series of pieces of evidence suggestive of the development of definite religious tensions operating here at a parochial level. The sources of these tensions are more difficult to assess. Criticisms of ceremonial, especially the superstitious elements involved in the churching of women, which ceremony was exposed to some ridicule at this time by, amongst others, the separatist Henry Barrow, and the clear demands for a

1. CCL x-3-4 ff66, 70-72.

2. CCL c-3-4 ff84-87, 94-120, 126-131.

preaching ministry combined with the journeying to hear a godly minister preach in another parish, make it possible to see this group as active Puritans with attitudes to the state of their own church at their parish level much akin to those analysed in Cranbrook in Professor Collinson's notable essay, and similar activities appear to have taken place during the 1580s in the parishes of Egerton and Lydd.¹

In 1582, a collection of presentments indicate that the Egerton minister, a Mr. Pilkington, was experiencing opposition from a section of his congregation not dissimilar, perhaps, to that endured by Richard Fletcher. Henry Harte was cited for mocking the minister in public, an activity taken up with zeal by a group of wives led by Elizabeth Hull, and Henry Hudson, the parish constable, was presented for refusing to unlock the church door thereby preventing the minister from holding services, and on one occasion for saying the service himself.² The opposite pole of attraction, as in the cases of Cranbrook and Wye, appears to have been the presence in the parish of a minister of a more radical disposition than the incumbent, for, according to a fragmentary statement dated January 1582, Edward Hudson admitted to taking services and preaching sermons in the parish church in spite of his being inhibited. At the centre of the opposition to Pilkington was Alexander Parker, who was presented not only for walking out of the church immediately the minister made his entrance but also for stating that he had as much authority to say the services and that the minister was a 'papishe preste'. By August, tempers appear to have been running high. Stephen Withersden was obliged to submit himself to the Commissary over public objections he had made to the form of the service, John Hucksoft was openly abusive to the churchwardens, Gilbert Peare actually assaulted one of them in the church porch, and the sidesmen refused to endorse their presentments. The

1. L.H. Carlson ed., The Writings of Henry Barrow, London, 1962, pp462-3; P. Collinson, loc.cit.

2. It is interesting to observe another Henry Hart at work within the context of dissent.

whole affair culminated in a disgraceful episode in which Parker and Withersden locked themselves

in the churche in the nighte and used an ugly shamefull and unreverent crying and screching like an owle and a cate and fartying and pyssing out of the church windows.¹

At Lydd, the minister had to contend with the derision of Nicholas Barrow and Thomas Lyllye, but the most interesting of all these presentments concerns Thomas Heasle, who was accused of

kneeling at the communion keping his hatt upon his head saving only at the receiving of the bread and wine at the ministers hand whereat offense is given amongst the people

of refusing to have godparents at his child's baptism, and of 'noting with his pen and ynke at the sermon tyme'.²

The conventicle attended by the wife of Thomas Hudson of Wye was thus only part of a more widespread phenomenon of concern regarding the established church and there is evidence that this assembly, given his later career and the movement of the godly of Wye to the parishes in which he was preaching, was probably bound up closely with the activities of Robert Jessup. On March 13th, 1591, proceedings were initiated against this minister for

being a mynyster and precher (he) was for some causes and present occasions by the auctoritie of this court inhibited from the service of any cure or preching in any churches within the diocese of Canterbury and so is at this present inhibited and that notwithstanding he in contempt and deseate of the said inhibition since that time especially

1. CCL x-8-12 ff5-6, 12-13, 22, 63-64.

2. CCL x-8-12 ff24-26; for a closer analysis of the significance of hat-wearing in church and its relationship with nonconformity, see Appendix I.

of late hath taken upon him not only to teache children
but also to cathicize expound the scriptures and to say or
conceave prayers and that in privat houses or some one house
especially in the house of Mr Henry Finch wher he now
remayneth and abideth.¹

The patronage of edifying ministers by influential laymen was, of course, not a development peculiar to Kent. Henry Finch had already clashed with Archbishop Whitgift over the latter's policy of reaction in the face of the growing forces of Puritan impatience with the pace of reformation within the established church. In 1584, along with thirty-seven other 'Kentish gentlemen', he had had an audience with Whitgift which had done much to alienate a section of the gentry from the Archbishop, and one of the issues at stake during what appears to have been a one-sided debate was this very point that the Archbishop's disciplining of certain preaching ministers caused a dearth of preaching in the diocese. Here, then, lay all the tensions of religious controversy which were to dominate the coming century. The conventicles surrounding Robert Jessup at Godmersham, Aldington, and Canterbury were in no sense separatist in intent or purpose, or even worthy of the designation 'radical', as Jessup himself implied in his answer to the charges which had been brought against him;

he saieth he hath not neither dothe teach children,
and touching the other matters objected he saieth he
hath not neither doth use any of them otherwise than
any other privat christian may do.....²

The desire for private religious exercises as a respectable, indeed desirable,

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1. CCL x-8-14 f75.
 2. Clark, E.P.S., pp175, 289; British Library (hereafter BL), Lansdowne MS42 ff185-186; Lansdowne MS43 f7; CCL x-8-14 f75; it is interesting to note that Jessup's patron at Godmersham was Charles Scott (x-8-13 f114) who was also amongst those who had an audience with Whitgift. Such a coincidence may indicate the kind of network of contacts which is so often elusive in this area.

supplement to public religious duties was to play an integral part in the developing process of semi-separatism and eventual separatism in the decades leading up to the Civil War, a process accelerated by the over-reaction of the ecclesiastical authorities, whether under Whitgift or Laud, to these conventicles. Such assemblies were not intentionally fissiparous, even if those who attended them were in one sense setting themselves apart from the rest of the parish assembly, and they were strongly defended by the puritan minister of Eastwell, Josias Nicholls. In 1596 he published An Order of Household Instruction to aid the godly householder in the pursuit of righteousness, in which he suggested that two hours a week should be devoted to religious instruction of servants and children, whilst on Sunday

After morning and evening prayer, when you have tried your people what they have learned at church by their pastour, and called to mind the chief heades of his teaching, then it is good to make it a drinke offering, upon the pastours lessons; to teach them a point or two of the principles of Religion.¹

Six years later, following a series of clashes with the authorities, he vindicated his views in greater detail;

And thus as faithfully as I can, I have shewed how this name came up and whereupon honest and godly men have beene and are called puritans and precisians; here it followeth to be considered out these thinges, what is their offence, and the state of their cause: which may be referred to four heades 1. Scruple in the use of certain ceremonies 2. scruple in subscribing beyond the state 3. seeking for reformation of some ceremonies and of some parte of the ecclesiasticall discipline 4. the people do heare sermons, talke of scriptures, sing Psalmes together in privat houses etc, Nowe whether for these causes they be justlie called puritans and troublers of the state etc, it remaineth to be examined

1. J. Nicholls, An Order of Household Instruction, London, 1596, sig. B4.

and discussed.

adding further on

And when the same Holy Scripture exhorteth men and weomen and commandeth them to talke of God's word in their houses, and when they walke in the way; and that the same should dwell plentifully in us, in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing ourselves in Psalmes and Hymnes and Spirituall songs, shall honest men and weomen be therefore called Puritans and their godly and Christian meetings be tearmed conventicles?¹

Thus when Jessup was claiming that he was doing nothing which any private citizen should not do, or when one Reader of St. James', Dover responded to the charge of conventicling in 1598 by saying

they never assembled together in any unlawful manner or of purpose to offend any manner of way or to traduce any man or to seeme singular or to disgrace any other but in the way of simplicitie²

they were merely upholding a position which they felt to be utterly reasonable and legitimate.

Much the same can be said concerning the next group of conventicles which came to light in 1599 surrounding the labours of the itinerant preacher George Dickenson. His name occurs four times in the presentments for that year in four different parishes. In Newington in the Sittingbourne Deanery, Thomas Blackboye, one of the churchwardens, was himself presented for

that he suffered one dykenson being a person excommunicate to preache in the churche of Newington being excommunicate and not having licence to preache.

1. J. Nicholls, The Plea of the Innocent, London, 1602, pp12, 37.

2. CCL x-9-1 f5.

his defence being

that the said dickenson did there preache, certein of the parishe did bringe the said dickenson to the church to preache.

a statement that throws an informative light on the pressure that could be brought to bear on the supposed upholders of orthodoxy at a parochial level. By June, Dickenson had moved across to Linton in the Sutton Deanery, where he preached in the graveyard, and from thence to Sutton Valence, a future centre of radical separatism, where he was presented

for private preaching in Sutton after the feast of St. Peter
And Robert Peire of Harrietsham for being at the same private
conventicle with dyvers others whom we knowe not nor can
learne there names.¹

Finally he appears at Headcorn in the Charing Deanery as part of the proceedings against William Brissenden concerning the funeral of his son in October;

obiecit that he harbored one dickenson in his house and
suffered him to preche at the funerall of one Brissenden
which respondent negavit but sayth that the justices and
men of reckoning in Sussex doe uphold the said dickenson
and mayntayne him viz. Sir Walter Dove et the Lady Mont-
ague Mr Pellam and others.

An attached note dated five days later clarifies the situation;

Itm that William Brissenden of Frittenden at the burial of
his son William Brissenden at Hedcorn had procured one
Mr Boxer to have preached as he hath confessed to George
Austin one of the churchwardens, having intelligence of
diggenson his being there brought him to the house where

1. CCL x-3-6(ii) f129, x-3-10(ii) ff143-144. It is worth a passing mention that Gilbert Peare had been one of those involved in the Egerton disturbances in the 1580s.

his son deceased lay and spake to Mr Reader the curate of Headcorn to tollerate diggenson to preche and afterwards when diggenson had finished his sermon Brissenden came to George Austen to have borrowed ii^svi^d to have gyven diggenson for his paynes.

The curate then appeared and deposed, somewhat defensively,

That indeed William Brissenden abovesaid spak to him this respondent to permit the foresaid dickenson to preache at the funeral aforesaid but this repondent would not agree therunto but this respondent sayth that after he this respondent had buryed his corps and was gone home the said diggenson went into the church and ther preched as they termed yt unknown and unwitting to this respondent and altogether without his consent.¹

As in the example of Robert Jessup, Dickenson had the support of influential Puritans and was also much sought after by the members of the parishes concerned. Again, such behaviour may not have been separatist in intent, but the stress on the importance of preaching to the extent that parochial boundaries became irrelevant threatened the authority of the resident minister of the parish in question, and thus, by implication, the discipline of the established church itself.

There is little to suggest that these conventicles maintained any sort of view of the need to worship apart from the ungodly elements in the parish which was to be a striking feature of the semi-separatist and separatist conventicles of the seventeenth century. Whilst there are plenty of presentments throughout this period of those resorting to other churches in order to hear a sermon, there is little to suggest that any other motive than the desire to be 'edified' lies behind such actions, and it was not until the seventeenth century, with the emergence of overt separatism, that the concept of gathered saints can be said to be at work. Hence the conventicles inspired by Jessup and Dickenson complement the general

1. CCL x-9-1 f67 and attached note.

picture of a lively demand for the 'godly and frutefull sermon', whether it be at a nearby parish church, or churchyard, or at a private meeting of those disposed to listen which was a distinctive feature of Elizabethan Puritanism.¹ If such exercises were not an explicit act of spiritual segregation along the principle of the wheat and the tares, it is equally, however, not hard to envisage such a short intellectual step developing from these early gatherings as the looked-for reformation finally failed to materialise at national or parochial level but, on the contrary, was replaced by actual persecution from those in authority, a conclusion which emphasises, perhaps, the significance of the episcopacy of William Laud.

In the same year that Dickenson was trudging through the Weald, evidence emerges of a conventicle in the parish of Ashford. One of the parishioners, rejoicing in the name of Lactantius Padwell, informed his judges that there were certain 'disorders' taking place in his parish, presumably to illustrate that by comparison his offence of non-reception was but a slight affair. Apart from complaining that the minister was irregular in the saying of services on Sundays, and that 'artificers' ignored holy days, Padwell stated that

Robert Hall and his wyef, Thomas Hasell, Robert Hunte, the wyef of Robert Cowley, John Pane, Thomas Osborne of Ashford do use to meet at private conventicles sometymes in the house of the aforesaid Hall and sometymes at the house of the said Robert Hunte and sometymes at the house of the said Robert Cowley.

An attached note goes into more detail, but apart from adding that the minister, Mr. Fowler, was aware of this conventicle - as was the minister of St. James', Dover, of the assembly there in 1598 -, that one of its members' servants attended excommunicate, and two of its members 'did get ther wyves with child before marriage', no further light is shed on the nature of this gathering.² Two Ashford

1. For a valuable discussion of this, see Collinson, *op. cit.*, pp252-8. Such churches were not always nearby; CCL x-2-8 f160 records that Stephen Dame of Canterbury preferred to attend services at Wye, a round trip of some 20 miles.

2. CCL x-4-3 f185.

parishioners were presented in the same year for speaking against the Prayer Book, but there is nothing to tie them in with the conventiclers mentioned in Padwell's deposition. A presentment for 1602 does involve Robert Hunt, giving his occupation as saddler, and stating that he was married on a Friday 'without either service or bell tolling', whilst other members of this group, Thomas Hasell and Thomas Osborne, had signed a general testimonial in support of the Puritan preacher John Strowde in 1576 in the middle of his conflict with the Cranbrook incumbent. Although the evidence concerning attitude to marriage may suggest possible radicalism - such a view was, for example, a not uncommon Lollard tenet - the presence of the minister would tend to argue in favour of seeing this very much in the light of the other assemblies so far examined.¹

Such conventicles as these continued into the seventeenth century and eventually co-existed with their more radical, separatist counterparts, although the first assembly of the seventeenth century to appear in the Act Books, that at Goudhurst in 1602, presents something of a problem in terms of categorization. William Champion was presented for

that he mayntayneth in his house a schoolemaster called Robynson whoe hath ever since Easter last preached in his house twice every Sunday and holyday he is not licensed; he mayntayneth in his doctryne usury and saith there is no hell.²

The eclectic nature of Robynson's beliefs need not concern us here and will be examined in more detail in Chapter 3. In terms of the presentation of the evidence and trends concerning conventicling, this gathering refuses perversely to fit neatly into any general analysis, for here is a conventicle which is clearly

1. CCL x-4-5 f138; A. Peel, The Seconde Parte of a Register, Cambridge, 1915, p116; J.A.F. Thomson, The Later Lollards, Oxford, 1965, p127. It is probably fair to say, however, that Lollard opposition to marriage was more a result of general opposition to sacraments or the sanctity of church buildings than to the ceremony per se.

2. CCL x-9-3, f52.

not confined to the exercise of sermon repetition, but in which a man of substance is maintaining a private preacher on a regular basis with an implicitly alternative ecclesiological outlook. If this presentment suggests that a minor note of qualification must be adopted before accepting Professor Collinson's general thesis concerning the evolution of separatism in this area, it is perhaps fitting that supportive evidence for such caution should come from the parish which he has made very much his own - Cranbrook. In 1604, Reginald Lovell of Cranbrook was charged

for that he taketh upon him to preche (being a layman) in his howse the first Thursday in every moneth to which sermon resort divers of sundry townes therabouts.¹

Whilst there is no evidence of doctrinal radicalism here, the fact that Lovell, 'a poore, silly, puritane' according to one unsympathetic contemporary, was a layman suggests that this can be seen as a transitional conventicle, the short step from repetition of the sermon to conception of the sermon itself having been made.² On a more practical level, Cranbrook was, like most of the large Wealden parishes ill-served in terms of both communications and subsidiary chapels and hence the problem of control and accountability was not insignificant - 'the parish is very grete.....ii thousand communicants at least' complained the churchwardens there in 1592. It may well have been, then, that Lovell was in fact providing a service which was much needed from the godly point of view, and which was thus not separatist except by implication. There is, however, a danger in focusing exclusively on the conventicle as an expression of dissatisfaction with the ecclesiastical status quo. Whilst there is little evidence, for example, to suggest that the assembly at the house of William Champion of Goudhurst was part of wider dissenting trends in the parish, three parishioners were cited for

1. CCL x-9-3 f226.

2. R.P. Sorlien ed., The Diary of John Manningham, New Hampshire, 1976, p44.

arriving late for the service and for sitting down noisily, and a fourth, William Hammond, for stating that 'he would teache a dogge to say the Lord's Prayer', a statement which looks suspiciously like a criticism of a non-preaching ministry. Likewise there are presentments of related importance for Cranbrook. Apart from the dissenting tradition from Lollardy to the Marian period, the parish had been deeply cleft by the Fletcher-Strowde controversy of the 1570s so much so that the minister had asserted in a sermon in 1579 that

there were somme of his parishe that dyd swere they
would not come unto the churche untyll such thynges
were brought to pass that they had devysed.

a statement foreshadowing the far greater problems faced there by Robert Abbott in the 1640s.¹ When Archbishop Grindal intervened on Fletcher's behalf and prevented Strowde from preaching, he was subjected to petitions testifying to Strowde's godliness, as has been seen. Eventually, Strowde was succeeded on his death by Dudley Fenner, who was possibly a remote forebear of the future Egerton separatist, a curate with clear Presbyterian sympathies. Of more concern to the authorities, perhaps, was the kind of threat to parochial order that the Cranbrook episode signified - 'what broile and contention hath Fenner made at Cranbrook, and all the rest likewise in their several cures?' - and, given the incidents mentioned above at Lydd and Egerton, such concern was not necessarily
²unjustified. In 1594, a servant of the wealthy clothier Richard Jordeyn, had candidly refused to enter the church during a service of baptism and in 1603, just prior to the unearthing of Lovell's conventicle, six parishioners were presented for

going out of churche in the time of divine service and
preching and for making there abode in the churchyard
or towne all the time of praiers and preaching.³

1. CCL x-3-5 f133, x-3-10(ii) f216, x-2-2 f58; BL Stowe MS184, f27.

2. Peel, op.cit., p235.

3. CCL x-3-8 f95, x-4-8 f2.

It is against this background and general process that Reginald Lovell's conventicle should perhaps be seen. Where Lovell's conventicle appears, perhaps, as more significant than that at Goudhurst is in the difference between the two. The phenomenon of a man of substance keeping or maintaining a chaplain in his house for edification was not unusual, and thus William Champion, regardless of the views which were reportedly held by his chaplain, was conforming to a known tradition. Lovell's conventicle was altogether different for it was he, a layman, who was doing the preaching and providing an alternative religious focus in potential opposition to the parish church.

The concept that there is evident development of conventicling away from the relatively innocent practice of repetition or catechizing as exemplified by the assemblies of the 1590s towards some form of semi-separatism receives some support from the presentment of a Newchurch parishioner in 1607. William Johnson was reported for

using some unseemly speeches against the booke of
comon prayer and also for suffering some unlawfull
assemblyes at his house against the saide booke.

The activities of this conventicle were clearly not restricted to simple edification but incorporated dissent and nonconformity both privately and in public - Johnson's wife was presented in the same year for refusing to kneel at the Easter communion service.¹ Hence, there would seem to be a significant difference between this gathering and those already examined. Hitherto, the emphasis has been on preaching and other exercises appear to have grown incidentally out of that central feature. In complete contrast, the Newchurch conventiclors are meeting as a direct result of their scruples touching the liturgy and the implication of the presentment is that they were moving towards some form of alternative ecclesiology. Contempt for the Prayer Book in particular, and church ceremonial in general, was, as Table 2 above has proposed, not confined to Newchurch.² It

1. CCL x-9-6 ff12, 14.

2. See above, p14

had emerged in one of the presentments during the Wye disorders already noted. The great difference, however, was that the godly of Wye were content to tramp to other parishes where they could be satisfied within the existing ecclesiastical framework; there is no suggestion that their conventicles aimed at any extra-ecclesiastical or unorthodox substitutes. The absence of non-attendance presentments accompanying the discovery of William Johnson's assembly in Newchurch makes it difficult, even when the various inconsistencies of offence recording is taken into consideration, to identify this group as separatist or even semi-separatist, although it was clearly involved in a kind of rationalizing nonconformity that was eventually to lead to rejection of the established church as a 'true' church and thus to open separation in the 1630s.

In 1608, a conventicle was operating in Wye again, this time, it would seem, around the figure of Josias Nicholls. A group of twenty-one parishioners were presented for absenteeism, and the churchwardens were cited to appear in order to find out

what persons doe use to resort to Mr Nicholls the
scholemaster there his house and there to meete
and to make prayer as yt is reported.

and an attached note states that

there are private meetings for prayers and conventicles
used in the howse of Mr Nycholls a scholemaster.

In addition, one of the churchwardens was represented for permitting an itinerant preacher, probably unlicensed, to preach in the church at Christmas.¹

Fortunately, the fact that the central role in these events was played by Josias Nicholls makes this assembly somewhat easier to categorize, for Nicholls was not a separatist. Suspended twice during the 1580s for refusing to subscribe to Whitgift's articles and for rejecting the use of the surplice, he was again

1. CCL x-4-1(ii) ff104-106, 126.

deprived in 1604 following the publication of The Plea of the Innocent. The moderate tone of this work reflects the dilemma facing the temperate critic of the contemporary religious scene in the first decades of the seventeenth century, for his book was attacked from the left by William Covell, an avid supporter of Hooker's Ecclesiastical Polity, and from the right by the separatist Henry Ainsworth. Deprived of his pulpit, Nicholls resorted to teaching; there is thus little evidence to surmise that the meetings at his house were intentionally schismatic. Equally, however, they were in all likelihood not exactly comparable to the gatherings attended by Thomas Hudson's wife in 1590.¹ Following his suspension in 1604, Nicholls may have collaborated with Thomas Whetenhall of East Peckham, whose forbears had gone into exile during Mary's reign, in the publication of a forthright attack on aspects of the established church in 1606, for in 1607 both their houses were searched and the work proscribed at Bancroft's bidding. Nicholls was living outside Maidstone at the time of the conventicle presentment from which it may be surmised that he retained his property in Wye in spite of residing near the Whetenhall family.² In their approach to his publication, and indeed to his career, the ecclesiastical authorities committed a serious error of judgement which they were to repeat with graver consequences under Laud in the 1630s. In concentrating their attacks on moderate nonconformists amongst the puritan ministers they ran the risk of forcing their targets to adopt an extremer position than in fact they might otherwise have held and, more seriously, of diverting attention away from the very real and potentially schismatic radicalism which was eventually to turn the English Church upside down.

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1. W. Covell, A Modest and Reasonable Examination of some things used in the Church of England, London, 1604, pp3-5; H. Ainsworth, Counterpoysion Considerations Answered, London, 1608, III: 190-192; P. Clark, "Josias Nicholls and Religious Radicalism", in Journal of Ecclesiastical History, 1977, Vol. 28, No2, pp133-153; C. H. Garrett, The Marian Exiles, Cambridge, 1938, pp324-325.
 2. Clark, loc. cit., p149.

The first specific mention of a separatist conventicle in the Diocese of Canterbury occurs in the records concerning the parish of St. Clement's, Sandwich. In 1609, it was reported that there was

one William Talbot that gooth to private meetings
as prayer or some other exercises but whether wee
knowe not and coming not att church.¹

The wording of this presentment is important for just as the presentment of the Newchurch parishioner was the first to link publicly stated objection to the Prayer Book with attending unlawful assemblies, so the citation of William Talbot is the earliest extant presentment which specifically links conventicling with refusal to attend the orthodox parish assemblies. Hitherto, private and public religious duties have been deemed compatible, even desirable, by the conventiclers examined; this is the first occasion when it would appear that the private conventicle has been adjudged preferable to the public act of worship.

As with the Cranbrook conventicle of 1604, this evidence has to be set against a general background of dissent visible in Sandwich which was ultimately to result in open separatism both in terms of emigration to the New World and of the establishment of sectarianism at home. Although, unlike the Wealden parishes, Sandwich was neither prominent as a centre of Lollardy or opposition to the Marian regime, there had grown up there towards the end of Elizabeth I's reign what might, with hindsight, be seen as critical attitudes, especially in the parish of St. Peter's. As early as 1577, twenty-seven parishioners were refusing to communicate, and this form of behaviour was to be repeated at the turn of the century, as Table 3 overleaf indicates;

1. CCL x-2-5 f156.

Table 3
Presentments for absenteeism in the Sandwich parishes
1570-1610

Year	St. Clement's	St. Mary's	St. Peter's
1570-1574	0	0	9
1575-1579	0	2	28
1580-1584	3	15	20
1585-1589	0	4	17
1590-1594	1	8	4
1595-1599	0	3	3
1600-1604	95	41	40
1605-1610	15	0	1

In addition, four of the thirteen St. Peter's parishioners presented for non-reception in 1584 were attending the Walloon Church in Sandwich, whilst in 1601 the St. Mary's churchwardens were charged with failing to present those who remained excommunicate.¹ It must be admitted that those who failed to attend church cannot necessarily be assumed to be doing so for what might be termed 'puritan' reasons. Equally, it has been forcefully argued that an increase in the number of parishioners presented for absenteeism may reflect little more than a corresponding increase in the zeal of those whose task it was to keep a check on such things, either through personal commitment or in response to a tightening up of discipline imposed from above.² Hence these figures, especially those for the years 1600-1604 must be treated with caution, although there is also some evidence of more specific unrest during these years existing alongside this generalised picture. In 1604, for example, John Kennyt, a cobbler was

1. CCL x-1-16 ff25, 148, 158, x-2-5 ff140-156, 166-191, 201-204, x-2-5(ii) ff2-3, 14.

2. A. MacFarlane, Reconstructing Local Communities, Cambridge, 1977, p193; for the implication that long lists of absentees tended to suggest an identifiable element of nonconformity, however, see F. G. Emmison, Elizabethan Life: Morals and the Church Courts, Chelmsford, 1973, p76.

presented for

abusing and disturbing our parson Mr White in his
ministry, revyleing and calling hym Atheiste, heretique,
schismatique, seditious teacher, inordynate lyer...

an outburst which he was to repeat three years later. In 1610, he was once
more in trouble with the authorities for a rather more explicit attack on the
Prayer Book in which he affirmed

openlie in a shoemaker's shoppe in our parishe before
divers persons that it were noe matter if the booke
of comon prayer used in the churche of England were
burnt for yt conteineth nothing in yt but trumpery.

and he was not alone in his opinions.¹ In 1608, Jane Moore snatched her child
away from the minister during the baptism service directly the minister attempted
to sprinkle it and before he had had a chance to admit it to the church and sign it
with the sign of the cross. Further presentments show that such behaviour was
neither isolated nor unsupported;

also we present the said Jane Moore for refusing to
kneele in prayer or stand for the creed, she with others
of her faction impudentlie stand in prayer and kneele
and profession giving out withall as the report is
boath this and the other disorder will bee easily
answered.

This was the background, then, to the conventicle to which William Talbot
resorted in 1609, and there is sufficient indication to suggest that this assembly
was explicitly separatist in intent and that it centred around the figure of Richard
Masterson, a woolcomber of the parish of St. Peter's.

The failure of the Hampton Court Conference followed by the publication of

1. CCL x-2-5 ff40, 92, x-9-10 f77.

2. CCL x-2-5 f139.

the 1604 Canons, which, amongst other things, laid down the penalty of excommunication for those that maintained that the Prayer Book and/or episcopal government were contrary to the word of God, provided a stimulus, it has been argued, to dissenting activity in general, and it can be no coincidence that the first potentially separatist gatherings to emerge in this part of Kent date from this period, even if Bancroft's archepiscopate was not as reactionary as had at first been feared.¹

Richard Masterson's connection with the exiled church in Leyden under the leadership of the seminal separatist John Robinson, can be mooted as early as 1611 when he was a witness to the marriage of Isaac Allerton at Leyden in October of that year. Eight years later he was married there himself to Mary Goodall of Leicester, and upon that occasion the witnesses were William Talbot and Masterson's brother-in-law, John Ellis of Northbourne. This establishes concrete links between these three nonconformists which can only be inferred from earlier presentments, such as that concerning William Talbot's conventicling mentioned above. In 1608, John Ellis was presented by the churchwardens of St. Peter's, Sandwich, for not receiving the communion for the space of two years, and he was cited by the Northbourne churchwardens in 1615 for being a 'Brownest'.² By the same year, Richard Masterson had openly separated from his parish church and had gathered around him a small company of like-minded people. In 1613, he was presented along with Thomas Baker and Thomas Allen

for affirming that the forme of God's worshipp in the
Churche of England by lawe established and contained
in the booke of comon prayer and administracion of the

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1. Watts, *op.cit.*, p41; J. M. Potter, "The Ecclesiastical Courts in the Diocese of Canterbury", unpublished MA Thesis, London University, 1972, pp28, 125; P. Collinson, The Elizabethan Puritan Movement, California, 1967, pp441, 460, 465.
 2. E. Arber, The Story of the Pilgrim Fathers, London, 1897, pp162, 166; CCL x-5-7 ff120-121, x-2-5 f132.

sacraments is corrupt and unlawfull worshipp and repugnant to the scriptures and that the rites and ceremonyes in the Church of England by lawe established are wicked antichristian and superstitious and suche as religious godlie men cannot neither maye with any good conscience approve.¹

and his attitudes and activities were eventually brought to the attention of the Privy Council as a result of a letter to the Lord Privy Seal, who was also Warden of the Cinque Ports, from the Sandwich clergy, in which they complained

of many notable sects and heresies there spredd and receaved amongst the people, by such as have recourse unto the towne of Amsterdam and other partes beyond the seas...

the main 'sowers of these sectes' being Richard Masterson, his son, and John Ellis.²

By 1619, it is fairly clear that Richard Masterson, John Ellis, and William Talbot were resident in Leyden as members of Robinson's community. It is sufficient testimony to this church that it was not subject to the same internal dissensions and divisions which seem to have bedevilled English expatriate churches from Mary's reign onwards. In 1620, under the leadership of William Brewster, a section of the church set sail for the New World, although it remained in close spiritual fellowship with the Leyden remnant until Robinson's death in 1625. Amongst the original 'Pilgrims' were other Sandwich parishioners, James Chilton and Moses Fletcher. It is not clear whether any links existed between them and the activities of the Masterson conventiclers, but both men and their families sadly set foot on New England soil all too briefly, dying of the 'general sicknesse' that swept through the Mayflower in December 1620 as the ship lay at anchor in Cape Cod. Nine years later, Richard Masterson and his family

1. CCL x-5-7 f59.

2. Acts of the Privy Council 1613-1614, pp304-305.

followed on to Plymouth and disappear from view, John Ellis and William Talbot remaining at Leyden.¹ Even without the proven connection with John Robinson, the wording of the presentment of Richard Masterson quoted above would have been sufficient to identify the theological and ecclesiological direction that he and his Sandwich conventiclers were taking. The stress placed on the positive inadequacy of the Prayer Book as being 'repugnant to the scriptures', and the clear identification of the services of the established Church with 'antichristian' tendencies are the hallmarks of the development of dissenting doctrines which were eventually to harden into Congregationalism, of which movement, of course, John Robinson was one of the primary exponents and defenders. Hence, Masterson's conventicle represents interesting confirmatory evidence on a parochial level of how, in one instance, the genealogy of later dissenting churches may have stood. For the moment, however, Independency lay in the future.

The Sandwich dissenters examined above, when presented with the fundamental problem of co-existence with a national church which they felt to be increasingly anti-Christian, solved their dilemma by physical and geographical separation, just as their Protestant predecessors had done during the Marian persecution. In both periods, however, there were equally many more who would not, or could not, emigrate and thus chose to stay behind. During the reign of Mary Tudor, the choice for these lay between 'turning and burning'; if the threat of martyrdom had receded somewhat by the first decade of the seventeenth century, at the stake at any rate, there remained the question of conscience as to which was the proper approach to the matter of the established church. It is interesting, though doubtless fruitless, to speculate on the tensions that might have operated within parishes well before the 1640s had the New World not been available as a kind of safety-valve. In 1612, the last time in which an Englishman was actually burnt for his religious beliefs, conventicling reappeared at Ashford.

1. C. E. Banks ed., The Planters of the Commonwealth, Boston, 1930, pp49-50; Arber, op.cit., pp374-376, 274; CCL x-2-5 ff153, 161.

Daniel Robins was presented for non-reception for two years and for standing as an excommunicated person without seeking to be absolved. On December 3rd, he appeared before the ecclesiastical court and deposed that

he hath not byn at devyne servyce these two years last past but within the sayd tyme hath together with one Pett a weaver and other excommunicate persons of Ashford assembled together at severall tymes and in severall houses and there they have together used certen prayers and receaved the sacrament of the Lord's supper together after theyr manner by drynkyng of a cup of wyne together.¹

The administration of sacraments within an extra-parochial assembly is not without historical precedent - the Plumber's Hall congregation of 1567 had celebrated communion amongst themselves to the undisguised horror of the authorities - and it is possible that such behaviour may have had practical rather than doctrinal reasons behind it. However, within the context both of developing dissent and nonconformity within the parish of Ashford, this conventicle is of obvious interest, even if the poverty of evidence makes it impossible to determine exactly what kind of assembly this was. It may have been separatist since, apart from alternative ecclesiological attitudes implied by the holding of a private communion service, its members had been excommunicated for contumacy following their failure to account for their non-attendance at their parish church. It is also possible that the church's weapon of excommunication might, in this instance, have been the decisive factor in formulating an answer to the dilemma facing the godly at home in that, by casting them out of the parish assembly, the authorities might have been making their minds up for them. In his study of Elizabethan Puritanism, Professor Collinson has observed

The 'meeting of the godly' was liable to become a conventicle, if not the nucleus of a sect,

1. CCL x-5-5 ff173, 184.

wherever the godly were deprived of a preaching minister or for any other reason alienated from their parish church.¹

and this statement is given an interesting edge when the deposition of the churchwardens of the parish of Headcorn is taken into consideration concerning one of their more radical parishioners and his following during the late 1620s;

for excommunication, they waygh it not but make a mockery and rejoyce at it for they are glad to be excommunicated out of the church in regard they never had any zeal to it.²

What cannot be evaded is the fact that of all the conventicles recorded in the Act Books or Visitation records, this assembly at Ashford is the only one in which mention is made of the celebration of communion. By the 1630s, private baptisms and even possibly private marriages were features of the separatist conventicles in the Diocese which will be examined in the following chapter, but the mention of administration of sacraments at a conventicle of so relatively an early date is certainly noteworthy and may hint at a radicalism or tendency towards separation which otherwise cannot be asserted with any degree of confidence.

Although there is a marginal increase in the presentments for nonconformity in the first two decades of the seventeenth century, the impression gained from a study of the conventicles of this period is of relative quiescence in comparison with the last two years of Elizabeth I's reign, with the exception, perhaps, of the activities visible in the parishes of Sandwich, and it was in this port that nonconformity continued to manifest itself. Running alongside the divisive behaviour of the Masterson conventiclors was a number of non-separatist parishioners who clearly did not approve of the ministry of the Sandwich clergyman, Harim White. In 1618, Helen Field and Elizabeth Field were presented for

1. Collinson, Elizabethan Puritan Movement, p377.

2. CCL x-6-7 f148.

abusing the minister, calling him 'dumme dogge' and stating that 'he and all his hearers shall goe to the devill.' Six other parishioners were reported for refusing to receive the sacrament kneeling and William Ellwood, a wealthy clothier and vestry auditor, was cited for

on the Sunday in the night (he) enterteyneth many people of both sexes and preacheth unto them and prayeth and when they goe to prayers they (so the fame goeth) eyther put owt the candle or remove yt to another roome.

In his defence, Ellwood stated

he useth to examin his children and the rest of the family and howse have profyted and what they have learned owt of such sermons as they heard in the same daye and wherein they do not well remember the contents or meaninge of the sayd sermon he useth to instructe them accordinge to his apprehension and best remembrance and knowledge.¹

There is on the surface little here to distinguish between this statement and those made by Jessup and Reader in the 1590s. The blowing out of candles was not an uncommon way of suggesting or hinting the worst about such 'night conventicles' and although he stood accused of preaching, his excuse that he was rather explaining than expounding may, possibly be taken at face value. He was also presented in the same year, however, for refusing to kneel during the communion service, and by 1624 he was being regularly presented for absence from that particular service.² The juxtaposition of the activities of Masterson and Ellwood may, in fact, serve as valuable reminders of the dangers concomitant with rigid attempts to over-classify at this date. It is likely, for example, that one of

1. CCL x-5-7 ff209-210, x-5-7(ii) f6.

2. CCL x-5-7(ii) f99; for insinuations concerning the putting out of candles, see N. Cohn, Europe's Inner Demons, London, 1976, p19 et passim.

those who attended Masterson's conventicle in 1613 was present at Ellwood's assembly by 1618. Equally, Mary Plover, another member of the Masterson circle, was vehement in her defence in 1619 that she attended church, albeit only for the 'sermons and preachings of god's word.' The key to an appreciation of William Ellwood's activities may lie in a presentment of 1620 which cited

William Ellwood Andrewe Hache and Thomas Denne all
of our parish for disturbing our minister Mr Harim
White in his sermon by excessive laughter and other
unsufferable behaviour deriding him to his face...

in that the object of Ellwood's contempt may have been the figure of the minister rather than the doctrinal standpoint of the Church of England.¹ Equally, the conventicle at his house may also have been the visible tip of a general movement of godly dissatisfaction with the organisation of worship in the area since the minister of St. Clement's also came under fire from the supporters of the lecturer there, Richard Marston, as did the minister of St. Mary's in nearby Dover. Even though, then, there may be grounds for seeing Ellwood's gatherings as radical, especially in the light of several parallel presentments concerning parishioners refusing to have their children baptised, it is more likely that, unlike the Masterson conventicle, Ellwood's meeting was not separatist, and this ~~is given~~ credence by the fact that he applied, in 1622, to the authorities for a dispensation to attend the church of St. Mary's in Sandwich doubtless because it was served at that time by Stephen Huffam, who was himself in trouble for administering the communion to those who refused to kneel and for permitting parishioners from the neighbouring parishes to attend services there.²

That there was separatism in the true sense of the word in the Diocese of Canterbury by the end of James I's reign cannot be doubted, but the evidence suggests that it was limited, and confined largely to Sandwich and possibly Ashford,

1. CCL x-5-7(ii) ff23, 29, 99.

2. CCL x-5-7(ii) f45, z-4-3 ff14, 27, 35.

and that it co-existed with the more dominant and persistent strand of non-conformity, characterised by the activities of the Wye group, perhaps, which was clearly non-separatist in intent.

There is, thus, some evidence for those who wish to see the conflicts of Charles I's reign as developing out of the legacy of the direction, or misdirection, of policy on the part of his predecessors. However, as the next Chapter attempts to demonstrate, an overview of the whole period 1590-1640 leaves the distinct impression that the critical stage in the development of religious separatism in the Diocese was directly related to the ecclesiastical policy adopted by Charles I and the ascendancy of William Laud, and it is to this that one must now turn.

Chapter 2 : The Development of separatism in the Diocese of Canterbury,
1625-1641.

Hitherto, lack of supportive evidence has made it difficult to establish clearly the exact nature of the conventicles studied. Only Richard Masterson's gathering at Sandwich can positively be identified as separatist, although the Ashford meeting of 1612 would certainly seem to be tending in that direction as, to a lesser extent perhaps, were those at Goudhurst in 1602, in Cranbrook in 1604, and in Newchurch in 1607. The emergence of radical separatist conventicles in the mid-1620s and thereafter poses fundamental problems in terms of them and their more moderate roots. In fact, it may be that such an approach is, as Professor Collinson has suggested, mal posée such is the preoccupation of denominational and more recent studies with the genealogical aspects of Dissent, although few would agree, perhaps, with Christopher Hill's assertion that to trace the genealogy of sects is a 'sheer waste of time'.¹

A study of one of the major separatist developments in the Canterbury Diocese, however, affords insight into influences at work during the 1620s as well as more pertinently demonstrating how such separatism flowered into the full-scale institutionalized dissenting churches of the Cromwellian period and thereafter.

Dr. Nuttall has demonstrated with clarity that the dissenting churches of Kent had their foundations well-laid before the clerical ejections of 1662, and has concluded that nonconformity in Kent was

well established long before 1662 and was separatist
in origins.²

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1. P. Collinson, "Towards a Broader Understanding of the Early Dissenting Tradition" in The Dissenting Tradition, eds. C. R. Cole and M. E. Moody, Ohio, 1975, pp6-7; C. Hill, The Economic Problems of the Church, London, 1956, pxii.
 2. G. F. Nuttall, "Dissenting Churches in Kent before 1700" in Journal of Ecclesiastical History, Vol. 14, 1963, p179.

but the accurate identification of these beginnings has yet to be established. The declining influence of Archbishop Abbot at court after 1621 and the rise of William Laud may well account for increasing radicalism in terms of dissenting activity within the Diocese from the early 1620s to the outbreak of the Civil War.

Certainly, there can be little doubt about the conventicles about which Laud felt most concern as far as his own Diocese was concerned. In 1637 he wrote to his King

I must give your Majesty to understand that at and about Ashford in Kent the separatists continue to hold their conventicles notwithstanding excommunication of so many of them as have been discovered. They are all of the poorer sort and very simple soe that I am utterly to seeke what to doe with them.¹

His awareness of these assemblies is evident as are his fears as to their potential destructiveness to the kind of church order that he was attempting to establish, although, as will be shown, his assessment may have been erroneous at least in geographical terms. Whereas most studies of this nature are beset with problems of a quantitative nature as far as documentary evidence is concerned, it is fortunate that sufficient data has survived regarding these conventicles for a plausible picture of the process of separatism to be drawn, at least as far as one area is concerned.² Dominating the development of genuine religious separatism in the Weald during the reign of Charles I is the key figure of John Turner, a chandler from the parish of Sutton Valence.

In 1622, the churchwardens of the parish of Sutton Valence, situated on the edge of the Weald reported that

John Turner of Sutton Valence hath affermed the Letanie in the booke of comon praier to be

1. BL Harleian MS787 f21.

2. The exception to this is the records of the trials of some of the Wealden separatists who are known to have been brought before the High Commission.

unlawful and superstitious and that he hath not come to the beginning and greater part of comon praier for the space of two moneths at least and that one Sunday in the afternoone within this six moneths being at churche before evening praier when the minister was coming to the churche the said John Turner as also his brother Thomas Turner went out of the churche and came no more to praiers nere the churche.

He was also presented along with his wife, Giles Barrington, and Daniel Medherst and his wife for refusing to attend the communion service, and was eventually referred to the ministers of Sutton Valence and Cranbrook, Mr. Henshawe and Mr. Abbott respectively, for 'his better information and instruction', an order which makes it fairly probable that he had publicly voiced doctrinal scruple about the established church and its Prayer Book services.¹ If the authorities believed that that was to be the end of the matter they were badly mistaken since, from 1624 onwards, Turner was to become one of the main separatist influences in the Diocese.

In describing the problems facing the student of 'community history', Alan Macfarlane has written,

We often obtain only a partial description of any single life cycle. People move past our bathyscope window and then disappear into the gloom.

and in certain respects John Turner proves to be no happy exception. Gaps in the parish register make it impossible to determine the precise date of his birth, although 1593 or 1594 are distinct possibilities. Of his father, Thomas Turner, nothing is known, but the same register indicates that the family name was well established in the parish.² There is tenuous evidence to suggest that critical foundations had been laid in this family well before the 1590s. In 1557, Roger Turner was presented for refusing to join in processions and an order was issued

1. CCL x-6-4 ff21, 24.

2. MacFarlane, op.cit., p206; Kent Archives Office (hereafter KAO) P/360/1/1.

that

Turner's wife and Dreison's wife be apprehended and brought to Maidstone and that there husbands be also be warned to be there.

Alice Turner's offence appears to have been refusal to attend the Mass, whilst Joan Dreison was said to 'despise the sacraments and ordinances of the Church.' Fourteen years later, Roger Turner was once more in trouble with the authorities for

having been forbidden by the churchwardens to saye the servyce in the churche hath not ceased to saye the servyce and aske the banes synce he was forbidden.

In 1605, in a reference possibly to John Turner's mother, Stephen Bishop, the father of one of Turner's future co-separatists, was presented for saying

that there were only two honest women in the weald of our parish and only two honest women in the towne of Sutton Valence

one of which he named as 'Turner's wife'.¹ It is thus possible that John Turner grew up in a godly environment or, at the very least, in a family and an area which possessed a tradition of independence when it came to matters of conscience, although it has to be admitted that the inconsistencies of the parish register combined with the lack of will evidence has made it impossible to determine the precise relationship between Roger and John Turner.

Although the developments discussed in Chapter 1 had not left Sutton Valence untouched - George Dickenson had been present there at a conventicle in 1599 - there is nothing to assert that Turner had been influenced by any of them. Indeed, apart from the nonconformity of the rector, Thomas Tatnell, there in 1603, there

1. CCL x-8-4 f4; L. E. Whatmore ed., Archdeacon Harpsfield's Visitation, Catholic Record Society, London, 1950, Vol.2, p203; CCL x-1-11 f93, x-4-9 f53.

are no presentments to suggest any of the kind of disorders taking place as had been the case in the parishes of Cranbrook, Lydd, or Egerton.¹ Indeed, as far as John Turner is concerned, all the evidence concerning this period of his life tends to give the impression of positive conformity on his part. His marriage produced a series of children between 1610 and 1619; George, an unusual name for this part of Kent, born in 1610 but dying the following year, John, born in 1612 and surviving only two years, Dorothy, born in 1616, and Anne, born in 1619. The absence of extravagant Puritan names - Thomas Starr of Ashford had had his son christened Joy-from-Above-Hope, for example - is striking, and there is no hint of his holding any liturgical objections to the services as laid down in the Prayer Book. On the contrary, he held the position of churchwarden from 1614 to 1620, whilst his bold, neat signature at the foot of the transcripts which were submitted annually to the Archdeacon for these years hints at a high level of literacy, an impression confirmed by the fact that he was called upon on at least one occasion to write the will of a fellow parishioner, and also by his later publications.²

What transformation had thus taken place in his mind between 1620 and 1622 can only be a matter for conjecture, although the experiences of other separatists may be of value here in helping to demonstrate the gradual process of disenchantment with the existing ecclesiastical order.³ In 1624, the churchwardens of Sutton Valence stated

wee knowe none but the wife of John Turner, Margaret Turner, who hathe not been churched since she was delivered of her last childe, also John the workman

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1. CCL x-9-3 f165; Tatnell's offences included refusing to read the Litany, Epistle, or Gospel from the Prayer Book, non-use of the sign of the cross in baptism, and refusal to say the Lord's Prayer after his sermon.
 2. KAO P/360/1/1; CCL x-11-16 f103; CCL Archdeacons Transcripts 409/AC. For the importance of baptismal names, see N. Tyacke, "Popular Puritan Mentality in Late Elizabethan England" in The English Commonwealth, eds. P. Clark, A. Smith & N. Tyacke, Leicester, 1979, pp77-93.
 3. See, for example, M. Tolmie, The Triumph of the Saints, Cambridge, 1977, p28.

of Giles Barrington, Joyner, doth not conforme himself to the government of the church of England nether for divers moneths dothe he repaire to the churche, but is a conventicler in comon fame and a traducer of God's worship in England.

and this is the first clear reference to the fact that behind this activity lay a conventicle. The following year they reported that

the sonne of John Turner is yet unbaptized about halfe a yeare old as we suppose and the child of Thomas Moreland about two moneths old is also unbaptized by the minister of Sutton Valence or any other that we do knowe.

adding that John Turner and his wife, Daniel Medherst, Thomas Moreland and his wife, John, the servant of Giles Barrington, and Elizabeth Moreland

are vehemently suspected to have preaching and baptizing in their privat conventicles.¹

There is no doubt that Turner and his associates had taken the momentous step of separating from their parish church although whether this decision was prompted by the birth of a son, which thereby confronted Turner and Moreland with the problem of baptism within a church with which they had become clearly dissatisfied, or by other factors is unknown. Indeed, in her study of the Begynhof Church in Amsterdam, Alice Carter has demonstrated that precisely the opposite could happen when separatist parents started a family, and she concludes that

as the younger members of the separatist assembly grew older, and especially as the responsibilities of parenthood came upon them, they began to want traditional baptism for their children.²

1. CCL x-6-4 ff68-76.

2. A. Carter, The English Reformed Church in Amsterdam in the Seventeenth Century, Amsterdam, 1964, p56.

It is not difficult to appreciate their dilemma since few of the separatists of the 1620s can reasonably have conjectured that they were living in an age which was on the verge of being 'turned upside down.' What is important here, however, is the nature of Turner's conventicle. It has already been seen that one of the features of non-separatist godly behaviour in the 1580s and 1590s was willingness to go in search of a suitable minister to perform baptism if the resident parish priest was a stickler for Prayer Book conformity. Whilst this was undoubtedly potentially damaging to the concept of Prayer Book uniformity, it fell far short of separatism. Turner's assembly cannot be placed in the same category for it was practising private baptism combined with regular absenteeism from the parish church. If there is no evidence that its adherents had actually covenanted themselves into a formal 'church estate' at this stage, it remains a possibility that this was in fact actually the case.

In addition to this conventicle, there is clear indication that some kind of rudimentary nonconformist organisation was beginning to develop at this time in which Turner played a leading role. Tensions arising in the parish of Egerton have already been examined. In that parish in 1607, the minister, by this date, Mr. Austen, was the subject of abuse in church and was physically assaulted in an extraordinary incident in which one of his parishioners

swonge the said Mr Austen their minister in a bell
rope up and downe in the belfry.

In 1610, Robert Butcher was presented for stating that

he had rather heere dogges howle then Mr Austen our
late resident minister preach.¹

By 1621, the parish was being served by John Lathrop, who was certainly no conformist. On May 23rd, he appeared personally before the ecclesiastical authorities to answer charges of refusing to conduct the services according to the Book of Common Prayer, and in his defence he deposed

1. CCL x-9-6 f5, x-9-10 f83.

that he preacheth sermons every sabbath day and therefore his ability of body will not permitt him to read the service also.

an excuse which evidently did not meet with much approval on the part of his judges, who caustically suggested that he might attempt to perform both aspects of his ministry in the future. In addition he was referred to the vicar of Charing for conference, usually a sign of some publicly stated objection in doctrinal terms, and the Charing minister was likewise charged to report any future nonconformity on Lathrop's part to the court. He evidently did not have to play the overseer for long, since by 1622 Lathrop had left Egerton, emerging again in 1624 in London as an open opponent of the Church of England as minister of the semi-separatist Jacob Church in London. There his latitudinarianism caused a split in the church between his own supporters, who argued for co-existence with the assemblies of the parish churches, and a more radical section who argued for total separation. Arrested and imprisoned in 1632, he finally went into exile in the New World the following year.¹ It is impossible to assess what impact his departure from Egerton exerted on the more radical elements in Egerton, and it is difficult to believe that the emergence of a separatist group there in 1623 can be totally coincidental. In that year, the new curate, John Kidd, himself no conformist over the question of licensed preaching or of wearing the surplice, informed the authorities in Canterbury of pressure being exerted on him by some of his parishioners;

Sir, whereas I have heretofore presented one John Dove of our parish of Egerton for refusing to receive the holy sacrament kneeling I desire you to adde this moreover unto the former presentment that since that time he hath used me baselie in words, calling me the servant of Baall, his words unto me were these I would be ashamed to be a servant of Baall whereuppon I asked him What Baall was and he told me The abomination of the Lord, and further charged me with the

1. CCL z-4-2 f5; Tolmie, op.cit., pp15-16.

maintayning of the lawful use of the idolatrous and
superstitious signe of the crosse in baptisme; his
consort and brother in evell John Fenner is not much
behind him in his saucie and uncivill carriage towards
me, being countenanced and animated by some of the
holy brotherhood, amongst whom the father of the fore-
named Fenner, hath of late threatened mee with a suite
at the common law for refusing to administer the
sacraments to the abovenamed irregular persons.....

Like Dove, Fenner had been the subject of a former presentment concerning refusal to kneel during the communion service, for sitting during the recitation of the Creed, and for being in general a 'repugner of the Rites and ceremonies of the Church of England.'¹ There are several interesting points concerning this letter. First, although it may be argued that this group was close to separation, Fenner and Dove had, it would seem, not as yet made the decisive break away from the parish church, and the attitude of Fenner's father points to confirmation of the suggestion made earlier that the behaviour of the orthodox representative at a parish level may ironically have played a crucial role in determining the moment of separation of offenders against ecclesiastical discipline. Second, the phrase 'being countenanced and animated by some of the holy brotherhood' stands out in that not only does it carry with it the implication that this radical group numbered more than the parties mentioned in the letter, but the term itself is significant. What has to be determined here, if possible, is whether the term is being used solely by Kidd as a descriptive word with pejorative undertones or whether he is merely repeating a phrase which these radicals applied to themselves. It cannot be denied that there was an identifiable attitude of group uniqueness in the depositions of the Wealden heretics examined during Mary's reign in the 1550s, both on the part of individual radicals such as John Fishcock of Headcorn, and amongst those who made up Henry Hart's Free-Will sect from the parishes of Lenham and Pluckley and their environs. John Plume of the former parish

1. CCL z-4-3 ff72-73 and attached note.

deposed that

Nicholas Yonge sayde that they maye not
communcate with synners

and hence it may be possible to argue in favour of a residual 'ethic of exclusivism', in Professor Collinson's phrase, upon which the Egerton radicals were calling.¹

By 1625, Fenner and his associates had clearly separated from the parish assembly for he was presented for non-attendance and non-reception, a marginal note stating that he, along with Elizabeth Adams and Lawrence Best and his wife, was a principal 'maintayner' of conventicles.² What is equally clear is that John Turner had linked up with the Egerton separatists. One of the parishioners who had attended these gatherings, Urbanus Smith, stated

that within these xii moneths last past he hath been twice in the house of Lawrence Best in the company of the said Best and his wife who were allso present John Fenner and John Turner of Sutton Valence a chandler Elizabeth Adams and many others to the number of 13 or 14 whom he now remembreth not many of them being strangers unto him, but he sayth he hath left their company these 6 or 8 moneths at the least and by the grace of god he never will frequent their company any more but saith that those three tymes when he was in their company he heard the said John Fenner at one tyme and Turner at another tyme make and conceyve prayers and read the scriptures and expound upon the same as pleased them and sing a psalme.

testimony corroborated by another eye-witness, George Austen, who added the telling detail that Lawrence Best kept a look-out in the hall of his house whilst the

1. BL Harleian MS 421 ff101, 134; J.W. Martin, "English Protestant Separatism at its Beginnings" in Sixteenth Century Journal, Vol. vii, 1976, pp55-74; Collinson, Religion of Protestants, pp252-6.

2. CCL z-4-4 f58.

conventicle was in progress, and that

ther were present which came from divers other
parishes who he remembreth not.¹

The point of contact between the Egerton conventiclers and their counterparts at Sutton Valence is, once again, difficult to distinguish. It is more than probable that the strangers whom Smith and Austen were unable to identify included some of the Sutton Valence conventiclers and it may be that kinship ties played an important part. Smith was the servant to Jacob Turner, but since the Egerton parish Register does not begin until 1684, it is impossible to show ~~any~~ concrete link between the two families. Equally, Turner and Fenner may have met through the former's peripatetic profession of a chandler.²

A month before this conventicle, John Fenner had been involved in a debate at the village of Ash with two local ministers. Along with Matthew Gilven of Westwell, Fenner had been visiting Sandwich and they had decided to stay the night with Gilven's father-in-law in Ash. As a result, a meeting was arranged in the house of John Bax between the two separatists and the ministers of the parish of Stourmouth. The evidence of this conventicle is immensely revealing and is thus worth quoting in full. John Bax deposed to the authorities on February 27th

That upon the day detected (January 8th), one Matthew Gilven of Westwell this respondents's kinsman together with John Fenner of Egerton returning homewards from Sandwich where they had been together that day rested themselves by the way at this respondent's house in Ash and having tarried a while and Richard Taylor of Staple, Elizabeth Gibbs and one goodwife Hubbert the wife of Thomas Hubbert of Elmstone and William Underhill of Stourmouth (who had been desirous of meeting with the said Gilven and Fenner for what intent he

1. CCL z-4-4 ff58-62.

2. I owe the point concerning the nature of Turner's business and the way it was conducted to Mr. Andrew Butcher.

cannot say and were informed by this respondent that on the sabothe day detected if they came they might haply find them in this respondent's house) came in also. And salutacion past on all parties after dinner they all with one assent fell to singing of a psalme, Fenner firstly a brief prayer (ex tempore) desiring of God that they might all singe their psalme with understanding or to that effect. And so after the psalme sung This respondent took a bible and turned to the 3rd chapter of the second epistle to Timothy and showed it to the said Fenner who taking it read it and this deponent thinking it to be a text directly expressing points of separation from the church questioned the said Fenner touching divers of the contents thereof whose answeres and discourse thereupon this deponent hath utterly (at least to speak to them directly) forgotten.¹

Such a detailed description of the activities of a separatist conventicle is a rarity and the piece throws up many points that require some examination. One such is the question of the lines of communication connecting separatists from the Weald with interested parties some thirty miles away. Clearly, Fenner's reputation had preceded him, but by what means can only be conjectured; it is to be regretted that there is no evidence of his activities in Sandwich given the known separatism developing there from at least 1609 onwards. Bax's deposition does throw light, however, on one possible area; in this instance, the whole question of the role played by kinship ties in the dissemination of dissent is brought to the fore. The part of family contacts as a determinant of dissent is, as Margaret Spufford has noted, a concept that 'awaits detailed study.' In his wide-ranging study of the county, Peter Clark has been moved to observe that

In an old Lollard county like Kent there was already by 1500 a strong tradition of multi-generational family loyalty to unorthodoxy.

1. CCL z-4-4 f67.

and that

This tradition was to be one of Lollardy's most valuable legacies to Kentish Protestantism.¹

It is an important claim, even if superficially the behaviour of the Grebill family prosecuted for unorthodoxy during Archbishop Warham's magna abiurata displayed the other side of the coin when it came to the question of family loyalty. There are intriguing hints in favour of supporting such a view, even if, in the final analysis, the evidence is as yet too diffuse to permit a positive adoption of the notion of multi-generational unorthodoxy. Students of Kentish history are familiar with the case of Richard Browne, for example. Browne's father, John, had been burnt for holding heretical opinions in 1511. At his martyrdom, one of the officials, according to Foxe, suggested that Browne's children should be thrown into the fire as well, 'for they would spring, said he, of his ashes'. Richard Browne went on to suffer imprisonment under Mary for his religious opinions and was only saved from following in his father's footsteps by the timely death of the Catholic queen.²

It is possible that John Fenner was related to the presbyterian Dudley Fenner, who had succeeded Strowde at Cranbrook following the death of the latter. Moreover, one of John Fenner's sons, Rest Fenner, was to become deacon of the Congregational Church in Canterbury during the 1690s, whilst one of his daughters married into the Austen family of Egerton, George Austen having been a member of the Fenner conventicle there in the 1620s. A more concrete example is afforded by the Nicholls family of Eastwell and Adisham. As we have already seen, Josias Nicholls was deprived for nonconformity in 1604, and his son, Surety-on-High attained a local reputation as the Puritan headmaster of Wye Grammer School. His grandson, Charles, became minister to the separatist congregations at Adisham, Nonington, Sandwich, and Womenswold both before and after the Restoration, whilst his great-nephew, also Josias, was one of the

1. Clark, E.P.S., p30; Spufford, op.cit., p280.

2. Clark, op.cit., pp30, 101.

original covenanters of John Durant's Independent Church in Canterbury in 1645.¹ Other examples such as the Knotts of Dover and Eythorne, the Fines of Dover, and the Prescotts of Guston, tend to lend some credence, then, to the idea that the family played a crucial role in the perpetration of dissenting attitudes over a number of generations, although there is clearly much research needed before this can be established reasonably firmly.

During the evening, Fenner held another conventicle where he expounded explicitly on the question of separation;

the said fenner of his own accord took the bible and turned to the 2 chapter of the first epistle to Peter and made some exposition upon the fifth verse of the same.²

The text in question throws valuable light on the direction in which Fenner, and by implication, his associates, were going;

But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness. (v.9).

When taken in conjunction with the text of II Timothy, which expounds on the inevitable persecution which will ensue for those who 'live godly in Jesus Christ', it becomes clear that the preoccupation of the conventicle was with its separated state both in physical and spiritual terms.

The following day, another meeting was called at, it would seem, the behest of William Underhill of Stourmouth, the parishioner who had initially been so anxious to meet with Fenner and his colleague. There are no presentments from the parish of Stourmouth concerning Underhill, although another of the conventiclors,

1. For genealogical details of the Fenner family and the Nicholls family I am indebted to Mr. Duncan Harrington and Mr. R. S. Hope respectively; KAO PRC/17/74 f341.

2. CCL z-4-4 f69.

Thomas Hubbert of Elmstone, had been reported by the churchwardens of his parish in 1609 for contending with the minister and interrupting the sermon by calling him a 'lyer'.¹ Present by arrangement were the minister and curate of Stourmouth and a dispute arose between the two groups, details of which were, once again, furnished by John Bax;

these two ministers fell to reasoning with the said fenner and gilven sometimes jointly sometimes severally about some tenents and propositions which were proposed and laid down by the said fenner and gilven in the parish of this respondent his wife and all the other said persons and in the hearing as he thinketh of many that said nothing at all, and some tooke not any notice at all of the passages. At which time and place he well remembreth diverse of the major points or a number of the positions conteyned in the schedule aforesaid were proposed by the said two layics by way of question only as he remembreth and much argument passed on each side upon the same but what the conclusions of the severall arguments or any of them were he cannot answer but in the bracking upp and dissolucion of the conference he well remembreth the said fenner in ironically and fleecing manner uttered this speech Wee would have cured Babel, but she would not be healed And therupon the said disputacion having lasted for some two houres together or thereabouts brake up and every one went his way.

The impression of chaos reigning at this assembly is, of course, revealing and it is confirmed by the statement of another witness, Daniel Rafe, who complained

there was such a confusion among them that they could understand nothing.¹

and it is possible that it was precisely this kind of unco-ordinated and undisciplined

1. CCL x-4-1(ii) f139.

2. CCL z-4-4 ff69, 73.

nature of this debate and, if it is at all typical, others that seemed so alien and potentially disruptive to the forces of order and uniformity. If Bax was not a separatist - he was presented in 1638 for resorting to other churches in order to hear sermons - Fenner and Gilven were, and the whole conventicle throws some light on the question of the relationship between those who scrupled the services of the parish church and yet chose to stay within with those who had decided that those services could be tolerated no longer.¹ This subject is implicit in Fenner's Parthian remark 'Wee would have cured Babel' for the image of Babel or Babylon was the hallmark of the evil of a 'permixt' congregation as far as separatists were concerned and it can thus be inferred that the whole question of the position of 'visible saints' within the 'carnall' multitude lay at the core of the debate in Bax's house. What is of equal interest is that amongst those present at this meeting was Elizabeth the wife of Thomas St. Nicholas of Ash, whose son was to become one of the leading figures of the Congregational Church there after the Restoration. Her deposition makes it quite clear that separatism was the key issue debated.² Depositions of others who attended, even if protestations of loyalty to the established church expressed in an Archdeacon's court must obviously be viewed with caution, show that the two radicals did not have it all their own way and thus this whole event is of some importance in demonstrating that there was a thin line which separated the two ideological camps, a line which could be crossed but which also represented a very real barrier between the two sides; although Fenner and Gilven left on a seemingly triumphant note, apart from Elizabeth Gibbs, it would appear that few had been converted to their view as a result of the whole affair.

Egerton was not the only parish to which Turner's influence had reached. Thomas Moreland, who had revelled in the prospect of excommunication, was a member of Turner's circle in Sutton Valence although he had originally come from the parish of Headcorn, where he had been presented in 1625 for

1. CCL z-4-6 f226.

2. G. Lyon Turner, Original Records of Early Nonconformity, London, 1911, p15; CCL z-4-4 f72.

not receiving the communion this Easter tyme and besides he refuses to come to our divine service and sayth it is falsery, but onely he will come to the sermon in the forenoone and in the afternoone not at all, and never will kneele in prayer with the preacher before the forenoone but squatts down in his seat most unreverently and it is to be feared he will seduce many others to his opinion, he is one of Turner's consorts of Towe Sutton who hath seduced many.....¹

All these presentments indicate fairly lucidly that the conventicles attended by these parishioners and dominated by the figures of John Turner and John Fenner, had little in common with the private exercises beloved of the Elizabethan Puritan as analysed in the previous chapter. Turner and his associates, whilst retaining certain features of orthodox ritual in their acceptance of the efficacy of Baptism, were offering explicitly what was not apparent during the 1590s, an alternative ecclesiology combined with a new theological approach to Christian doctrine. As such, these conventicles represent an important stage in the development of separatism within the Canterbury Diocese prior to the florescence of open sectarianism during the Civil War and thereafter.

In 1626, the minister of Sutton Valence came under fire from another member of the Turner family, John's nephew Warham Turner. The churchwardens reported that

Warham Turner Chandler did on Easter Day last present himself among the communicants whom the Minister admonished of an error against the book of common prayer publicly affermed by the said Warham viz. that noe man might pronounce remission of sinnes which were the wordes of the common prayer book, wherunto the Minister of Sutton Valence did then pointe the said Warham replied Is the booke of common prayer subject to the

1. CCL x-6-7 f148.

Worde or the Worde to it?¹

Eventually, when offered the chalice, Turner stood bolt upright and walked out of the church without receiving. Rejection of the concept of the power of the priest to grant remission of sins was not an uncommon tenet of Lollardy - a parishioner of Willesborough was accused on these grounds in 1472 - and it was a noted feature of Lollard confessions in the Weald during the magna abiurata of 1511.² Of John Turner there is no mention in 1626. It may well have been that he spent much of this year in Boxley, a parish just outside Maidstone, for it is at this stage that evidence becomes apparent that John Turner's thinking and attitudes were being shaped by one of the leading figures of religious unorthodoxy in Kent, Thomas Brewer of Boxley, although how these two men met remains unknown.

Thomas Brewer had been at Leyden in 1615, and was enrolled at the University there a few months before one of the major figures of pre-Revolutionary separatism, John Robinson. In June 1617, Brewer had purchased a house, the Groenehuis, in the Klegstaag, next door to Robinson's own residence, lodging with him such future giants of radicalism as Hugh Goodyear, John Bastwick, and Alexander Leighton. There he financed the establishment of a press which published works proscribed in England. In 1619, James I had had enough and induced the administration in Leyden to act. Brewer's house was raided, the garret which housed the illegal press nailed up and sealed, and Brewer arrested. As a member of the University, however, he could claim certain immunity and although he eventually returned to England voluntarily, he was finally dismissed without punishment.³ By 1625, he was back in Boxley, where he was presented along with several of his tenants, for refusing to attend the church for any of its services. The following year, the churchwardens noted

1. CCL x-6-4 f100.

2. Thomson, op.cit., pp183, 189.

3. Arber, op.cit., pp175, 195-228; D. Plooi, The Pilgrim Fathers from the Dutch point of view, New York, 1932, pp58-78.

that Mr Thomas Brewer doth comonly inveigh against the calling of Ministers of our church as comonly is reported and that the jurisdiction of Bishops is unlawful and their sumons not to be obeyed and as we the churchwardens one of this last yere and the other of this yeere heard him saye that he would spend five hundred pounds ere he would appear to their sumons or citacions, and have their conventicles with others that resort to him and hee to them as the fame is...¹

It is clear that he was in a financial position to make such a boast, whilst further presentments suggest that, like Turner's assemblies, private baptism and possibly even private marriage were features of the conventicles led by Brewer. His activities were soon brought to the notice of higher authorities by, amongst others, the Arminian minister of Maidstone, Robert Barrell. It is possible that Barrell had become rather sensitive over the issue of religious nonconformity and the role of the priesthood since in the same year one of his parishioners had publicly attacked him in the church, stating loudly that the parish church was not a sanctified church and that 'Mr Barrell preacheth false doctrine.' He was certainly not a popular figure amongst the Maidstone parishioners, both as a result of his zealous promotion of tithe suits and in his public repudiation of the Calvinist doctrine of Election.² The report of Brewer's activities reads as follows;

1. Thomas Brewer, Gentleman, who writ a book containing about half a quire of paper; wherein he prophesies the destruction of England within three years by two Kings, one from the North and another from the South. The said Brewer coming not long since from Amsterdam, where he became a perfect Brownest, and being a man of good estate, is the general patron of the Kentish Brownests who by his means, daily and dangerously increase. He, the said Brewer, hath printed a most pestilent book

1. CCL x-6-4 ff84, 96.

2. CCL x-6-4 ff97, 111, x-11-16 ff77-78, z-1-9 f29, z-4-4 f103; Clark, E. P. S., pp326, 361; Public Record Office (hereafter PRO) SP 16/424/48.

beyond the seas; wherein he affermeth, That King James would be the ruin of all Religion.

2. One Turner, a candle-maker or chandler, of Sutton Valence in Kent, preaches in houses, barns, and woods That the Church of England is the whore of Babylon and the synagogue of Satan etc. He hath many followers; and is maintained principally by the said Brewer, whose chaplain he seems to be.¹

Under such a patron as Brewer, it is not surprising to see Turner moving away from the position of puritan malcontent towards that of an influential and identifiable radical immersed in the mainstream of separatist thought and activity. Neither is it difficult to understand why the full weight of episcopal displeasure was about to descend upon both of them.

By 1627, Turner's activities appear to have taken him away from Sutton Valence to Egerton, where he was presented along with John Fenner and his wife, Edward Fenner his brother, Lawrence Best, Margery Adams, Elizabeth Bennett, Cherubim Sixweeks, Bennett Tippet, and 'one Hubberd of Great Chart', for attending a conventicle held at a house belonging to Edward Fenner. Robert Hubberd and his wife were presented in the same year by the churchwardens of the parish of Great Chart for refusing to receive communion, but the interesting feature of this presentment concerns the position of Edward Fenner.² In his defence, he maintained that he was not present at the conventicle and was unaware that his property was being used for nonconformist purposes. Whilst such a statement would normally attract reasonable suspicion as to its veracity, it is worth noting that he fell out with his older brother over the whole question of the latter's radicalism in religious matters. In 1637, Edward Fenner wrote to Laud in the form of a petition dated February 1st;

Most humbly shewing that whereas John Fenner now in prison in the Gatehouse hath many times endeavoured

1. PRO SP 16/35/110.

2. CCL z-4-4 f208, x-6-7 f241.

heretofore to perswade your Graces petitioner to separatism from the Church of England and did once by practise get him your Graces petitioner to be excommunicated And further whereas Edward Fenner father of the said John Fenner and Edward since the imprisonment of the sayde John dying hath made your Graces petitioner his sole executor The said John Fenner not prevayling with your graces petitioner for to joyne with him in separation hath theruppon maligned and sought to molest your graces petitioner And since the death of their sayd father doth threaten the undoing of your sayde petitioner and hath practised to rayse suites against him which are begunne to the great disquiett and lickely undoing of your graces petitioner whose tyme and trade are his best support Most humbly therefore prayeth your graces petitioner that his sayde brother who seemeth to be enriched since his imprisonment and doth now hate your said petitioner supposing him to bee an assistant to his late apprehension may bee restrayned from impoverishing and undoing your said petitioner.

The situation appears to have remained unresolved two years later and the whole petition is a healthy reminder that the family group was not always the nursery for the development of religious extremism.¹ Was it memories of this divisive conflict within his own family that prompted John Fenner many years later to add the following codicil to his will;

And my will is that if either my sonne Rest Fenner or my grandson John Fenner shall contend in Law one with another against or for or about anything in this my last will and testament conteyned That then I give the part and share of him soe contending unto the other and his heires.²

1. PRO SP/16/381/9 f17; SP/16/422/86 f162.

2. KAO PRC 17/74 f341; 32/54 f213. It is interesting to note that John Fenner's will contains no religious preamble whereas Edward's is prefaced with an orthodox statement of trust in the 'meritts, death and passion of Jesus Christ my Redeemer'.

Attached to the 1627 presentment is an additional note from the curate of Egerton, in which he states that John Fenner and his wife have not attended church for seven years, which, if true, would push back Fenner's separatism to the relatively earlier date of 1620, and that Margaret Adams, 'an old woman',

doth much hurt in our parish she carrieth Turner's notes in papers usually about her and where she cometh she sheweth them.¹

an interesting additional detail which helps to fill in the picture of Turner's ministry.

It was at this point that the authorities struck. Both Brewer and Turner were arrested, the latter being taken to Maidstone Prison and from thence to the Gate-House Prison in Gardiner's Lane, Westminster. In his absence, the Sutton Valence conventicle continued to function, indeed to positively flourish, probably under the leadership of Thomas Moreland. In 1628, the son of Giles Bishop was noted as having not been brought to Baptism, further investigation revealing that on July 9th, he was baptized

in the house of one John Turner of Sutton Valence by a minister, as he hath heard, of London but what his name is or who were godfathers or godmothers thereunto where any or none or whether he that baptized him were a minister or none or whether the childe were baptized according to the forme prescribed in the booke of comon praier or noe he is altogether ignorant But saith the childe, as hath been tolde him was named Micah.

Fourteen days later, an order was issued in court for the child to be rebaptized according to the orthodox liturgy in the parish church, an injunction which is unique amongst the recorded rulings in the Diocesan Act Books for this period. Of equal

1. CCL z-4-4 f208.

interest is the name of the child with its clear Biblical connection.¹

Initially, however, the action of the authorities appears to have frightened off some of the fainter spirits. Robert Bills, admitting that he had attended Turner's conventicles, was at pains to explain to his accusers that

having since that time laid open their points and discovered these tenents to some one or two learned and religious ministers of his diocese and uppon conference with them finding the said persons to be meere imposteurs and not able to prove any of their affections by any text of scripture rightly applied hee for his parte doth now utterly renounce and abandon their unlawful assemblies and doeth promise from henceforth by God's grace never to associate himself into there company againe and that he will from henceforward shewe himselfe to be a peaceable member in the Church of England in conforming himself to the observance of the rites and ceremonies thereof et submisit.

and in a similar vein Ann Adams, the servant of the wife of Giles Bishop, promised to receive the communion in the future and to 'noe more repair unto the said conventicle.'² Such minor triumphs for the forces of reaction proved to be only a temporary setback for the Sutton Valence conventiclors who, as will be seen, extended their network by the end of the 1630s.

Parallel developments seem to have been taking place in the parish of St. Mary's, Dover at this time. Between the years 1616 and 1620, eighty-four parishioners were presented for absenteeism, thirty-three for refusing to pay the church 'cesse' and fifteen for refusing to contribute towards the minister's stipend.³ Of course, it is impossible to say what proportion of the absentees were thus for

1. CCL x-6-4 f146; Tyacke, loc.cit.

2. CCL x-6-4 ff146-151, 171.

3. These figures have been extracted from the following Act Books on deposit at Canterbury Cathedral Library: x-9-13 and x-9-14.

Puritan or nonconformist scruples touching the order of service as used in the parish church. However, several of those presented - John Fines, Lawrence Knott, and Edward Goodwin for example - can be identified as active members of the Dissenting Churches that emerged in Dover following the fall of Laud and the collapse of royal and episcopal authority, an aspect of continuity which will be examined in the ensuing chapters of this study. It is interesting to note that a parishioner presented for refusing to kneel in 1613, Hopesstill Tilden, originated from Tenterden, and was later to be found at Sandwich in 1619 refusing to have his child baptized. Of those presented for refusing to kneel in 1618, one of them was a member of the Ovill family, and another of this family was likewise presented for non-reception. There is thus a further suggestion of the importance of continuity here since Reginald Ovill had been implicated in the obviously Puritan conventicle unearthed in the neighbouring parish of St. James' in 1598.¹

In 1622, the parish appears to have been split by the presence of the curate Henry Chantler. In the proceedings which were instituted against him it was stated that

he hath of late in a sermon of his reprehended such as have kneeled to prayer at their entrance into the church in the time of publick prayer or sermon whereat divers have taken offence and thereuppon have usually soe sone as they come at such tymes into the church without any reverence set them down with their hats on their heads both men and very boyes.²

The evident desire of these parishioners to pray privately on their knees upon entering the church, as distinct, for example, of the more puritan practice of the singing of Psalms whilst awaiting the beginning of the service, indicates that these parishioners were 'Prayer Book Protestants' or 'formalists', and their behaviour thus carries with it the implication that Chantler was not. In a letter

1. CCL x-5-7(ii) f23, x-9-11 f223, x-9-14 ff10-11.

2. CCL z-4-3 f14.

to Dr. Featly, the curate set out his position quite clearly;

I have spoken before of the place both of publick and privat prayer that as there is a distinction if prayer both publick and private so also there is of the place where these are to be made; publick prayer must be in a publick place and private prayer in a private place wherein it seemes I have been mistaken by some who have conceived that I utterly condemned all manner of private prayer whatsoever in a private place, whereas I intended only to reprove the abuse of it and namely in the time of the publick duties of the worship and service of god as appeareth by the reason which then brought to confirm it namely this, because it brought a confusion into the church, when some are praying, some are reading, some are talking some are sleeping where they should all together give attention unto that part of the worship of god then in hand. I spake nothing against private prayer, reading and meditation before the publick duties of gods worship begins. But when once the publick service of god is begun we ought then laying aside all private meditations to give all due reverence and diligent attention thereunto.¹

an explanation which not only clarifies Chantler's stance on this point, but also gives much-needed and telling information about the nature of parish assemblies at this time, particularly in relation to the behaviour of the congregation upon entering the church and before the service began.² That Chantler was no conformist is confirmed by the depositions of two churchwardens in 1626, when they admitted

that there are divers parishioners of the same towne that have unlawfull meetings or conventicles in that

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1. ibid., attached letter; I am grateful to Professor Collinson for his advice in the interpretation of this incident.
 2. For the full text of this letter, see Appendix IV.

parish and many parishioners there refuse to come to divine service or at least some parte thereof and usually come not untill prayers be ended and the minister in the pulpit and in dispite of the booke of common praier.

That these conventicles were connected with the unorthodoxy of the curate is confirmed by details of further proceedings instituted against him at the same time. He admitted the charges and was dismissed with the admonition

that he forbear all meetings with the townsmen of Dover tending to conventicles and that if he know or hereafter shall come to know of any such unlawfull meetings that he describe the same to this court.¹

Henry Chantler had originally been appointed to a lectureship in the parish of St. James. In 1621, in that capacity, he had been accused of serving the cure 'with no testimonials from any of the Bishops' and for failing to subscribe, and it is from presentments for this parish that the pressure being exerted on the St. Mary's incumbent, John Reading, first comes to light. In 1623, the churchwardens John Loome and Stephen Wilds were presented for failing to report absentees.² On July 10th, Nicholas Robins was brought before the court to answer the charge that

he hath censured and abused Mr Reading sayeing that he had preached a point of doctrine which was not agreeable to the word of God.

The deposition of William Eldred describes what had taken place;

the said Robyns came to his shop (in April) in Dover out of purpose as he beleeveth fell into speeches about Mr Readings late sermons con-

1. CCL z-4-3 f27, z-4-4 f126.

2. CCL z-4-2 f116.

cerning kneeling and reverend behaviour in the church and said that the said Mr Reading had a point of doctrine in his sermon that he would never be able to prove for yt was contrary to Mr Perkins and the fathers. And about a fortnight after when Mr Reading had again treated of that point and finished yt this deponent went to the said Robyns and told him that he hoped that Mr Reading had now given hym full satisfaction about that point and the said Robyns answered that Mr Reading could never satisfy him therein and that Mr Reading had preached very uncharitably of some of them (meaning as he supposeth himself and others of that fashion).

The events at St. Mary's were thus, it would seem, not isolated but part of a more general dissenting movement involving rivalry between a conforming minister and his more radical counterpart, the curate, and in this sense not only reminiscent of the troubles in Cranbrook in the 1570s but also indicative of the fact that the curate appeared to be playing the same role as that being enacted in Sandwich by Stephen Huffam, Thomas Warren, and John Brook.¹ That John Reading, the vicar of St. Mary's was being subjected to attack by the supporters of Chantler in much the same way as Richard Fletcher had suffered at the hands of John Strowde's faction, is indicated in a letter dated March 4th, 1621 which Reading sent to his patron Lord Zouche;

be pleased to know that we have this laste weeke a new erected lecture begun, by one Mr Chantler a stranger (as is sayd) licensed by the L. Grace of Cant: I have conferred with the Maior and iuratts of our parish whoe assure me the authours of that businesse (beeing our holy brethren) did privately worke yt without their approbation or knowledge: I have bene with Sir James Hussey whoe is perswaded of me that yt hath beene designed and done to my

1. CCL z-4-3 f44, x-5-7(ii) ff68, 151-153, z-4-3 f35.

great hinderance both in hope to draw away my auditeurs
and to lessen my meanes and livelyhood

and Reading continues by making an interesting assertion which demonstrates the close inter-relation between political and religious standpoints at work at a provincial level;

Mr Richardes joyning with some other adversaries of our peace pretendes that the lecture is only for St. James parish (for ther it is to be read) whereas indeed yt is to be maintained by the private benevolence of Mr Barker Mr Braines Mr Fowler and the same companie which suited against me in my parliament businesse as is well knowen to Mr maior now being and the better sort of our parish.¹

By 1624, Reading was applying for removal from Dover to some other benefice, although he was only too well aware, in a letter to Edward Nicholas dated November 29th, that it would be hard for him to find a living worth more than that of St. Mary's.²

At about the same time, there is a suggestion that Ashford was once more the setting for radical behaviour.³ In 1626, Catherine White was cited for speaking openly against the Prayer Book and the following year, Thomas Starr was presented for

that hee did behave himself very unreverently at the time of the reading of the tenne commandments

his offence being that he placed his hat on his head during the recitation of the Decalogue by Mr. Hayes, the minister. Starr evidently owned property in Kennington, since he excused himself from communicating at Ashford on the

1. BL Egerton MS2584 ff305-306.

2. PRO SP/14/175/75; for an earlier attack on Reading by the minister of Hougham, see SP/14/103/79.

3. CCL x-6-5 ff6, 28.

grounds that he was at the other parish, a statement which may be fairly regarded with some caution since the Starr family went into religious exile in the New World in the Hercules in 1634, Comfort Starr eventually returning after the Civil War to become the pastor of the Congregational Church in Canterbury.¹

A study of the figures presented in Table 1 suggests that although non-conformity was very much a part of the general religious scene prior to the reign of Charles I, it was the latter's accession which brought conflicts and tensions at a parochial level into sharp focus. Such a phenomenon can hardly be explained without reference to the elevation of William Laud to the See of Canterbury. Although his predecessor, George Abbot, had shown signs of conservatism in his last months, and although the new Archbishop was not without his supporters in the Diocese, Robert Barrell of Maidstone being a notable example, Laud's first report to his monarch in 1633 was not self-congratulatory.² The Archbishop noted

And first, for my own diocese of Canterbury, I hear of many things amiss; but as yet time hath been so short, that I have had no certain knowledge of any thing fit to certify.

The following year, he launched an extensive visitation which appeared to expose the roots of nonconformity in the area under his direct jurisdiction. Writing to Charles I, Laud remarked

And not to conceal truth from your majesty, I found in my own diocese (especiall about Ashford-side) divers professed separatists, with whom I shall take the best and most present order that I can; some of them, and some of Maidstone (where much inconformity hath of late years spread) being already called into the high commission, where, if they proved guilty as they are voiced to be, I shall not fail to do justice upon them.

1. CCL x-6-7 ff223, 257, 261; KAO Sa/AC 7 f276; Banks, op.cit., p117.

2. Clark, op.cit., p362.

He added that the foreign churches at Canterbury and Sandwich were great 'nurseries of inconformity in those parts'.¹

Such prosecutions, combined with the 'innovations' concomitant with his Arminian desire to reform and ennoble church fabric and ceremonial, were to prove critical in directing the hitherto serpentine development of religious radicalism within his own Diocese. Within the context of this chapter, the evidence resulting from his inquiries is invaluable in helping to sustain the picture of that development which has hitherto been traced.

In 1634, Thomas Moreland, who appears to have assumed Turner's role in Sutton Valence was duly presented for refusing to have his child baptized, and for being a 'sectary'. At the same visitation, William Bowling of Ashford was proceeded against, subsequent presentments making it clear that he was part of a separatist conventicle there. He first emerges in 1632 when both he and his wife were cited for non-attendance.² The following year, he and his wife were amongst those recorded as standing excommunicate whose number included Edward Bevin, a Catholic recusant, William Morlen, another 'profest separatist' by 1634, Thomas Hubberd and his wife, who had both been previously presented four years earlier for frequenting other churches, and five others whose motivation remains unrecorded.³ The presentments for the years 1634 to 1637 as far as Ashford was concerned are dominated by Bowling and his followers, and what is of importance initially is the observation that

the said William Bowling doth cause his apprentice
to goe with him to Egerton and other places where
there meetings are

clear evidence of the gradual extension of the Fenner/Turner group beyond the

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1. Lambeth Palace Library (hereafter LPL) Tenison MS943, ff287, 291; for a discussion of the influence of the Stranger Churches, see Appendix III.
 2. CCL x-6-8 f163.
 3. LPL VG 4/12 f261.

confines of their own parishes. He was also cited for

that being a profest separatist and keepes conventicles he taketh upon him (though a layman) to baptize and to preach

and the reference to baptism represents a further piece of evidence which depicts the activities of these conventicles. By 1637, Bowling was being accused of refusing to have his four children baptized, and for saying that

the government of the Church of England by law established is Antichristian and he doeth also deny the king to be supreme in matters of religion

whilst another of his group, Alexander Shute, stated what was to become a commonplace concept of the dissenting churches that the Church of England was not a 'true' church.¹ After 1635, John Fenner was in the Gate-House and the leadership of his Egerton assembly seems to have devolved upon Lawrence Best. It is perhaps, no surprise, then, that Laud was moved to write to the King concerning the separatist activity in his diocese in 1636

neither do I see any remedy like to be, unless some of their seducers be driven to abjure the kingdom

a course of action which, if the scribbled note in Secretary Nicholas' private pocket-book is to be believed, was actually contemplated with regard to both Turner and Fenner by the Privy Council during the winter of 1636/7. No action was taken, it would seem, in Turner's case, but John Fenner was later reported to have gone to Amsterdam. Whether he had been released on the condition that he left the country is not known, but the two fragments of evidence taken together may suggest that this is what took place. As far as his own diocese was concerned, however, Laud felt that little had been achieved and he was still obsessed with the

1. LPL VG 4/15 f42, 4/22 f112; CCL z-3-16 f63, z-4-6 f45.

problem on the eve of his fall from power.¹

By 1638, the network of nonconformity reaching out from the Moreland-Fenner church appears to have reached the parish of Ulcombe. The Sutton Valence churchwardens reported in that year

To the 46 wee knowe of none except Thomas Moreland who formally have been presented. And now wee present Ann Elmstone wife to the said Thomas also Jane Tippit his maidservant also Sara maidservant to Henry Elmstone for refusing to come to our church and unconformity to the doctrines rites and ceremonies of the Church.²

Here the link between the two parishes appears to revolve around the relatively humble figure of Jane Tippit, for, in 1635, the Ulcombe churchwardens made a lengthy report concerning the disorders taking place in their parish;

To the 2 wee cannot affirm that any have peremptorily to professed or said but there are some who make a great semblance of zealous profession and yet cannot be drawne to our church though they live in our parish and doe say that they thincke not ours the right church as namely Richard Willard William Edmitt and these wee think to be comprehended also in the 3 article: and wee have heard the same persons frequent privat conventicles....

Later in the year, the presentment was expanded;

To the second there are in our parishe William Edmitt and his wife (as she affirmeth she is but wee cannot learne where they were married) and Richard Wyllard and

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1. BL Harleian MS787 f21; LPL Tenison MS943 f291; PRO SP/16/343/17 f46, 16/424/48 f107. For an accusation that Laud was reduced to hoping plague would carry Brewer and Turner off, see W. Prynne, The Unbishops of Timothy and Titus, Amsterdam, 1636, pp10, 159-160.
 2. CCL x-6-11(ii) f62.

his wife and Jane Tippett a maidservant of the said Willard whoe doe all refuse to come to church and have soe done a long time pretending our church to be a false church. To the 4th wee knowe none butt the aforesaid Edmitt and Wyllard at whose houses are comonly upon the Sundayes conventicles and congregations preaching or teaching or expounding and the said Wyllard since Easter last had a sonne borne and refused to have it brought unto the church to be christened there or elsewhere by our minister but is comonly reported that it was christened in their own conventicle by himself being the father thereof.¹

Aside from further suggestion here that private marriage was within the schema of these assemblies, this is the only mention within the framework of these conventicles and the records relating thereto of private baptism being actually carried out by the father of the child concerned. However, the significance of this evidence is that it throws up the distinct possibility of similar lines of communication in operation as those visible amongst some of the Catholic recusant families in this part of Kent, Jane Tippett moving from one professing group to another for employment in a somewhat analagous fashion to the Ropers and Pordages of Alkham and Teynham.² If the link appears a trifle tenuous, evidence from the Archdiaconal Visitation of 1637 is fairly unequivocal;

wee present one Moreland who hath many years absented himself from the church and yett wilfully persists and perverts others as it is vehemently suspected. Wee present also his maidservant but wee cannot learne what her name is. It is comonly reported that these persons with other of their adherents keepe their conventicles at three severall places viz. in this parish (Sutton Valence) at the house of this Morland. At Ulcombe in the house of one Edmitt and Willard: At Egerton at the house of one fenner.

1. CCL x-6-4 ff247, 255.

2. CCL x-9-4 f82, x-8-10 f307.

As with the Moreland conventicle at Sutton Valence, the Bowling conventicle at Ashford, the Fenner/Best conventicle at Egerton, the assembly at Ulcombe continued down the path of extremism in spite of the combined efforts of Laud and Nathaniel Brent. By 1638, the Ulcombe churchwardens openly refer to Edmitt's assembly as a 'privat church', terminology justified by their report in 1640;

To the 46 wee have none such except Richard Willard and his wife who have stood excommunicate these three or four yeares for refusing to come to our churche combining themselves in a new brotherhood and keeping their schismaticall new service at their house in time of divine service.¹

Laud's preoccupation with these related assemblies was, perhaps, understandable since there is evidence from other parishes that his administration was running into serious opposition. In 1632 and 1633, the Rector of Little Chart was summoned to answer charges

for having been formerly convented (on 4th December 1631) for going abroad to alienate and estrange the love of diverse persons and especially about this citty (ie, Canterbury) from their owne pastours and ministers, in and by his private meetings and conferences with them, and monished to desist from so doing, hath notwithstanding sithence not only persisted in the same, but also has caused and been the author of sundry conventicles and unlawfull assemblies, wherein he hath brocked much pernicious matter tending to the disturbance of the Church's peace and the discipline therein established, and to the begetting and nourishing of Schism and faction in his auditors.

and it is certainly true that Samuel Keame had not been inactive. The church-

1. CCL z-3-16 f284, z-4-6 f45, x-6-11(ii) ff72, 114.

wardens of St. Martin's presented him for 'expounding on a chapter' at the house of Mrs. Paramour, who was herself reported for encouraging Keame 'in conventicling'¹; the St. Andrew's authorities presented William Tailer and Richard Cheevers for holding conventicles with Keame and the latter for refusing to kneel at the communion service, as well as noting that six other parishioners were also present, the wife of one of them, Alice Weekes 'goeth and gaddeth' to other churches and 'calleth the said Mr Keame her Father' and is 'frequent and familiar with him'; and Abraham Love of St. George's was likewise reported for attending these meetings. In his defence, Keame insisted that he merely repeated the sermon points of the day's sermon 'after dinner', and the evidence from these parishes would tend to support this. What perhaps is significant here is the reaction of the authorities to these assemblies. Keame's conventicles were basically non-separatist and closer in character to those examined in the first part of Chapter 1, itself an interesting reminder that not all the assemblies of the 1630s were separatist in intent. However, the authorities reacted strongly to Keame's activities, reflecting, perhaps, a crucial blurring of distinctions which was to be ultimately so disastrous for Laud.² Having said that, it is equally true that even with the benefit of hindsight it is often difficult to categorise the attitudes and intentions of the conventiclors of this period. Hence, given the activities of Canterbury parishioners such as Nicholas Gunn at this time, it is perhaps easily understood as to why the behaviour of Keame and his adherents was misconstrued, for Gunn was accused of being

a frequenter of conventicles and for taking upon him to expound the holy scriptures in other mens houses and families and for oppugning the ceremonies of the church and upbraiding and vilifying some of the Ministers of this towne in desgracefull words and assertions, and

1. LPL VG 4/13 f95, 4/14 ff95-96.

2. LPL VG 4/13 ff95-100; Foster, op.cit., p11.

in particular charging Mr Palmer that he was an enemy to God's children or to that effect.¹

If Keame's radicalism was no more than that of the average Presbyterian, the Laudian regime's failure to make sufficient distinction between such men and the real radicals like Turner or Fenner or, in this case, Gunn, was to prove instrumental in the alienation of the more moderate elements of godly society. Nowhere is this point more appositely demonstrated than in the way the Church courts imprisoned George Huntley, the vicar of Stourmouth, for nonconformity, and yet it had been he who had staunchly defended the position of the established church and the validity of the parish assembly against the separatist John Fenner at the disputation in Ash in 1625.²

The 1630s continued to witness presentments for all shades of nonconformity, then, with especial stress on the emergence of separatism, although it remains a moot point as to how effectively such radical opposition would have been sustained had it not been for the attitude of the Archbishop of Canterbury.³ As might be expected, Wealden parishes bulked large as centres of this developing nonconformity. In 1631, Thomas Johnson of Tenterden was reported for affirming

That the form of God's worship in the Church of England established by lawe and contained in the book of comon praier and administration of the sacraments is an unlawfull worship contayning in it that which is repugnant to the word of God

and that

the rites and ceremonies of the Church of England by law established are such as men godly affected

1. LPL VG 4/13 f100.

2. Clark, E.P.S. , p370: for a description of Huntley's prosecution, see B. Whitelock, Memorials of the English Affairs etc., Oxford, 1853, vol.1 pp36-7.

3. LPL VG 4/12 ff46, 142; CCL x-5-7 (ii) f173.

may not with a good conscience approve use or subscribe unto them.

At this stage he was still attending church, albeit for sermons only, but by 1632 he had evidently separated, excommunication once more being the possible catalyst. He was joined in 1634 by Henry Merriott's wife, who was presented by the Tenterden minister for

usual neglect of comeing to divine service and for not receiving the communion at Easter last not since and beeing by me admonished thereof and advised to conforme herselfe to the orders of the Church answered that shee knew noe one that had authority in the churche but our Lorde Jesus Christ and that the prayers of the churche were taken out of the masse booke.¹

Against this background was a series of presentments of parishioners refusing to kneel at the appropriate moments of the service, refusing to be 'churched', attending sermons only, the wife of Stephen Willcox typifying the attitude of this last group, perhaps, by her attendance being combined with the statement that she 'doeth not well approve of the prayers of the church'.² Again, these fragments all indicate that non-separatist dissent continued to co-exist with its more radical counterpart, and serve to remind the observer that not all those who expressed criticisms of the established liturgy were separatists.

Other Wealden parishes witnessed similar activities at this time. In Biddenden in 1633, Ambrose Iggleden was cited for walking out of the church when the minister began to read the Litany, the churchwardens adding the telling detail that he 'sate in the churchyard turning his bible', and Isaac Stedman was presented for refusing to kneel during the communion service and for eventually leaving the church without receiving. At nearby Rolvenden, two parishioners were cited for

1. CCL x-6-8 ff129, 147, 183, 215, 219.

2. CCL x-6-8 ff225, 252, 285; LPL VG/15 f21.

refusing to enter the church, and at Pluckley, Stephen Rayner was denounced for refusing to receive and for failing to bring his child to baptism.¹ Separatism emerges in 1635 in the parish of Kingsnorth, on the edge of the Weald. In that year Mary Cloake was presented for irregular attendance and for stating that

the forme of god's worship used in the Church of England and contained in the common prayer book is superstitious and unlawfull worship

and that

the rights and ceremonies of the Church of England by law established are wicked antechristian and supstitious.

The following year Elizabeth Philpott, whose husband had been presented twenty years earlier for 'gadding' to Ashford, Brigit Allin, and Sara Wilcock were all cited for

affirming the Church of England not to be apostollicall and they doe not allow the forme of worshipp prescribed in the book of common prayer

the Archdiaconal Visitation of that year likewise deeming them 'schismaticall'.²

Parallel behaviour is visible in some of the main urban areas of the Canterbury Diocese. In Maidstone, open rejection of the Laudian minister Robert Barrell's ministry took the form of fifteen parishioners refusing to attend the parish church there and seeking edification elsewhere, two of which - Robert Swinocke and Thomas Crump - had been benefactors of John Turner during the 1620s, again an interesting example of the lack of definition which might occur between separatists and non-separatists in the early days of common dissenting attitudes towards the established church and before the issue of coexistence with the carnal 'multitude' assumed

1. CCL x-6-8 f202; LPL VG 4/12 f103, 4/15 ff48, 26.

2. CCL x-6-9 ff58, 79, 113, z-3-16 ff114-115.

decisive importance, for it is clear that neither Crump no Swinock were separatists, although another of this group, Robert Joy, eventually was, becoming joint pastor of the Staplehurst Congregational Church during the early 1650s.¹ It is more than likely that the parish to which this group resorted rather than tolerate the attitudes of Robert Barrell was Otham, whose incumbent in 1634 was Thomas Wilson, a minister with pronounced Presbyterian views. Wilson had come to Otham shortly before from Teddington;

The occasion is this, there were many serious understanding Christians in Maidstone, much troubled and dejected at the deadness and dulness of that Ministry under which they lived. Alas, the children asked bread, and their Spiritual Father (by Profession and Office) gave them stone, that their souls were ready to famish for want of food.²

Accordingly, Robert Swinock, one of the Aldermen of the town, 'an active godly person', managed to obtain control of the rectory at Otham and began to cast around for a suitable minister to fill the vacancy there. He eventually travelled to Dorking, in Surrey, in order to hear Wilson preach and subsequently invited him to fill the Otham vacancy. Wilson was evidently a great success with the godly in the area, exemplary of the kind of energetic, charismatic minister whose vocation and activities have been vividly described in Professor Collinson's recently published Ford lectures.³ He preached twice every Sunday, every Holy Day, and his funeral sermons were always well attended and cherished. Such a figure, understandably, attracted much criticism from the Arminian and 'formalist' ministers of the area, such as Barrell;

While he was minister of Otham, many of Maidstone and others several miles apart, to my knowledge some

1. LPL VG 4/22 f5; CCL U37 f15; PRO SP 16/35/110.

2. G(eorge) S(winnocke), The Life and Death of Mr Thomas Wilson, London, 1672, p8.

3. See, Collinson, Religion of Protestants, Chapter 3.

seven or eight miles from Otham, did ordinarily attend on his ministry, and joyn in Communion with him at the Lord's Supper; but the number that flockt after him (which was so great that his Church would not hold them) was a great eyesore to the prophane world, and caused several of the ministers about him to envy and maligne him.

and he was eventually suspended for refusing to read the Book of Sports in 1635, a publication which was clean counter to the type of Sabbatarianism beloved of such ministers as Wilson. He was later restored, and suspended again in 1640 for refusing to read a prayer for victory against the Covenanting Army in Scotland, producing in his defence the casuistical argument that he had so done

because in the Rubrick before the Common Prayer, it was enjoyned that no prayer should be publikely read, except those that were in the book of Common Prayer.¹

He continued to preach in Maidstone in conventicles until he was restored to office by Sir Edward Dering with the advent of the Long Parliament, and his biographer leaves a vivid description of the Maidstone sabbath which, after his adherents had visited the church for his two sermons, ended at Robert Swinnock's house and

By the time he had supped, there would be a hundred or more gathered together at Mr Swinnock's house, to joyn with him in the conclusion of the day.²

Sandwich continued to witness regular public dissent and open separatist activity throughout the 1630s. In 1631, Thomas Allin, a member of Masterson's conventicle in 1613, was still absenting himself from services 'not agreeing with the orders of the church', whilst in 1633 Ralph Crone indicated his displeasure at the reading of the lessons by placing his hat on his head. In 1635, the wife of John Archer was

1. G. S(winnocke), op.cit., pp11-12, 15-17, 22-23.

2. ibid., pp27-29.

presented for

vilifying and slandering this Church of England
with the terme papiste church, saying and affirming
before divers credible persons that the Church of
England is a papiste church and no better

and three years later 'widdow Pratt' was cited for stating

that the forme and manner of making and consecrating
Bishops Priests and deacons is repugnant to this word
of God

and for joining herself in a

new brotherhood accounting those Christians who are
conformable to the doctines government rites and
ceremonies of the Church of England to be unfet for
them to joyne with in Christian profession.

a stance which she had evidently adopted by the following year when she is referred
to as a separatist in the presentments for 1639.¹

Presentments from Canterbury serve to reinforce this general picture of the
quickenning pace of nonconformist and separatist behaviour in the Diocese during
the 1630s. In 1634, a widow in the parish of St. Alphege stated that 'those whoe
went to the christening service served the divill', and the following year, in the
parish of St. Andrews, Nicholas Manley was reported for separatism, and the
churchwarden stated that he had in fact sailed for the New World, although his name
does not appear in Banks' list. In 1638, John Dickenson of St. George's parish was
presented for refusing to kneel and for making no defence of his occasional attend-
ance. Dickenson, in fact, must have been close to separatism at this stage since
he was soon to become one of the original covenanters of the Congregational
Church in Canterbury.²

1. CCL x-5-7 f59, x-5-7(ii) ff173, 247, 268; LPL VG 4/13 f180, 4/22 f205.

2. LPL VG 4/22 f59; CCL x-6-10 ff77, 199.

The fullest account of a separatist conventicle in operation towards the end of this decade, however, comes from Dover. As has been seen, Dover witnessed certain religious tensions during the 1620s arising out of the appointment of a radical curate to the lectureship of St. James, and the Act Books for this period contain sufficient evidence that the kind of behaviour examined above was part of the religious scene in Dover during the 1630s. In 1630, for example, William Hudson of St. James' was presented for walking out of the church, refusing to attend the church, and spending his time during services walking the streets of Dover, whilst some of the absentees cited, like William Mondgeham, can be identified as later separatists.¹ However, it was in 1639 that details emerged of a fully-fledged conventicle within the town under the leadership of a stonemason from London, John Trendall, who had been employed in repairing some of the towns defences at Archcliffe. On July 27th, the Mayor and Jurats of Dover examined John Trendall and subsequently reported their findings to Laud. The scope of Trendall's offence was that he

of late hath occasioned conventicles in and about this towne, taking upon him there to expound the Scriptures both to men and women; spreads sundry opinions repugnant to the doctrine of the Church of England and refuseth to take the oath of Supremacie to His Maiestie

and the Mayor, having conferred with John Reading, the incumbent of St. Mary's, then ordered a full report to be submitted to the Archbishop. The examination of Trendall falls into two parts; the statement made by Trendall himself, and the subsequent depositions of some of those who had attended the conventicles over which Trendall had presided. Trendall deposed as follows;

hee came to this towne and port about the 11th day of November last past being hired to worke in his trade in Aycliffe Bulwarke about makeing a wall

1. LPL VG 4/12 ff42, 142.

about the same fort, and confesseth that hee hath not since his being in this towne been at either of the churches to hear divine service and sermons and saith that his conscience will not serve him to yeild to the worshipp under the Bishops power here used (as hee conceiveth) hee denieth that the Lords praier is a praier and for the Creed or Beliefes hee saieth he hath nothing to doe with it nor doth approve of it. Hee denieth that he hath drawne any persons together into conventicles to instruct them in any points of religion, but confesseth persons have come to his house and that hee hath bene at diverse of the inhabitants houses in this towne being sent for and hath conversed there with them but refused to declare their names.

and the confession was signed not only by Trendall, but by his wife, two children aged ten and five, and Humphrey Watts, his servant, aged eighteen.¹ The names of the parishioners attending his assemblies were supplied by the next parishioner called before the Mayor, Joan Tiddyman. She deposed that Trendall had been at her house some four times, and that the following were also present; Trendall's wife, William Tatnell, Edward Goodwin, John Haselwood the younger, the wife of John Broome, 'widdow' Lee, the wife of John Hogben, Jane Crooks, Thomas King, William Smith, John Tylley and his wife of Nonington, and 'others being strangers'. It is from her statement to the civic authorities that a definite picture of the conventicle begins to emerge. She admitted that they had met

from seaven or eight of the clock on a Sunday untill twelve of the clocke at noone...and then went thence and came againe about one of the clocke and there staid until six of the clocke at night

devoting in all some ten hours of the sabbath to godly discourse. She continued,

1. SP 16/432/27 f51.

the said Trendall tooke a text of Scripture and did explaine the same and instruct them in the word, hee maintaineth that our saviour Jesus Christ is Lord and king of his church which is his body and the like doctrines and that the same sunday they did sing the 118 Psalme from the 15th verse to the end the the 84 psalme. Shee saith that shee hath heard that the said Trendall doth maintaine that the Lords Prayer is not a prayer but the grounds or forme of a prayer and that Christs ordinances are not in our church and shee herselfe hath founde the same and that she hath found great comfort in the said Trendall's companie and by his instructions. Shee further saith that William Tatnell did the same Sunday in the after-noonne write what Trendall did declare and repeate unto them And lastly shee saith that shee hath heard the said Trendall say that such ministers that have there power from the bishopps have it by false power.¹

Of those apparently present, Edward Goodwin had been presented during the 1620s for refusal to pay church assessments either for repairs to the fabric of the parish church or as contributions towards the vicar's stipend, and he was to continue such behaviour after the Restoration, but the presence of John Tylley of Nonington is perhaps the most interesting. He was cited in 1635 in Nonington for speaking

against the rites and ceremonyes of the Church of England and he and his wife and Robert Tilley his man and widow Pritchards who dwelleth with the said Tilley refuse to conform themselves to the same.²

If such evidence may give rise to suspicions that here was a small separatist conventicle at work, such views are confirmed by an entry in the Sandwich Year Book for 1640, which, in fact, suggests that, taken along with his appearance at the Trendall conventicles, Tylley was involved in some form of separatist network

1. ibid., f54.

2. CCL z-4-2 ff17, 165, z-4-7 f246, x-9-15 f27; LPL VG 4/22 f174.

along the lines of that observed in the Wealden parishes during the same period. In 1640, Vincent Wood was hauled before the Mayor and Jurats of Sandwich along with Tylley and six others from Ash, Northbourne, Betteshanger, and Deal

whome they found assembled in the house of the said
Vincent Wood at Deale in the time of divine service
and sermon in the forenoone of the same day in manner
of a conventicle

although absence of proof, or possibly magisterial leniency, resulted in these conventiclors escaping with the shilling fine for absence from the church.¹ The choice of the Psalms sung at this particular meeting at Tiddyman's house is also revealing, giving some insight, as with the analysis of the texts employed by Fenner at the Ash debate, into the predominant view of a company of righteous holding themselves apart from the ungodly persecutor, since Psalm 118 contains such verses as

The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the
tabernacles of the righteous; the right hand of
the Lord doeth valiantly

and, appropriately in view of Trendall's occupation,

The stone which the builders refused is become
the headstone of the corner

whilst Psalm 84 declares

How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts....
.....Yea the sparrow hath found an house, and the
swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her
young, even thine altars, O Lord of Hosts, my King
and my God.....For a day in thy courts is better than
a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house
of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.

1. KAO Sa/AC7, f382.

The next deposition was made by John Haselwood the younger, although he merely confessed to having been there, and confirmed Trendall's remarks concerning the unlawfulness of ministers, adding the telling detail that

he was absent from the church the last two sundaies
and that one of them hee was walking about and sitting
under the castle hill and the other sunday in his
house.¹

He was followed by the examination of Edward Goodwin, whose deposition is of value in that it becomes clear as a result of his statements that not all those who attended were potential separatists or particular admirers of Trendall and his teachings. The main point of interest for Goodwin appears to have been Trendall's view that the Church of England clergy were not ministers in any 'true' sense.² Goodwin went twice on the same day to hear Trendall - it is notable, perhaps, that he was prompted to return to the conventicle in the afternoon only because there was no sermon on offer at his parish church - but appears to have been unsatisfied with what the stonemason had to say concerning the priesthood. Greater details of this occasion are furnished by the statement of William Tatnell, who deposed that Trendall expounded in the morning on Isaiah 51 : 7, and in the afternoon on I John 3 : 1. In both cases, these texts reflect the emphasis on scriptural justification for separatism that can likewise be observed in those used by Fenner at Ash, the verse from Isaiah being

Hearken unto me ye that know righteousness, the
people in whose heart is my law; fear ye not the
reproach of men, neither be ye afraid of their
revilings.

and, rather more explicitly, the verse from I John stating

Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed

1. SP 16/432/27 f56.

2. ibid., f58.

on us, that we should be called the sons of God:
therefore the world knoweth us not because it knew
him not.

Like Goodwin, Tatnell was clearly uneasy about Trendall's opinions, for at one stage of the proceedings he asked him

whether that which was able to beget faith were
not able to nourish it, which the said Trendall
denied but gave not this examinant any satis-
factorie answeare therein.¹

The examination of a fellow London stonemason, Thomas King, reveals that Dover was not alone in the kind of process observed above, for he stated that he had also visited Ham church, near Sandwich, to hear a stranger preach in the company of Trendall's apprentice, Humphrey Watts as well as other Dover parishioners, and he concluded his deposition with the observation that he attended Trendall's meetings in order to

trie the spiritts whether they were of god
or noe as the words of God directeth him

and when asked whether he approved of Trendall's opinions or not he simply replied that he did not know what they were.² Such vagueness is, in a sense, appropriate since it is impossible to assign any precise categorisation to this conventicle. All the evidence that can be gleaned from the statements of those who attended suggests that it was separatist in intent, although it is equally true to say that, apart from Joan Tiddyman, John Haselwood, and, perhaps, Thomas King, its members were by and large present as much out of curiosity as of conviction. None of those cited appear to have joined the Dover Baptist Church during the Interregnum, neither is there any evidence to suggest that any of them became Quakers during the 1650s, but there were Presbyterian and Congregational churches in existence during the

1. ibid., f59.

2. ibid., f60.

Interregnum, and conventicles of these denominations there after the Restoration, and thus the possibility exists that some of them may have attended the services of these groups. Equally, if the post-Restoration evidence concerning the behaviour of Edward Goodwin can be taken as being at all representative, they may well have merely resumed their occasional conformity displayed here in 1639.

Concentration on religious radicalism in Dover at this stage is merited for in the person of John Reading, the vicar of St. Mary's, is encapsulated, perhaps, the key to understanding some of the forces at work in the creation of separatism at grassroots level. It has already been noted that Reading was under pressure during the early 1620s from a faction in his parish supporting the more radical activities of the curate Henry Chantler, although local politics may well have been as much behind this as religious attitudes, itself an instructive state of affairs. By 1640, Reading was once again subjected to attack, although the emphasis by this time had changed in that the renewal of opposition would seem to reflect the general development of religious radicalism on a national and provincial level. That John Reading felt this deeply is beyond doubt. In August 1641, he preached before Sir Thomas Mallett and Sir Edward Dering at the Maidstone Assizes on the text of Romans, 16 : 17,

Now I beseech you brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine you have learned and avoid them.

There is likewise little doubt that he was pursuing, or attempting to pursue a via media increasingly out of tune with the times in his insistence on a moderate approach towards the critics of the established church;

lenity can doe more than rigour, a mild hand maketh better impression then a rigid and imperious injunction can; sanctity cannot be forced neither will opinion; if God should compell, he left no place for sinne or sanctity.¹

1. J. Reading, A Sermon Delivered at Maidstone, London, 1641, p3.

Such overt criticism of the policy of strict uniformity being pursued by the church authority displays the dilemma facing respectable defenders of ecclesiological orthodoxy during Laud's episcopate, an important point which has been emphasised by Dr. Tyacke in his observations concerning the positive nature of Arminianism and the vital differences between the conservatism of Laud when compared to that of Whitgift.¹ For faced with official extremism on the one hand, ministers like Reading were also confronted by the attacks of separatists on the other, and his sermon is likewise critical of those who sow dissension;

Between the Prophets and the people, who under the pretence of decrying the ambition, corruption, and State-medling of some, shew their hatred to all ministers of Christ, flying at them with their sat superque vobis, you take too much upon you, seeing all the Congregation is holy. I might say the contempt of the ministry is the window open to Haeresie Satan's principall advantage.....to suggest ill opinions of good ministers, seeing contempt of their person will like a Gangren quickly creep on to contempt of their doctrine.

and he concludes with a powerful reiteration of the need for a policy of moderation;

To all them that heare me, I beseech you brethren and them, whether Innovators, or separatists, the two smoaking firebrands, the Scylla and Charybdis, the gulfes and Chasmes of our Church and State, avoyd both extremes.²

It was a theme he was to return to in 1643 when he published what was in effect a prayer for the state of the nation ;

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1. N. Tyacke, "Puritanism, Arminianism and Counter-Revolution" in The Origins of the English Civil War, ed. C. Russell, London, 1973, pp119-143.
 2. Reading, op.cit., pp14-15, 25.

Heal our rebellions and back-sliding, binde up the woundes which our unnaturall and unhappy division have made in this Church and State; cure our distempers, reconcile us to one another, and all to thee in Jesus Christ; give us grace to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.....restrain all those desperate spirits of division, which for our unthankfulnesse and surfeitinge on thy blessings of peace thou hast justly permitted to come out of the bottomlesse pit amongst us. Remove all those Schisms and factions which any way obscure the lamps of thy Tabernacle and the light of Truth; suppress all the secret and professed Incendiaries, who kindle sedition, and endeavoure to lay waste Cities and villages, and to even the Palace and the Cottage in one common voice.

By the time he published this heartfelt plea, he was in prison, and his main benefactor, the Primate himself, was in no position to help him. Indeed, somewhat ironically, it may well have been Laud's attempts to bestow the rectory of Chartham on a minister of such worth that resulted in Reading incurring the enmity of the House of Commons.¹

John Reading's experience is instructive, but not unique in this part of Kent at this date. Robert Abbot, the minister of Cranbrook, faced a similar dilemma at the same time, and it is apt that this should have been so in the sense that of the ministers of the Diocese of Kent who were held in high regard, these two were particularly favoured by another voice soon to be silenced, Sir Edward Dering. Addressing the Commons in October 1641, Dering stated;

Many mournfull sad complaints I have of late received from ministers the ablest and in every way worthiest that I know. I could willingly name you two, one at Dover, the other in Cranbrook in Kent. Men upon whose merit let my credit stand or fall in this house. He

1. J. Reading, A Grain of Incense or Supplication for the Peace of Jerusalem, London, 1643, Sig.A3; The Works of William Laud, Vol.IV, Oxford, 1844, p16.

that hath preached the least of them hath preached
severall thousands of excellent sermons to his people.¹

Like Reading, Robert Abbot was increasingly caught between the 'Scylla and Charybdis' of the times. On March 13th, 1640, he wrote to Dering concerning the conflict that he was experiencing with certain 'Brownists' in his parish and their attempts to draw up a petition against Dering as a result of his imprisoning two of their number;

Had it not been for a brother in lawe of Richard Rabson (one of your worships visitors since you sat) it had not bene to doe now. He feared the removing of your worship their enemy and therefore stopt the course. These Brownists are not an inconsiderable part. They growe in many parts of the kingdom and in your dear country amongst the rest. And though it was thought that the high courses of some Bishops weare the cause of the revolt from us yet now they professe that weare Bishops removed, the Common Prayer Book and ceremonies taken away they would not join with us in communion. They stick not only at our Bishops, service and ceremonies but at our church.²

Here, too, was the elementary difference between the atmosphere of the Fletcher-Strowde controversy of the 1570s and that facing the Cranbrook minister in the 1640s. At the heart of the former incident there was, to be sure, a measure of opposition to the prelacy - Strowde referred to Bishops as 'ungracious knaves' and another parishioner had likened his son to a bishop on account of his son's habit of always falling asleep after dinner - but Professor Collinson is surely right when he affirms

Separatism in the proper sense of gathering and

1. J. Rushworth, Historical Collections, London, 1721-2, Vol. IV, p394; W. H. Coates ed., The Journal of Sir Simonds D'Ewes, New Haven, 1942, p30; L. B. Larking, Proceedings, principally in the County of Kent, London, 1862, p57.

2. BM Stowe MS184, f27.

covenanting of a separated people to form a new kind of church was a rare phenomenon before the mid-seventeenth century.....Separate, in the sense of different, Cranbrook's 'hotter sort of Protestants' may always have been. Separated they were not until the 1640s.¹

By the 1640s, it is clear, the demands of the radical element amongst the Cranbrook godly transcend boundaries undreamt of by Strowde or his arch-supporter, the schoolmaster Thomas Good. According to Abbot, the demands of the radicals included

every particular congregation to be independent and neather to be kept in order by rules given by the King, Bishops, Councils or Synods. They would have the votes about every matter of jurisdiction, in choise of members and ministers, excommunications and absolution to be drawne up from the whole body of the church in ~~common~~ both men and women. They would have none enter communion but by solemne covenant. Not that made in Baptisme or received in the supper of the Lord, but another for reformation after their way.

The divide between Abbot and this group of identifiable proto-Congregationalists was unbridgeable; whereas Fletcher, particularly after Strowde's death, was able to find some kind of modus vivendi with the more radical elements of his parish during the 1580s, no such solution appeared possible for Abbot, and there is a note of desperation in the latter part of his letter to Dering;

Sir, I have been a preacher amongst them twenty four years...Yet....I can nott be of the mind but that Episcopacy is lawful.

By the following year, he was threatened with open and irreversible schism in the

1. CCL x-2-7 f274; Collinson, "Cranbrook and the Fletchers.....", pp198, 200-202.

form of an ultimatum from some of his parishioners not necessarily related to those mentioned above;

A friend hath forwarned me this day that tomorrow will 40 come unto mee to persuade mee to lay downe the common prayer booke quite or else they will not come to the church, and they are of the middle sort of the parish.....I know not what to doe or say to give content.¹

Much of the evidence of conventicling and developing dissent examined in this chapter would tend to support Professor Collinson's view of the development of separatism as being very much a feature of the reign of Charles I although Cranbrook's experience of religious radicalism cannot necessarily be taken as being totally representative of the Diocese as a whole. There were separatist conventicles before the 1630s in Kent; if doubts surround those at Goudhurst in 1602 and Cranbrook in 1604, no such hesitation attaches to the activities of Masterson and his followers in the port of Sandwich from 1609 onwards. Again, although the 1630s saw the expansion of the Turner/Fenner church, the critical foundations of this assembly had been firmly laid in the 1620s, before the ascendancy of Archbishop Laud. In that sense, the question as to whether such activities would have sustained themselves had it not been for the Arminianism of the Archbishop of Canterbury is, of course, an intriguing one but, in the end, as with most historical speculation, fruitless. By 1640, thanks to the intransigence of Laud within his own diocese, dissenting churches were on the point of bursting out in profusion. All that was needed was a breakdown in the system of the enforcement of ecclesiastical discipline, and that state of affairs lay in the not very distant future as relations between King and Parliament deteriorated between 1641 and 1642.

1. BL Stowe MS184, ff28, 43-44.

Chapter 3 : The Problem of Eclecticism

In 1616, Edmund Abbey, a parishioner of New Romney, was presented by the churchwardens for affirming that

The bodie of Christe is receaved in the sacraments
realie and actually and substantiallie if not then
he spared not to say that Christe was an idle
fellow to speak as he doth in the Gospell of St John
My fleshe is meate indeed and my bloude is drink
indeed

but he followed up this expression of orthodox Tridentine-Catholicism by explaining that he would not attend church since he could

praie as well, nay better, in his fields upon
the sabothe day then hee can in the churche

a statement which appears closer to a well-worn Lollard tradition.¹ Three years later, the curate of Whitfield cited Alice Juniper for a variety of offences including attendance at church only when there was a sermon and for stating that the tradition of churching of women was 'but a vayne ceremonye'. Both these complaints can be confidently identified as stock puritan approaches to the more superstitious elements of orthodox liturgy, as can a subsequent statement that she dissuaded

others from frequenting their parishe churche
to divine service and perswading them to go
to other parishes.

However, the curate also stated that she maintained

that damnable opinion that children dyeing
unbaptised are damned and goe to hell²

1. CCL x-5-9 f59, x-9-13 f21.

2. CCL x-6-2 f12.

a belief which tends more towards Prayer Book orthodoxy than to Puritanism.

Both these cases are exemplary of the dilemma facing any student of popular religious attitudes and beliefs, especially those culled from the ecclesiastical records where, more often than not, the bare statement is recorded with no further details concerning the background against which such views were expressed. The problem is twofold; how to explain the precise meaning of such statements and their relevance to the tradition and development of unorthodoxy or religious radicalism, and how to determine just how representative such statements are of an accepted popular view. In the latter case, the question hinges on the quantitative nature of such evidence; how many such expressions are needed before a particular view can be taken as being commonly held? This is an important question, for it dominates all studies of popular religious beliefs, from Keith Thomas' monumental Religion and the Decline of Magic to Le Roy Durie's Montaillou, and this is particularly so with regard to the former since such work itself can all too easily suffer from the kind of contextual 'plundering' by subsequent studies which then enshrine certain examples as solid evidence per se, a process or historiographical approach which may lie behind a justifiable criticism of Christopher Hill's methodology as displayed in The World Turned Upside Down.

In terms of quantity, the number of such expressions of popular religious mentality within the Diocese of Canterbury between 1590 and 1660 represent a very small fraction in terms of the total number of ecclesiastical offences committed during this period. Moreover, the background against which many of these various affirmations were made frequently remains impenetrable. Since the reports of such statements are also recorded by unsympathetic onlookers, it may thus be historiographically presumptuous to even attempt to define them as belonging to a known tradition of heretical or radical thought or, worse, to see them with hindsight as anticipatory trends of the kind of eclectic ideas which emerged fully into the light of day during the Civil War and its aftermath. Equally, however, such expressions will not simply go away; they are there on record, and it is the

task of this short chapter to discuss them.

In general terms, the various statements dealt with in this chapter can be envisaged as belonging to a variety of categories; eclectic attitudes towards the concept of sin and the existence of Hell; radical Christological opinions; apparent Atheism; and a final group of individual ideas which stand on their own.

Rejection of the concept of sin emerges as a Lollard view in Kent in 1431 in the statement of Thomas Hellis of Brenchley, who abjured a belief that however much a man sinned he would not be damned as a result.

Dr. Thomson is clearly aware of the problems outlined in the opening remarks of this chapter, placing Hellis on 'the wilder wing of the Lollards'. It is interesting that he was forced to recant at Tonbridge, for it was from the same parish that a denial of the existence of Purgatory came some sixty years later.¹ Denial of Hell, it has been argued, was also a part of Elizabethan Familism as, indeed was the rejection of the concept of sin. So, it is against this generalised background that the presentment of William Austen of Ebony, a small parish on the edge of the Weald near the Sussex boundary, in 1583 may, perhaps, be assessed. Austen stated

that yf others stande by the hyghe waye syde
and robbe it is gods will he should so doe.

Such antinomianism was very much evident in some of the tenets of the extremer sectarians during the 1640s and 1650s.² Number 17 in Thomas Edwards' catalogue of 176 'Errours, Heresies, Blasphemies' was the view that because God decrees all men's actions therefore there can be no sin, whilst Number 91 records the

1. Thomson, op.cit., pp177, 184.

2. CCL x-1-17 f96; J. D. Moss, "The Family of Love and English Critics" in Sixteenth Century Journal, No.6, 1975, p49.

Mephistophelean notion that

There is no hell, but in this life, and that's
the legall terrours and fears which men have
in their consciences.

It was the recognition of the continuity of such concepts which led Christopher Hill to postulate the existence of an underground tradition in his essay 'Lollards to Levellers' and, whilst such an interpretation may fairly be treated with caution, his rational observation that

it is a prevalent donnish assumption that ideas
are transmitted principally by books¹

sounds an equally cogent warning against dismissal of such an approach out of hand. Much the same dilemma faces any attempt to place the eclectic view of the Goudhurst schoolmaster, Robinson by name, who was reported for preaching twice every Sunday and holy day in the house of William Champion in 1602 and who combined the advocacy of the lawfulness of usury with a denial of the existence of Hell.² Robinson was, of course, active within the framework of a conventicle, and it is tempting to see this as evidence of the existence of some kind of radical cell; there is little else to support such a view even although the assembly, as has been noted, would seem to have been more than just an exercise in sermon repetition and perilously close to physical separation from the parish assembly, and it is perhaps a salutary reminder of how easily religious speculation could shade off into radicalism once the constraints of ecclesiastical discipline were removed. In 1602, the church courts would deal with men like Robinson; forty years on there was no such machinery.

Radical attitudes towards the nature of Christ, as with notions concerning sin and Hell, were not without precedent or eventuality, and this is equally true

1. C.Hill, Milton and the English Revolution, London, 1977, p5.

2. See above, p19.



for Kent as for other counties. Dr. Davis has recorded the case of a Rochester weaver whose views included 'a suggestion of the radical doctrine of the celestial flesh' as early as 1505. During the 1530s

the parson of hothfelde preached that Our
Lady was not quene of heaven but the mother
of Criste and that she coude do no more for us
then a nother woman lykeninge her to a saffron
bag

and in 1543, Thomas Dawby, the curate of Lenham, had preached in a similar fashion that the virgin Mary was 'but a sack to put Christ in', views which anticipated the heresy of Joan Boucher as recorded by her prosecutors in April 1549;

you beleve that the worde was made flesshe
in the virgins Belly But that Christ toke
flesshe of the virgin you beleve not.¹

Radical christology emerges in some of the proceedings which the Marian authorities instituted against Kentishmen in 1556. John Symes of Brenchley denied that 'christe is consubstancyall that ys to say god fro the begynnyng', whilst Robert King of Petham issued his inquisitors with the challenge

yf any man can shewe him in Scripture this word
consubstancyall then he wolde beleve that christe
ys consubstancyall and of one substance with the
father or els nott.²

William Prowting of Thurnham likewise made a lengthy statement of his views concerning the nature of Christ's godhead, ending with the statement that

1. Davis, *op.cit.*, p37; BL Cotton M5EV f397; J. S. Brewer ed., Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic of the Reign of Henry VIII, London, 1864, Vol. XVIII, Pt. II, p315; LPL Reg. Cranmer f75.

2. BL Harleian MS421 ff94-95.

yt ys no artycle of our faith that ther ys
one god, and three persons but one god al
myghty in whom he beleevyth and sayth that
christe ys not almyghty of hyme selfe but
recevyd all power of hys father and ys made
god over all things unto us and sayth that
a was not god of the sayd substance of god
fro the begynnyng.¹

The similarity in the wording of these three confessions permits the acceptance, perhaps, of some tangible tradition in this part of Kent. It is with this knowledge, then, that the christological opinions of Robert Spicer of Lyminge take on additional interest. In 1599, he was brought before the ecclesiastical authorities where he stated that he believed it to be imperative to fast on Sundays and he admitted that he had refused to receive the sacraments. When pressed, he stated that

the minister Mr. Grimstone would have put him
from the communion for that in reasoning our
Saviour Christ he the said Mr Grimstone would
have perswaded him the said Spicer that Christ
was the son of man and he this respondent would
not be perswaded but that he was the son of god
only.

In spite of being referred to the minister of Bishopsbourne for instruction, Spicer continued to maintain this idea, and in the following year he was presented for affirming that 'Jesus Christe was never fleshe nor bloude.'² Here is a clear assertion refuting the concept of Christ's humanity which would seem to have few precedents in this area with, perhaps, one exception. On June 18th, 1557, five men and two women were burnt at Maidstone; Joan Bradbridge of Staplehurst, Walter and Petronil Appelbey of Maidstone, Edmund and Katherine Allin of

1. ibid.

2. CCL x-9-1 ff32, 160; it is perhaps worth noting in passing the presentments for indiscipline concerning Christopher Spicer of Lyminge in 1618, CCL x-9-14 f233, z-4-1 f34.

Frittenden, the wife of John Manning, also from Maidstone, and Elizabeth, 'a blind maiden.' For John Foxe, the doctrinal differences separating these martyrs - Edmund Allin seems to have been a Protestant in the Edwardian mode - were insignificant and thus they all deserved inclusion in his hagiography of respectable Protestantism.¹ However, evidence concerning an attack on the curate of Maidstone, John Day, who had apparently heartily approved of these burnings, by the returning exiles John and Roger Hall, reveals the interesting possibility that the heresy of some of these martyrs was perhaps not as acceptable as Foxe might have thought, especially when taken in conjunction with the anti-Trinitarian tradition postulated above. In defence of his attitude towards these martyrs, Day subsequently preached a sermon at Maidstone, the contents of which were transmitted to Foxe by John Hall. According to Hall, Day stated

It is reported of me. . . . that in the tyme of
quene marye when sertayn people wer burned in
the kynge his medow I shoulde saye that they
were damnid, but I think thay do belye me that
so saye or report of me, but to say the truth
I know not nor do not remember what I ther sayde.

adding

but this I knowe that some of them did deny the
humanity of Christ and the equalitie of the
trinitie and no man doubteth but such are heretykes.²

He was pursued out of church and subsequently induced to admit that he was guilty of slander - 'dyd you, quod he, never lye in your lyves' - at which point he headed for the alehouse, itself a familiar anti-clerical slander often employed by Protestants, and later, by more radical Puritans. The circumstances surrounding this affair, when combined with the pocket of unitarianism identified above,

1. J. Foxe, The Acts and Monuments, 1877 edition, Vol. VIII, p321.

2. BL Harleian MS416 ff123-124.

may well warrant suspicion concerning Foxe's record of the views of the seven burnt at Maidstone, and thus may allude to a popular eclectic christological tradition in this part of Kent, upon which Spicer was drawing in 1599. A similar heresy was to reappear in Canterbury in 1648 when Sarah Ray was brought before the congregation of Durant's Independent church there to explain certain 'corrupt opinions' which she held

As to denye Jesus Christs remaining in a humane nature and to denye that he was in heaven and alsoe that hee was not distinct from the father

for which views she was duly excommunicated. Equally, however, Spicer's opinions may well have sprung from what Professor Dickens has termed the 'questioning attitude of the sceptical, materially-minded layman' when faced with some of the more intellectually demanding theology of the established Church.¹

Alternative christological views emerge in the presentment in 1615 of Martin Lambkin for

speaking corrupte, superstitious and unlawfull wordes in sayeng that Christe Jesus ys not yett born but ys yett to be borne.

and he was duly excommunicated.²

There are several professions of atheism which appear in the Act Books, although the statement of the Leeds churchwardens concerning the fact that Walter Mason had failed to attend church between 1629 and 1631, 'but liveth like an

1. CCL U37, f13; A. G. Dickens, Lollards and Protestants in the Diocese of York, London, 1959, p16; Spicer's view of Christ's humanity was echoed in the composite heresy for which Edward Wightman was burnt in 1612, in which Wightman claimed that 'Christe our Saviour tooke not humane flesh of the substance of the virgine Mary his mother', C. Burrage, Early English Dissenters, Cambridge, 1912, p218.

2. CCL x-5-6 f283.

Atheists making no profession of any religion' may reflect rather the anxieties or prejudices of the presenters rather than the philosophical standpoint of the defendant; in this case, doubt rather than doubt appears to have been behind the whole affair. The remaining 'atheistical' presentments can, however, be fitted into an existing, known tradition of speculative thought. In 1620, the Maidstone churchwardens presented

a sonne of John Kemsley for saying that there is no god and that all things come by nature and by Course and that his father doth affirme it also.¹

Six years later, Robert Read of Eastchurch was cited

for that he being wher talke was of God said that he knew not whether there was any god or no hee never sawe him, things might come by nature.²

On May 24th, he was called upon to answer to the authorities where he admitted stating that 'hee for his parte never sawe God nor the divell in person' and that he thought the rest of those in whose company he had been were of the same opinion, although this, of course, may simply have been an attempt to lessen his own part in proceedings by implicating others. Such wording is by no means unknown. Keith Thomas gives the example of an Essex parishioner who was said to have stated that 'all things come by nature' and that 'he does affirm this as an atheist'; moreover, in wording very similar to that of Robert Read, he also cites the case of a Durham parishioner who affirmed

I do not believe there is either God or Devil;
neither will I believe anything but what I see.³

1. CCL x-6-4 f184, z-4-1 f187.

2. CCL x-6-3 f83.

3. K. V. Thomas, Religion and the Decline of Magic, London, 1971, p202.

The concept that all things come by Nature was to become part of the Ranter ethic in the 1650s, as well as part of the spiritual torment that the wilder elements of religious radicalism endured before finding their respective spiritual havens. Lodowick Muggleton, Lawrence Clarkson, the young George Fox, and at one stage Richard Baxter - four men with very different viewpoints - were all assailed by such thoughts before reaching their eventual and various metaphysical destinies.¹ Once more, totally inadequate supportive detail concerning Kemsley or Read makes it impossible to explain their statements in any depth or with any degree of accuracy; all that, perhaps, remains to be suggested is that both men belonged to that group of unbelievers which has been characterised by Professor Aylmer as 'the popular scoffer and blasphemer' in contrast to the genuine atheist who has arrived at his conclusion as a result of a prolonged internalised intellectual debate. In this context, Professor Aylmer goes on to sound a timely warning against the danger of attempting to over-explain historical phenomena, and his views that 'we must allow for the role of sheer muddle and misunderstanding in history' is, perhaps, as wise a course to follow as those who would seek to fulfil the historian's dream of producing complete coherence out of source chaos.²

The final group of statements which will fit into no particular pattern opens with the opinion of Nicholas Proctor of Queenborough, who affirmed in 1582 that

the byble was not the word of god and further
when he should take his othe before the maior
he refused to kyss the book accordynge to lawe.³

It is possible that his words as baldly recorded in this presentment imply a standard

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1. C. Hill, The World Turned Upside Down, (hereafter W. T. U. D.), London, 1972, pp173, 179, 205; G. Fox, The Journal of George Fox, London, 1852, Vol.I., pp4, 22; N. Keeble ed., The Autobiography of Richard Baxter, London, 1931, pp26-8.
 2. G. Aylmer, "Unbelief in Seventeenth-century England" in Puritans and Revolutionaries, eds., D. Pennington and K. V. Thomas, Oxford, 1978, pp25, 31-32.
 3. CCL x-2-4 ff19, 158.

Puritan objection to the non-scriptural parts of the Bible, such as the Apocrypha, although the non-attendance and non-reception presentments accompanying this case would seem to suggest rather more deep-seated scruples. Objections to oaths were familiar tenets of Lollardy, Anabaptism, and Quakerism; it would be thus premature to assume that his refusal to take his oath before the Mayor is indicative of a doctrinal extremism. Josias Nicholls, the Puritan minister of the parish of Eastwell, refused to swear an oath in 1585, although the reasons for such behaviour are far from clear.¹ It is possible that, in both cases, recalcitrance to swear an oath on the Bible can be identified as a refusal to make a commitment using a form of external object, a scruple connected with the general approach to superstition that Keith Thomas has observed as being a feature of extreme Protestantism in the second half of the sixteenth century. However, if Proctor's words can be taken at face value, his position over the oath could equally stem from the logical conclusion that, since the Bible was not the word of God, swearing an oath upon it was a somewhat meaningless exercise. His denial of the Bible as being God's word is hard to reconcile with the kind of Bibliolatry that was very much a feature of Puritan singularity, as exemplified by Richard Baxter the elder.² There is some evidence of a critical approach to Scripture in this part of Kent during the 1540s; the Tenterden priest, Humphrey Cotton, was reported to have said in 1543 that 'there be heresies' in the Bible, whilst John Thatcher of Canterbury asserted that 'the Bible was made by the Devil', but, apart from these, there is little in terms of an existing tradition to aid the categorization of this statement which, in the last analysis, could reflect some kind of individualistic materialism rejecting all external tokens of spiritual worship.³ Equally, if the Blasphemy Ordinance of 1648 is anticipated, such views as expressed by Proctor could be akin to unbelief.

1. CCL x-2-9 f33.

2. Thomas, op.cit., pp76-77; Collinson, The Elizabethan Puritan Movement, pp27-28; Keeble, op.cit., pp4-5.

3. Brewer, Letters and Papers...., Vol.XVIII, p307.

The extraordinary presentment of Elizabeth Dewton of the parish of St. Alphege in Canterbury in 1612 is, in one sense, more straightforward to discuss. Her crime was blasphemy for making a statement that there was

a child by her to be brought forth and sayeth
that she is certefyed by revelacion that the
name of that child shalbe Moses and the surname
Emanuele because yt shalbe another saviour.

She was duly brought to court where she is reported to have said

that she hath so affirmed and reported and yt
hath soe bene revealed unto her by an angell
sent from the Lord.¹

Once again, the spirit behind such an assertion harks back to a recognisable Messianism detectable in a variety of utterances both before, and during, the sixteenth century, one of the most notable being that concerning William Hacket, and it is interesting to note that one of his 'sect', the mystic Edmund Copinger, felt an extraordinary calling to visit Kent in the 1590s although there are no surviving details of where exactly in the county he went.² Keith Thomas observes that

there had been a steady procession of would-be prophets during the previous century, some of them claiming to be Christ in person or his appointed representative; a pretension which had been familiar in medieval England and which was well known to Tudor writers on mental illness.

and there survives a potentially valid example of his final point in the case of Alice Fancocke of Northgate parish in Canterbury, whose nonconformity in 1597 was excused by the churchwardens on the grounds of her being 'a frantick body'.³

1. CCL x-9-11 f188.

2. R. Bancroft, Dangerous Positions and Proceedings, London, 1593, p144.

3. Thomas, op.cit., pp156-157; CCL x-3-9 f194.

However, her mother was presented in 1574 for disturbing the minister during the service, and another member of the Fancocke family was one of the early adherents of John Durant's Congregational Church in Canterbury during the 1640s, evidence which may suggest that the initial presentment discussed contains more to it than might be deemed possible at first sight. The claim to be carrying the Messiah was a feature of Interregnum radicalism, as were Messianic utterances and gestures in general - witness the behaviour of James Nayler. The Ranter, Mary Adams, asserted that she was about to give birth to Christ.¹ In this context, the statement of Elizabeth Dewton takes its place in a general phenomenon of popular extremism, further analysis being rendered impossible by lack of additional material.

One final example may serve to bring us back to the problems posed at the beginning of this Chapter and to throw, perhaps, some light on the whole question. In 1635, one of the churchwardens of the parish of Bredgar in the Sittingbourne Deanery presented John Nightingale

for a comon blasphemmer as namely for sayeing
that woemen have noe soules.²

Concerning this attitude, Keith Thomas has recently written,

Women were also near the animal state. Over many centuries theologians had debated, half frivolously, half seriously, whether or not the female sex had souls, a discussion which closely paralleled the debate about animals and was sometimes echoed at a popular level. At Witley in Surrey in 1570, one Nicholas Woodies allegedly asserted that women had no souls; at Earls Colne, Essex, in 1588, the minister himself said the same; and in the diocese of Peterborough in 1614 a local wit was reported for 'avowing and obstinately

1. CCL x-1-2 f137; CCL U37; B. S. Capp, The Fifth Monarchy Men, London, 1972, p42; Hill, W.T.U.D., p249.

2. CCL x-6-3 f253.

defending that women have no souls, but their shoe soles'. The Quaker George Fox met a group of people who held that women had 'no souls, no more than a goose'.¹

John Nightingale's statement can hardly be taken as a serious theological belief or rationalisation - his levity is evident in the same presentment where he is accused of laughing and giggling in church during the service - but this minor event may serve to indicate a wider truth. If the evidence marshalled by Keith Thomas can be taken to suggest that such a view was not uncommon, and if the example of Nightingale can be accepted as being in any sense representative, then it would suggest that there may have operated at a popular level a whole series of proverbial or formulaic attitudes or statements upon which the less articulate could draw in time of discussion. The implications of this for research are clear; such a state of affairs would explain the recurrence of similar expressions. Professions of atheism may be a case in point, the repetition of the formula 'all things come by nature' being the natural suffix to any discussion or expression concerning unbelief, and thus not necessarily a display of either conscious rationalisation or the existence of any underground tradition of the same. Whether or not the pronouncers of such proverbial wisdom were aware of the radicalism underlying the repetition of such formulae, and whether or not such statements were made in a daring rather than convinced spirit can, in most cases, never be known since details such as where and when such views were expressed are usually missing.

The impact of the methodological approach of Keith Thomas and Christopher Hill to the question of popular beliefs and attitudes cannot be called into question, and the contribution that their respective studies have made in this field has been seminal. Nevertheless, in the light of the attitudes examined in this Chapter, it is certainly worth questioning the amalgamation of statements to indicate a fundamental truth; if such an approach in no way devalues the methodological style employed in such works as The World Turned Upside Down, it certainly validates the alternative

1. K. V. Thomas, Man and the Natural World, London, 1983, p43.

perspective. In the final analysis, given the poverty of supportive evidence, all the historian can do, perhaps, is to 'eschew lumping like the plague' and to observe, record, discuss, and pass on.

Chapter 4 : Sects and Sectarianism in the Diocese of Canterbury,
1640-1660.

Before a study of the relationship between the separatism described in the second Chapter of this study to the formal dissenting Churches which emerged in the Diocese following the collapse of Laud's and Charles I's administration is attempted, some effort must be made to trace the development of the more extreme groups which existed in this area during this period. Such a task is not simple. With the fading of the Act Books and Visitation Records the quest for religious radicalism becomes more complex, especially in the light of the quasi-dialectical fact that what was deemed radical by conservative forces in the 1590s had, in one sense, become a conservative force itself by the 1650s in the face of extremer sectarianism. Evidence for the existence of the wilder sects in this area for this period is sparse, and knowledge of them comes largely from incidental sources, for their failure to keep any records was in fact part of the very radicalism for which they stood, the Seekers being a firm example of this.

The various groups of which there is some sign consist of Seekers, Ranters, Levellers, and Diggers, and the chapter will conclude with fleeting references after the period in question to 'unmingl'd' Brownists and, in the light of recent research, to the existence of Muggletonians.

Information concerning Seekers in what had been the Diocese of Canterbury comes largely from Quaker sources, some of which will be analysed in greater detail in Chapter 7. The conversion of Thomas Howsegoe of Staplehurst to Quakerism is a case in point. According to the testimony of the Quaker Ambrose Rigge, Howsegoe was, in the early 1650s, the pastor of a large group of Seekers in that area prior to his conviction;

we came to Staplehurst where we found a great
congregation of Seekers so called amongst whom
Thomas Howsegoe was Teacher, where we had a good
service; many of them being convinced with their

Teacher, and his wife and children, who lived
and died in the faith.¹

There is further confirmatory evidence of the existence of this sect in the Weald in another Quaker source. In June 1655, Alexander Parker, whilst on a general proselytizing mission through Kent, wrote to Margaret Fell of his visit to Cranbrook where, in the morning, he preached to the Baptists, and

In the afternoon I came to a meeting of Seekers
soe called A great meeting and an old man speaking
over them truly the old man is great in ignorance
and blindness, they are very self wiled and con-
ceited and would not suffer me to speake but
were full of confution, and after much contention
I came away giving them warning of the dreadful
day of god that is coming upon all the enemyes
of god and fals hypocrits.²

It is, however, probably fruitless to attempt to trace the development of the Seekers or any of the wilder elements of religious sectarianism in the area of Kent under study by employing similar methodology to that used in the early chapters of this work, in the sense that the drift towards the embracing of Seeker attitudes would seem to be the result of a highly personal and internalised process on the part of the individual concerned. Further on, the spiritual pilgrimage of Howsegoe will be analysed more closely since his journey through non-denominational dissent through Independency to the Seekers and, ultimately, the Quaker movement is an informative and probably not unrepresentative phenomenon.³ In his case, there was an identifiable sect around him, but a similar process of 'falling off' or literally seeking can be seen in the case of the Dover Quaker Luke Howard, who drifted

1. A. Rigge, Constancy in Truth, London, 1710, p9.

2. Library of the Society of Friends (hereafter LSF), Caton MS 3/94 ff285-286.

3. See below p 250 ff.

from the early Particular Baptists in Canterbury to the General Baptists, and then into a 'seeking state' in which he was led to conclude

there was nothing in religion to be knowne more than I had found.

Whilst it appears that he avoided lapsing into the extremer behaviour associated with the Ranters, he did attempt to take his 'fill of the world' before he was eventually drawn into the Quaker movement, becoming one of the first important converts of the Caton/Stubbs mission to Kent in 1655.¹ If Howard was a Seeker, there is no evidence in his spiritual autobiography of the existence of a recognisable sect of that type in East Kent, and thus the whole notion of Seekerism takes on the form of a personal mental state arising out of the shortcomings of the dissenting churches which became apparent once they had become formalised and given over, somewhat ironically, to the efficient exercise of discipline.

Further evidence of Seeker tendencies can be seen in the writings of a Benenden parishioner, Simon Henden, who has been characterised in a recent study as a Ranter, a designation which may require reassessment.² Little is known of Henden, although it is possible, perhaps, to discern some form of lineal connection between non-separatist Puritan nonconformity and later sectarianism in this particular instance from the following entry in the Act Books under Rolvenden in 1625;

at the baptism of the childe of Frances Cushman the wife of Symon Henden of the parish of Benenden tooke away the childe before shee could be signed or received into the congregation as it is specified in the booke of comon praier.³

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1. L. Howard, Love and Truth in Plainness Manifested, London, 1704, pp5-8; Tolmie, op.cit., pp82-83.
 2. Clarke E.P.S. p178.
 3. CCL x-6-7 f194.

In 1648, Henden appears to have signed the Petition from Kent encouraging the Commons in

bringing of the person of the Kinge together
with the rest of the Grand Delinquents to a
speedy Triall

in the hopes that the House of Commons will be satisfied with nothing less

then the blood of those persons who have beene
the principall Authors of its effusion, foras-
much as God himself hath said without distinction
of persons that whosoe sheddeth mans blood by man
shall his blood be shed.¹

Henden's views come to light as a result of his publication which resulted in a local controversy with the Biddenden Baptist pastor, George Hammon. In the preface to his work, Henden sets out a series of criticisms of existing churches and their theological attitudes, beginning with an attack on the Presbyterians. In so doing he reveals one of his fundamental standpoints;

Others seem to look with eagle-eyes over many generations into the purest primitive times, and erect new models of Churches, parallel (as they suppose) to their first, and most accomplished pattern, and this I am perswaded the most do out the sincerity of their hearts. But they, not observing the cessation and departure of the glory of God from the primitive government, nor how Anti-Christ had full power in that outward court, nor rightly discerning the next immediate fountaine whence a Gospel-marriage flowes, nor marking the variety of God's dispensations in severall seasons, imbrace shadows

1. Bodleian Library, Oxford, (hereafter Bodl. Lib.) Tanner MS57, ff476-487.

for real substance and set up bestiall idols
instead of true Gospel churches.¹

The eclectic view that the presence of Christ continued no longer than the Apostolic age and would return with the second coming closely approximates the opinions of the rather obscure pre-Revolutionary sect of Legatine-Arians as described at the beginning of the century by Henoeh Clapham, and places Henden fairly firmly in the Seeker mould both theologically and personally, given his subsequent statement concerning his own particular 'dark night of the soul' in which he felt

shipt betwixt two seas, sometimes tossed one
way, sometimes another.²

Rejection of ecclesiology subsequent to the death of the Apostles was implicit in some of Milton's earlier views; what made this attitude extreme when recast in the Seeker way was that its adherents' anticipation of the appearance of another John the Baptist, or other Apostolic figure, who would pave the way for the millenium, or, worse, the personal identification on the part of the individual Seeker of himself as that figure. There is, however, no evidence to suggest that Henden thought of himself in this latter category although, by implication, it can be suggested that his thought developed positively from the former framework. He joined Independent worship for a time, although it is doubtful as to whether he ever became a covenanted member of one of these churches, and he gradually began to experience doubts about the validity of early Congregationalism;

I began more narrowly to pry into the primitive
platform; and in this I dissented from the rest...
....I spyed that all my model was but an outward
form, voide of that Spirit of life; that the glory
of God was departed from those ordinances I then

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1. S. Henden, The Key to Scripture Prophecies, London, 1652, Sig A2;
K. Burton ed., John Milton: Prose Writings, London, 1958, pp20-25.
 2. H. Clapham, Errour on the Right Hand, London, 1608.

plead for, and did not anywhere accompany their execution.¹

This is an immensely valuable statement in that it goes a long way in explaining, perhaps, the appeal of Quakerism to the Seekers as observed in the cases of Thomas Howsegoe and Luke Howard, for the Quaker approach to the concept of the church was in a not dissimilar vein in its heavy emphasis on the inward, as opposed to the outward, temple. At this stage, however, the Quakers lay in the future as far as this corner of England was concerned, and Henden eventually found his way to an anticipatory viewpoint;

I received an answer by a light of the Spirit beyond mine own, that the way to be resolved in the case I desired, was to abstract my thoughts from all former conjectures of myself and others and look nakedly into the Prophecies of the Anti-Christian times, the age we live in, and that to come, compared with the primitive.

From such meditation he concluded that there was a need for a new ministry since Rome alone

was not the whole woman Babylon (as hath been commonly conceived) but that she containeth besides the grand one, many harlots distinct in their form as daughters from their mothers.²

It is his conception of the 'new ministry' which is suggestive of his Messianic attitude, for such dispensers of this ministry which is to be the last, must be guided by the 'Spirit of Prophecy' without which they will be unable to unlock the mysteries of the Book of Revelation, itself the only key to any comprehension of the forthcoming Gospel age. It has already been noted that Henden has been referred to as a Ranter, and yet he reserves his greatest scorn for the members of this sect

1. Henden, op.cit., sig.b2.

2. ibid.

'who in their blasphemies and beastly lusts' are excluded from participation in his concept of the future.¹

The remainder of his work is devoted to the literary defence of his assertions against John Elmstone, one of his main theological opponents, over the fundamental Seeker denial of any definite link between the existing church order and the primitive church, and the assertion that the link, if it ever existed, was eventually fractured by the 'Romish Apostacie.'² The details of the controversy need not concern us, and Henden concludes with a ringing passage illustrative of more, perhaps, than just his own spiritual development;

Yet one thing more. You have taken a great deal of pains through your whole book to prove a true visible stated Gospel Church thoroughout the Gospel times, but all this while you have not shewed us which of all the several forms is that true stated Church. Rome arrogates it, the Lutherans usurp it, the English Episcopacie plead it, the Presbyters and you challenge it, the Dippers appropriate it, those called Brownists claim it as their sole interest, the Independents assume it. And truely, the wisest man in Europe taking a thorow view of every-one of these Church-models, will be at a stand certainly to determine which of them is true and right, and which had its lineal descent in the rectitude or order from the Primitive. The more accurately he examines, the greater occasion he may find to question all.³

1. ibid., p2

2. Elmstone was a Cranbrook schoolmaster with Puritan inclinations; see F. Haslewood, The Parish of Benenden, Ipswich, 1889, p179, E. Melling, ed., Kentish Sources II; Kent and the Civil War, Maidstone, 1960, pp3-4.

3. ibid., p94.

Here, surely, is a near perfect elucidation of the post-Reformation development in religion pushed to its near inevitable conclusion; as a contemporary summary of the issues discussed in general within this study it has much to commend it.

Professor Tolmie had demonstrated the potency of the Seeker view concerning apostacy from the Apostolic Church model as a destructive force amongst the Baptist Churches of London,

for if there was no succession of baptism from the time of the Apostles through the traditional churches, then true baptism could be restored only by an administrator having an extraordinary commission such as John the Baptist.¹

and thus it is not surprising that Henden should have been involved in a detailed debate with the Baptist community in the Weald during the 1650s. His main opponent was the pastor of the Biddenden Baptist Church, George Hammon, and it is clear from the preface to his printed defence of Baptist ecclesiology and theology, that the argument between himself and Simon Henden included not only the latter's son, John, but also took the form of a face-to-face debate. Hammon writes,

According to my promise, and the desire of many friends I have taken in hand to give some further account of the Conference that we had at your House of June the 3rd 1658. Together with an Examination and Tryal of some few particulars published by you upon a more mature consideration.²

The work is chiefly a series of counter-arguments to the main line of Henden's opinion over the relationship of the existing church states to the primitive Apostolic model. Hammon argues implicitly against the kind of uniformity that the Seeker doctrine would seem to be proposing for, although he bemoans the fact that

1. Tolmie, op.cit., p54

2. G. Hammon, Truth and Innocency prevailing against Error and Insolency, London, 1660, p103.

The Diversity of Opinions in our times is very great, as you well know, the which causeth much division and strangeness in point of Neighbourhood amongst men professing godliness

he concludes that even if Henden finds that all existing church models are

of a different mettall from the true, how near so ever to the primitive they seem to be in outward shell

yet their grand salvation is the inescapable fact that they are all firmly grounded upon 'Believers possessed of such power sent down from Heaven' - a more tolerant Hammon this than the explosive antagonist of the Quakers at Lydd in 1655.¹

If the only hard evidence concerning the existence of the Seekers as a sect comes from the Weald, then perversely the scraps of information concerning the Ranters come from urban centres. There is plainly just not enough extant information for this part of Kent to suggest that the Ranters were ever classifiable as an organised sect, although it is possible to identify the existence of Ranters or Ranting tendencies in the County, Lawrence Clarkson being a notable proponent. Clarkson visited Kent by his own admission some time after his release from prison in 1646, and was active in Maidstone and Canterbury. On the second of his visits he records that he

found none of the people so zealous as formerly, so that my journey was but a small advantage to me, and there I heard the maid had been in these parts to seek me, but not hearing of me, returned home again, and not long after was married to one of that sect.²

The maid referred to came from Canterbury and thus by implication it would seem

1. ibid., pp105, 158.

2. L. Clarkson, The Lost Sheep Found, London, 1660, p22.

that there were Ranters in the city at this time, an impression confirmed by the excommunication of Margaret Courthoppe by the congregation of Durant's Independent Church for

forsaking all of the church meetings, adhering to heresy and false teachers, with companying with ranting persons, and for refusing to hear the admonition of the church.¹

The only other concrete reference to Ranters occurs outside of the boundaries of this study but is clearly worthy of mention en passant. Two of the more noted Ranter preachers, Joseph Salmon and Richard Coppin appear to have been active in and around Rochester during the late 1640s and early 1650s. Coppin's mission would appear to have been effective since three Presbyterian lecturers were appointed to go to Rochester with the specific task of preaching down 'the Blasphemies and Heresies of Richard Coppin and his besotted and begotted followers' there. He was subsequently arrested in 1655 on the orders of Major-General Kelsey following a series of sermons delivered in Rochester Cathedral, and was effectively silenced.²

The only reference to the Digger or True Leveller movement in Kent is the mention of a community of Diggers at Cox Hall, the location of which remains elusive. Cox Hill has been put forward as one possible site, a place just to the East of the Dover/Canterbury road. Christopher Hill has identified Digger influence in the anonymous pamphlet from Kent entitled No Age Like Unto This Age, the possible authorship of which is discussed below in Chapter 5 with reference to the later career of the Sutton Valence separatist John Turner. It is an assertion worthy of examination since, if this was a Digger pamphlet, then it is not only valuable evidence of the possible spread of the communal ideas of this group into

1. CCL U37 f17.

2. A. L. Morton, The World of the Ranters, London, 1970, pp94, 97; Hill, W. T. U. D., p222.

3. G. H. Sabine ed., The Works of Gerrard Winstanley, Cornell, 1941, p411; Hill, W. T. U. D., pp124-127.

Kent, but also, by implication, would be suggestive of the predominance of Wealden areas as being those to which such influences had spread. It is certainly true to say that since the pamphlet was addressed to Richard Cromwell, Major-General Harrison, and 'all the rest of those worthy commanders', it would fit into the literary tradition of political Levelling in the context of direct appeals made to Army leaders. However, the subtitle of the pamphlet sets out quite clearly the nature of the work;

Wherein the oppressed do declare the particulars of their sufferings since the beginning of the late Parliament, how their houses were broken open, and their babies imprisoned, their Cattel and goods violently taken from them, pretended for Tythes that unjust gain of oppression, besides their great sufferings in the days of the late Kings and Bishops.¹

The prime target of the pamphlet was thus to be tithes, and the first eleven pages, nearly half of the piece in fact, are devoted to citing the cases of individual parishioners who suffered distraint of goods for non-payment, the most detail being given of the case of John Turner. Whilst opposition to tithes was certainly part of Winstanley's platform, so was it an integral part of the early Congregationalist platform, as is shown in the following chapter in an analysis of the written works of John Turner. It is here that an important distinction is necessary. Winstanley's opposition to tithes can be seen as very much part of a general rejection of the principle of economic elitism - 'that God whom you serve, and which did entitle you lords, knights, gentlemen and landlords is covetousness' - whereas the opposition of, for example, John Turner hinged on the total absence of Scriptural authority for the maintenance of tithes.² In short, the argument of early Congregationalism was not primarily economic, and it is the latter influence that

1. Anon., No Age Like Unto This Age, London, 1653, title page.

2. Sabine, op,cit., pp409, 532.

can be the more readily detected in the pamphlet in question;

Question : Why should tythes be put down ?

Answer : For that they are opposite to the Gospel, and the paying and receiving thereof doth thereby deny Christ to be come in the flesh. The Apostles gave no direction for paying of tythes neither received they any but what the people freely gave them.

Question : But if the Minister in England should be left free to the peoples benevolence they would have but a small portion.

Answer : Then it doth appear that neither the Minister nor people stand in the order but are of Anti-Christ, for Christ's ministers are content with his wages and never did seeke any humane power for their maintenance.¹

The logic employed, and the phraseology used, in this argument are both extremely close to those as set out in John Turner's pamphlet Tithes Proved Unlawfull, and it is upon this, taken with the predominance of his biographical detail, that permits the view to be adopted that he had some hand in the composition of No Age Like Unto This Age. Where more radical influences may be seen, and it is probable that it is upon this that Christopher Hill bases his statement concerning the Digger content of the pamphlet, is in a list of points to be 'proved', the majority of which deal with Church exactions, but three of which suggest a wider countenance; that the law be regulated and all oppressive measures abolished; that the Jews be allowed to reside in England in freedom; and that the laws be written in plain English. Demands concerning the reformation of law and legal practice were, it cannot be denied, an important feature of Digger propaganda -

1. No Age Like Unto This Age, p14; for a discussion of Turner's attitude to tithes and a comparison of the phrases he uses, see below, p142ff.

The lawyers they conjoyne, stand up now, stand up now,
The lawyers they conjoyne, stand up now, stand up now,
To arrest you they advise, such fury they devise,
the devill in them lies, and hath blinded both their eyes

runs one particular Digger song - and the 'Norman laws' were a regular target for the leading pamphleteers of the Leveller movement, as was the use of language other than plain English in legal affairs.¹ Both these were an important feature of the final and abortive Agreement of the Free People of England, published in May 1649.² The suggestion that Jews be allowed freedom to live in England is, however, less easy to place. Richard Overton certainly preached toleration for the Jews as part of a general religious toleration - 'Are we not all creatures of one God, redeemed by Lord Jesus Christ? - but such views concerning toleration were not the sole prerogative of Leveller adherents.³

In the final analysis, then, this pamphlet from Kent cannot be seen as positive evidence of the existence of a coherent Digger movement in Kent and, whilst it must be admitted that it contains identifiable Digger strains, the majority of its content does not conform to the known attitudes of that group, and in particular there is no hint of a mention of the commons or property ownership in the publication. It was thus probably something of a composite work reflective of a complex and troubled spiritual age, and is no less instructive for that.

In his wide ranging study of political and religious developments in Kent from the Reformation to the Restoration, Peter Clark has observed of the late 1640s that

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1. Worcester College, Oxford, Clarke MS18 f32; No Age Like Unto This Age, p13.
 2. For Leveller opposition to the existing legal system, see especially J. Lilburne, Englands Birth-Right Justified, London, 1645, p35 and G. Aylmer, The Levellers in the English Revolution, London, 1975, pp85, 165.
 3. H. N. Brailsford, The Levellers & the English Revolution, Manchester, 1961, p55.

Equally indicative of the new left-wing undercurrent in the county was the appearance of Leveller activity in a number of West Kent towns - indeed, it is possible that the Leveller organisation in Kent was the strongest outside London.¹

an assertion which appears to be based on Pauline Gregg's view as expressed in her biography of John Lilburne that

Apart from London and Southwark, the organisation in Kent was the most advanced. Lilburne visited Dartford personally, and was in touch with Army men in the county. Remembering, too, the Hertfordshire and Buckinghamshire men who had petitioned for him and Overton thirteen months previously, he visited Watford and made a special appeal to them. A report from the agents in Gravesend, Maidstone and other Kentish towns was due on Sunday, January 23rd, when four of the central committee, including Lilburne and Wildman, were to meet the Kentish agents at Dartford.

This meeting never took place since, by January 19th, Lilburne was in the Tower and Wildman had been consigned to the Fleet.² Such evidence as there is for a widespread Leveller movement or influence in Kent rests on two sources. The first of these concerning the political organisation of the movement is a Letter to Kentish Levellers, dated 'Dartford, this 9. of Jan. 1647' and signed 'John Lilburne, Wildman, John Davis, Richard Woodward.' After an opening complaint about the parlous state of the country caused by 'Divisions, Distractions, heartburnings, and contentions which abound in this distressed nation' the letter proceeds to discuss the organisation of a Petition which presumably was the 'Large' Petition of March 1647;

1. Clark, E. P. S., pp389, 478n.

2. P. Gregg, Freeborn John, London, 1961, p231.

Many honest people are resolved to unite together in that Petition, and to prosecute it with all their strength, they are determined, that now after seven years waiting for Justice, Peace, and Freedome, they will receive no deniall in these requests which are so essentiall to their Peace and Freedome, and for the more effectuall proceedings in this business, there is a Method and order setled in all the Wards of London, and the out Parishes and suburbs; they have appointed severall active men in every Ward and Division, to be a committee, to take the speciall care of the businesse, and to appoint active men in every Parish to read the Petition at set meetings for that purpose.

The authors go on to say that this process is to take place in other counties - Hertfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire, Cambridgeshire, and Rutland - and they urge the Levellers in Kent to

appoint meetings in every division of your County, and there to select men of publick spirits, to take care that the Petition be sent to the hands of the most active men in every towne, to unite the Town in those desires of common right, and to take their subscriptions.

Agents thus appointed were asked to assemble at Dartford on January 23rd, to confer 'about matters that concerne your Peace, and common good and Freedome.'¹

"The Levellers in Kent" - how many of them were there? Did they exist as a coherent organised group in any sense, or would they have done if the meeting of Sunday, January 23rd, had gone ahead? Certainly hostile contemporaries were

1. W. Haller and G. Davies eds., The Leveller Tracts 1647-1653, Columbia, 1944, pp102-104.

prepared to believe so for, following the collapse of Ingoldesby's mutiny at Oxford, it was stated that the mutineers had expected the support of some 'thousands' from Kent.¹ Equally, it must be remembered that what is identified as Dartford today was very different from that place three hundred years ago, when it must have been more Kentish than London. Even so, this would perhaps argue for the Leveller influence impinging only slightly into the county. Even if Leveller influence can be seen behind some of the ideas in No Age Like Unto This Age, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the Leveller movement made little impact on Kent and this, in one sense, is not unreasonable since it was primarily a phenomenon based in London and within the Army; there is evidence, shadowy and indistinct, of certain insurrections at Wye, Staple, and Woodnesborough during the late 1640s but there is insufficient confirmatory material to suggest that they were Leveller inspired although, of course, it is possible that they may have contained elements akin to those examined in the pamphlet mentioned above.²

The nature of Fifth Monarchism has undergone changes in interpretation of late, Dr. Capp concluding in his study that as a movement it was predominantly urban and that it left large parts of the country untouched, including, perhaps surprisingly, Essex. More important is the fact that Dr. Capp identifies the Fifth Monarchists as a 'political and religious sect' which developed out of the Millenarianism of the 1640s. On a provincial level, however, identification of 'Fifth Monarchy Men' is not a straightforward affair, especially as far as Kent is concerned. The millenarian expectations of John Durant of Canterbury, which are discussed more fully in the following chapter, were quite plain for all to see, and one stage he published the statement

In a few years I beleieve a man may in sober
speech ask, Where is the King of England?
where is the King of France? where is the

-
1. Mercurius Pragmaticus (18-25 September 1649).
 2. No Age Like Unto This Age, p10.

King of Spaine? where is the Danish, Swedish,
Hungarian power?

and yet it is difficult, to say the least, to envisage Durant in the same category as Venner, for example, or the housewife of Deal who, when her hands were covered in blood whilst dressing a pig, stated

Oh that my hands were in that regall bloude
Charles Stewart.

even if Durant was referred to after the Restoration as

The principall agent in getting hands to the
petition for bringing his late Majesty to his
trial and death.¹

Positive identification of Fifth Monarchism for the moment, then, remains confined to Canterbury, Sandwich, and, possibly, Egerton. In 1656, the names of Fifth Monarchist agents in Kent are given as Captain Boys and Mr. Taylor, both of Sandwich. Given the tone of the letter written by the Independent congregation of Sandwich to the army in Scotland and the later behaviour there of a Captain Owen Cox, who was arrested in 1661 for mooring his ship in the harbour full of powder and for using seditious language, it is likely that there was an element of this radical movement in this town, but little more can be added to this generalised picture.²

At Canterbury, there appears to have been some connection during 1653 between Durant's congregation and a number of London Churches which had been

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1. J. Durant, The Salvation of the Saints, London, 1653, p293; PRO SP 19/199 f21; M. V. Jones, "The Divine Durant" in Archaeologia Cantiana, Ashford, 1968, Vol. 83, p199; It is interesting to note that Durant's name does not appear in Tanner MS57.
 2. T. Birch ed., A Collection of the State Papers of John Thurloe, London, 1742, Vol. VI., p187; Worcester Coll., Oxford, Clarke MS 18 f42; Capp, op.cit., p208.

organised into a form of Fifth Monarchist organisation by Vavasour Powell and Christopher Feake, and it is in this context that Professor Tolmie's observation with reference to the London churches that it was in the Independent congregations that millenarian ideas developed and

it was the Independents John Rogers, Christopher Feake, John Simpson, and Vavasour Powell who were to give leadership to the Fifth Monarchy movement

is of especial value, since all four of these radicals were signatories of the letter sent to Durant's church.¹ Apart from this, however, the only other evidence concerning the activities of Fifth Monarchists in Canterbury emerges outside the period covered by this study. It would seem that there was a group in the city in 1665 under the leadership of one Fritton, possibly the Alexander Fritton who was identified as a Baptist pastor there in the Episcopal returns of 1669, but there are no details other than this concerning the activities or extent of this group.²

There is no direct evidence that this brand of radicalism was to be found in the Wealden parish of Egerton, a village with, as has been seen in a previous chapter, a strong tradition of nonconformity during the 1620s and thereafter. However, a letter to the Secretary of State, Sir Henry Bennett, from Colonel Thomas Culpepper, dated November 12th, 1662, deserves mention within the context of Fifth Monarchism in Kent. The letter concerns the arrest of Thomas Palmer, an erstwhile pastor of the Congregational church of Nottingham and an itinerant Fifth Monarchist preacher. Culpepper writes;

The last Sunday I was at Egerton where Mr Palmer the Preacher did intend to preach, tho he had notice of my coming found in his pocket as you will see by this letter, the date whereof is equall to that of my orders, and tho I have

1. Tolmie, *op.cit.*, p87.

2. PRO SP 29/136 f65; Lyon Turner, *op.cit.*, pp13-14.

found who gave you intelligence I hope you will please to direct how he shall be proceeded against. Your preacher I found in a disguise intending to have passed my men, and being discovered made some persistence. I had taken about 200 of his Auditors and sett sentrees on them in the church whilst I went to searche the towne, but before I came agayne my soldiers were all gone, and had let as many of them goe as would. Some 30 stayed because none of them refused the Oathes and promised to meete no more I let them goe having taken engagements from them that they would appeare if they should be summoned. They who should have given the Oathes in this County are extreemly to blame for I hardly find one that hath taken them.¹

Palmer claimed that he came from Canterbury and that he had taken the Oath required by the Act of Uniformity of 1662, but Culpepper goes on the state that he also apprehended an Ashford preacher 'who doth absolutely desist from it', a phrase that tends to confirm the impression given in a further letter of October 1661 which claimed that

the wild of Kent is a receptacle for the distressed running parsons and I heare they have vented abundance of seditious practices.

Of additional interest is the fact that part of Culpepper's commission was to arrest Colonel Kenrick, who had played an important part in the reception of Quaker ideas in that area during the 1650s. It would, of course, be optimistic to envisage a sect of two hundred supporters of Fifth Monarchism in Egerton and its environs, but, given the general impression of the Weald as a notable nursery of nonconformity and sectarianism it is not impossible that the figure represents to a degree the strength or presence of the movement in this part of Kent.

1. PRO SP 29/62 f110.

Two final sects require mention, although, in the case of one of them, evidence is, to say the least, limited. In their report concerning nonconformity as demanded by Archbishop Sheldon in 1676, Archdeacon Parker and his Commissary, Thomas Boucher, recorded the following qualifications at the foot of their returns;

6thly A considerable part of the Dissenters are not of any sect whatsoever
7thly At Ashford and other places Wee find a new sort of Hereticks called after the name of one Muggleton, a London Taylor, in number about 30
8thly The rest of the Dissenters are Presbyterians Independents and Quakers of about equall numbers, onely 2 or 3 called Self Willers professedly.¹

Recent research has uncovered the existence of a Muggletonian presence in Kent, its last adherent, a retired Kentish farmer by the name of Philip Noakes, dying a mere four years ago.²

John Reeve and Lodowick Muggleton, believing themselves to be the Two Witnesses foretold in the Book of Revelation, founded their sect in 1652, but until the recent work of Christopher Hill, Barry Reay, and William Lamont, the impact of that event as far as Kent was concerned, was limited. It is now clear that there were Muggletonians in the Diocese of Canterbury from the 1650s onwards, although, probably as a result of the rejection of any form of proselytization which lay at the roots of Muggletonianism both ancient and modern, their numbers were never very large.

The very nature of Muggletonian organisation makes it difficult to determine whether the Commissary's estimate of Kentish Muggletonians was at all accurate. Barry Reay has shown that Muggletonian meetings were informal affairs and therefore could easily fail to attract the attention of those on the look-out for conventicles after the Restoration. Upon Muggleton's own admission, however,

1. Lyon Turner, op.cit., p27.

2. C.Hill, B.Reay, W.Lamont, The World of the Muggletonians, London, 1983, p1.

Kent was an important area for the sect. Writing to Dorothy Carter in 1660, he observed

but the doctrine of the commission of the Spirit hath been very little received in the world; but the most that hath received it, is here in London, and in Cambridge-shire, and in Kent. In these three places there is a few that is very well grounded in the belief of this spiritual commission.

Of those few in Kent, by far the most important was a heelmaker who lived in Stone Street in Maidstone and whose name was, somewhat appropriately perhaps, Christopher Hill!¹

Much can be learnt of the problems facing the tiny band of Muggletonians in the Diocese of Canterbury at this time from a study of the correspondence between Hill and Lodowick Muggleton. The dating of the foundation of a Muggletonian cell in Maidstone remains understandably obscure, although in a letter to Hill from John Reeve, the founder of the movement, in June 1656 it is clear that the group meeting there had been doing so prior to that date.² Reeve died in 1658, and his last to Hill, dated July 17th, 1657 makes it clear that Hill had received Reeve's blessing, a not unimportant gift for a Muggletonian to receive.

It is in the letters written to Hill by Lodowick Muggleton between 1660 and 1663, however, that a more definite image of the sect can be seen to emerge, and of the importance of Hill in it at a provincial level. Between 1659 and 1660, Lawrence Clarkson, erstwhile Ranter, attempted to fill the vacuum created by the death of Reeve, and it would seem that he sought support for this open challenge to Muggleton's authority by trying to influence the provincial Muggletonians.³ The

1. A. Delamaine and T. Terry eds., A Volume of Spiritual Epistles...by John Reeve and Lodowick Muggleton, (hereafter Spiritual Epistles), Long Acre, 1820, p36.

2. J. & I. Frost eds., Supplement to the Book of Letters written by John Reeve and Lodowick Muggleton, (hereafter Supplement), London, 1831, p5.

3. Hill, Reay, & Lamont, op.cit., p171.

prophet responded by writing at some length to Hill, warning him to in a letter dated in January 1660 to peruse Clarkson's testament The Lost Sheep Found, which Clarkson had apparently circulated for Muggletonians to read, with great care, for

there you shall find a great deal of spiritual
pride assuming to himself those high titles which
never did belong to him, neith did John Reeve,
nor I, ever give to him

and informing Hill that he had sent his daughter to burn several copies of the book before Clarkson's eyes. Yet Muggleton was obviously concerned by the threat that Clarkson posed. He exhorts Hill and 'all the rest of the believers'

not to stumble or stagger in your faith concerning
Claxton, as if your happiness of eternal life
did depend upon believing of him to be a messenger
or a bishop.¹

It would seem, too, that Clarkson's campaign for support in the provinces had met with some success since Muggleton went on

Again my counsel and advice unto you, and the
rest of the believers there about you is, that
you would allow Lawrence Claxton no more
maintenance weekly as you have done formerly²

and he suggests that such funds would be better employed in helping to finance his attempts to have his work on the eleventh chapter of Revelations published.

Muggleton concludes by desiring Hill

to read this letter to all believers of this
commission there about you, though some of them
are unknown to me, with my love to yourself
and mother Wylde, and Martyn the thatcher, and

1. Spiritual Epistles, pp17-18.

2. ibid., p19.

Martyn the tanner, and his wife and daughter,
and all the rest that have a love to this
commission¹

a statement which is not only informative about the early adherents of Muggletonianism in this area but which also establishes beyond doubt the importance of Christopher Hill.

The following month, Muggleton wrote to Hill again, asking him to try to raise forty or fifty shillings towards the expense of publishing the former's book. The letter is of interest in revealing the increasing pressure that his followers were experiencing with the return of reactionary religious attitudes. Hill had clearly written to the prophet for advice concerning attendance at church and the imposition of oaths. Muggleton's advice is informative of the informality of the sect with regard to congregative worship, an informality which was probably instrumental in helping to preserve the sect;

But as for your meetings being put down, what need you care? Cannot you live by your own faith for a time, without meeting together on those days called Sundays? Cannot you see and talk with one another as you see occasion on the week or working-days?²

and he goes as far as to assert

For this worship of the Spirit, which is now, hath no visible forms of worship at all belonging to it, neither is there any necessity for any public meetings at all. So that as for your meetings being put down, there is no cause of trouble or sorrow at all, but rather a cause of joy.

1. ibid., pp20-21.

2. ibid., pp22-23.

This is a far cry from the Puritan stress on 'godly fellowship' which found its purest expression in the kind of conventicles analysed in the first chapter of this study, and, in one sense, represents a final stage in the identifiable process of spiritual internalization visible in the period under study. Equally, however, Muggleton is clear over the question of attendance at church;

if the powers of the nation doth command you
to go to church to their public worship, then
I say you are to suffer what penalty the powers
of the nation will lay upon you, rather than
to worship in the house of Baal.¹

At the end of February, Muggleton wrote again to Hill, expressing satisfaction at the latter's success in raising twenty shillings, and displaying renewed anxiety over Lawrence Clarkson's attempts to find support amongst his followers in Cambridgeshire and Kent. Muggleton displays a commendable charity in his advice to Hill as to what to do about Clarkson. Although he makes it clear that Hill and his brethren are to regard Clarkson as an 'excommunicated person', and are thus 'not to have any society with him in spiritual matters', Muggleton appreciates the embarrassment that may be caused by Clarkson turning up at Maidstone, and he tells Hill

only this I shall give the liberty to do,
that if he comes amongst you, you may eat
or drink with him, or give him lodging as
you would unto a stranger, but not to mind
any of his sayings with reference to his
being a believer, or to what I have done
concerning him.²

By the end of 1660, Clarkson had been routed, leaving Muggleton as the undisputed leader of the sect. For Christopher Hill, however, problems at

1. ibid., p33.

2. ibid., pp28-29.

provincial level were only just beginning. It has been seen in an earlier letter that Hill was having difficulty with some of his followers concerning church attendance. He wrote to Muggleton again at the beginning of 1661 about this problem, and Muggleton reiterated his previous position;

Therefore, whosoever shall make a show, or a profession of faith in this commission of the Spirit, and yet go to worship with the idolaters of the nation, I shall not look upon any such person to have any true faith in the true God, nor in his commission of the Spirit; neither can they have any true peace, nor the assurance of everlasting life¹

but the dilemma facing some of Hill's flock was not eased by such advice. In August 1663, Muggleton wrote to three of them who had, in the face of repression, started attending divine service at the parish church. Goodwife Wilds, one of the early converts, had evidently given out as her excuse for attending church that she wished to test the congregation and the minister. Muggleton was not impressed;

Yet you, Goody Wylds, had no intent to got to the public worship; then, however, you did pretend unto me it was but for the trial of other believers; but now it doth appear otherwise²

and he returns to this in a subsequent letter to Hill;

And as for you, mother Wyld, if that were her excuse, as you have written, for her going to church to try their spirits, and finding the priest to be a devil, and therefore she would not hear him any more; it is but a poor excuse, not so good as Adam's fig-leaves were to cover

1. ibid., p33.

2. ibid., p121.

his nakedness.....And as for her knowing the priest to be a devil she knew that many years before she came to own this commission. She need not have gone to church to have known that; for she knew all the priests of the nation, and of all sorts, were false, and not sent of God.¹

One of the other apostates, Thomas Martin, had evidently been blessed by John Reeve and thus Muggleton himself was in something of a dilemma as to what course of action to take. In the end, he contented himself with a warning;

therefore do not blind your eyes as to think that you may show yourselves at church to save yourselves from sufferings, and yet own the commission of the Spirit; you are mightily mistaken if you think to do so.²

The episode left an impression upon Muggleton, for he referred to it eight years later in a letter to the Cambridgeshire Muggletonians;

Also consider those three believers in Kent who had the blessing of John Reeve; yet they, for fear of suffering and presumption together, because they had the blessing, they said, they could not be damned to eternity. So they bowed themselves three times (that is, at Church to Baal), and then gave over. But what hath been the effects of it? Since nothing but crosses, sickness, weakness, poverty, and beggary, hath, and is still, the fruits that action hath brought forth; besides, the author of hope is eaten over with rust in them.³

Apart from these two incidents, there are few other details concerning Muggletonians in the Diocese of Canterbury for this period. Muggleton's connection

1. ibid., pp127-128.

2. ibid., p122.

3. ibid., p330.

with the area may have been strengthened by family ties - there are several references in Spiritual Epistles to his wife visiting relations there - and he found Kent a useful bolt-hole whenever attempts were made to foist parochial duties upon him. It is also clear that Hill had organised his followers carefully for the Kentish Muggletonians were amongst the very few who had created a regular fund for the prophet from subscriptions organised on a monthly basis.¹

The last sect worthy of mention comes to light in a letter from the Rector of Biddenden, Dr. Hinton, to Archbishop Sancroft in 1683. Hinton was describing the state of his parish, and wrote;

The parishioners there (as elsewhere in the Weld of Kent) have among them all the vulgar sects about London and one more, for there are also remaining some Brownists who boast that have kept themselves unmingl'd with all the other dissenters ever since the days of that notable schismatic from whom they have their denomination²

and this is an appropriately intriguing reference with which to conclude this attempt to discern the existence and growth of the more radical sects in the Diocese of Canterbury during and after the Civil War. Can this claim, which purports to suggest that this sect had kept itself true to the separatist ideas of Robert Browne since mid-Elizabethan times, be taken seriously? The Act Books give no hint of any schism in the parish of Biddenden during the 1580s and 1590s, or, for that matter, thereafter, although the limitations of these records as a barometer of popular religious attitudes has already been noted. The term 'Brownist', like the designation 'Lollard' before it, was used in a general sense throughout this period and cannot be taken as being a necessarily accurate description of the religious views of those so called, and yet Hinton's letter is fairly unequivocal in linking

1. ibid., p34.

2. Reprinted by C.E. Woodruff, "Letters relating to the condition of the Church in Kent" in Archaeologia Cantiana, Vol.21, 1895, p184.

this sect to the Elizabethan separatist whose name gave birth to the term. In the final analysis, this tiny, if curious scrap, can only be left to join the other such minutiae of radicalism as observed in this, and the previous, chapters.

Chapter 5 : The growth of Congregationalism in the Diocese of Canterbury,
1640-1660.

As elsewhere in England, the collapse of episcopal authority and the decline in fortunes of the Caroline regime directly encouraged the rapid emergence of separatist churches in Kent. Ironically, however, the concomitant lapse in archidiaconal records in particular, and ecclesiastical administration in general, makes the task of tracing the new dissenting churches no easier, and this in spite of the general relaxation of censorship and parochial control. The growth of these gatherings certainly as far as Kent is concerned, has to be established by reference to all kinds of disparate sources - sadly, only a handful of the original church books have survived, and the Quakers alone were blessed with some concept of recording for posterity. Hence the ensuing chapters will rely heavily on these extant records in attempting to trace the growth of the denominational churches in this area and their relationship with the Laudian conventicles and pre-Revolutionary separatists discussed in the first two chapters of this study.

In terms of the organisation and presentation of material relative to the period in question there is, however, one advantage to be enjoyed. If, as Professor Stone has remarked, it is rare to be able to attach 'a single political or religious label' to those in the limelight during the years of the Revolution, the same does not hold true for the Dissenting Churches themselves.¹ Hence this chapter will concentrate on the evolution of one of these denominations, the Congregationalists or Independents.

Before embarking upon a study of the rise of these churches, however, some attempt must be made to locate, where possible, the roots of the 'Congregational way' in what had been the Canterbury Diocese. It is within this context that, once again, the figure of John Turner assumes a fundamental importance.

It is possible to ascribe the authorship of at least three pamphlets to John Turner thereby facilitating the task of determining his exact theological and

1. L. Stone, The Causes of the English Revolution, London, 1972, p34.

ecclesiological standpoint. His writings were: The Saintes Belief, published in 1641; Tithes Proved Unlawfull, published in 1645; and his major work, A Heavenly Conference for Sion's Saintes, also published in 1645. In addition, as has been suggested in the previous chapter, given the wealth of biographical detail and the almost obsessive concentration on the evils of tithes, it is a possibility that he was the author of the anonymous No Age Like Unto This Age, particularly since this piece contains examples of episcopal tyranny at the expense of parishioners some of whom can be positively identified as being members of his group.¹

Whilst it is certain that Turner opposed Baptism according to the form prescribed in the Book of Common Prayer, refusing to have any of his later children christened in the parish church, it is equally manifest that private paedobaptism played an important part in the worship of the Sutton Valence-Egerton conventicles, a position that Turner defended in print, maintaining that the 'confirming seales of every Particular church of Christ' were Baptism and the Lord's Supper. In answer to the question 'How then to children come rightly (who have no understanding) to the ordinance of Baptism?' Turner replies with the forthright explicitness which is the hallmark of all his writings;

By the righteousness which God by his grace in Christ is pleased to impart unto them that are borne of Parents under the holy promise or covenant. For the Lord's covenant is with the faithful and their seed.

Equally, he leaves his reader in no doubt as to the fate of those that deny children the right to Baptism; they are to be cut off 'from all Christ's congregations'.² But it is his predominant emphasis on the elementary importance of the covenant that indicates where his own theological position lay; that of the early Congregationalist. This is reinforced by the closeness of many of his beliefs concerning the existing church as well as those relating to the correct organisation of a 'true' church.

1. See above, p124.

2. J. Turner, A Heavenly Conference for Sion's Saintes, London, 1645, pp39-41.

Covenant theology was not new to the seventeenth-century mind, but it was an integral part of the Congregational outlook. Dr. Nuttall has commented that

the drawing up of a covenant and the committing of it to writing added to its solemnity; while the appending of the signatures (or marks) of those who entered into it both underlined its binding character and satisfied their self-consciousness as individuals. Certainly most of the congregational churches had a written covenant.¹

For John Robinson, the covenant was the hallmark of the gathered Apostolic church;

I doe tell you that in what place soever.....
.....two or three faithfull people doe arise,
separating themselves from the world into the
fellowship of the gossell, and covenant of
Abraham, they are a church truly gathered....
.....against which the gates of hell shall
not prevayl.²

No specific evidence exists, unfortunately, to confirm that any of the separatist churches analysed in the first two chapters of this study specifically demanded the covenanting of its members, although the descriptions employed by some of their critics - 'binding themselves into a new brotherhood' for example - and the views of Turner, Fenner, and Brewer, when taken together with known continental connections, may be felt sufficiently circumstantial to permit such an assumption to be made, and that these assemblies underwent a procedure similar to that so well documented at Bristol.³ However, detailed evidence does exist concerning the founding of a Congregational Church at Canterbury in 1645 in the form of the

1. G. Nuttall, Visible Saints, Oxford, 1957, p78.

2. J. Robinson, Justification of Separation from the Church of England, Amsterdam, 1610, p221.

3. E. B. Underhill ed., The Records of a Church of Christ meeting in Broadmead, Bristol 1640-1687, London, 1848.

Church Book, which is at present on deposit at the Cathedral Archives and Library, and which opens with the words of the covenant made by its first members;

Wee acknowledge ourselves unworthy to enter into and insufficient to keep covenant with the Great God yet (by the help of the Spirit of God) our desire is to take hold on the covenant of Free Grace and wee doe solemnly avouch and sincearly profess (in the name of Jesus Christ) to live as his people by receiving Jesus Christ as our alone Prince and Saviour; and as our alone Priest, Prophet, and King, giveing up ourselves (as a holy bodie or church) to walke with him.¹

'To walke with him' - this is the distinctive phrase of the Congregational way, and of John Turner's thoughts upon the subject. As with Robinson, there was no true church for Turner without a covenant made between

a company of people called to beleeve and to professe obedience unto God

and the definition of such a covenant was

when they together have vowed or agreed in a bodily or church estate to walke together obediently in all things to Christ's precepts.

For John Fenner, it was precisely because there was no true covenant between God and the established church in England that he felt justified to separate.²

Implicit in the acceptance of the covenant external to the parish assemblies is the rejection of the established church in toto, hence the whole question of separation was of seminal importance to early Congregational writers and thinkers such as Turner. Bound up with the repudiation of the Church of England, however, was an equally important concept. It was not merely a question of the Church of

1. CCL U37 f1.

2. Turner, op.cit., pp31-32; KAO U350/C2/54.

England being in error but rather that it was positively the incarnation of Anti-Christ, belief in the existence of which, as Christopher Hill has so cleverly shown, was almost as an essential prerequisite for the Christian as the acceptance of the existence of the Saviour himself. This view was pithily summarised by John Robinson;

If on the contrary, ours be of God, and of his Christ, then theirs is of Anti-Christ, God's and Christ's adversary.¹

and the whole issue evokes from Turner one of his most colourful and visionary outbursts;

And lest their evill should be espied, they have caused four Angels to hold the four winds of Christ's church, power, and government that they should not blow upon the earth, sea, or any trees, by which Locusts doe rise out of the smoake of the bottomless pit, and with fire, smoake and brimstone, which have proceeded out of their mouthes, they have darkened the third part of the Sun-light of the Gospell, the third part of the inferior Moon-light of the Law and the third part of Christ's ministry, and thereby caused the powers of the earth to reele to and fro like a Drunkard, and quake, and say, alas, we knowe not what to doe; hide us from the presence of the Lamb for his wrath (in his regall power and church government is to come) and we cannot stand, for he will condemne (without respect of persons) all evill government and governors, worship and worshippers, and then you shall be so borne up on every side with earthen props that men shall not dare to speake against the Beast neither teach Jesus Christ

1. C. Hill, Anti-Christ in Seventeenth Century England, Oxford, 1971, p32;
J. Robinson, Of Religious Communion, Private and Publique, Leyden, 1614, p17.

to be the saviour of the world (what gifts soever
God indue them with) without a licence from these
evill angells or patentees of the Gospell.¹

Such language prompts the question as to what extent Turner was influenced by the millenar_ianism of his age. Of course, the very term 'millenary' has given rise to a deal of historiographical controversy, but if Dr.Capp's definition can be accepted that millenarianism was the belief

in a perfect society to be established through
divine intervention²

then it is reasonably clear that this concept was current in the thought of the early Congregationalists in this part of Kent. This is hardly to be wondered at since Dr.Nuttall has observed that this was true, by and large, for Independency on a national scale, and Professor Wilson has gone as far as to suggest that this view is implicit within the concept of 'gathering' a church apart from the parish assembly in the first place.³ On the other hand, not all proto-Congregationalists were millenarians,as will be seen when a close analysis of the Canterbury Church is undertaken further on in this chapter, but certainly as far as John Turner was concerned, there is sufficient evidence to suggest that both he and his circle maintained such expectations. William Bowling, active at Ashford and Egerton during the years of Turner's imprisonment, baptising and preaching at conventicles held there during the 1630s, was brought to the attention of no less a writer than Thomas Edwards, the arch-Presbyterian who devoted the last years of his life attempting to draw Parliament's attention to the threat to order and civilisation posed by the religious radicals. In July 1646, Edwards received a letter from a Presbyterian

1. Turner, op.cit., p3; qv Isaiah 24: 1-2, 20-21.

2. B. S. Capp, "Godly Rule and English Millenarianism" in Past and Present, No.52, 1971, p107.

3. Nuttall, op.cit., pp146-148; J. F. Wilson, Pulpit and Parliament, Princeton, 1969, pp223, 229.

minister resident in Dover, Nicholas North, which gave a full account of a meeting between the latter and

William Bowling of Cranbrook on Wednesday last, the eighth of July 1646 in my passage with him in a pair of oares from Gravesend to London, there bee five other passengers in the boat that did witness these errors and Heresies to be stoutly asserted by the party aforesaid.¹

There follows an impressive catalogue, including the denial of the existence of Hell, and of Original Sin, as well as the assertion of the mortality of the soul and that the devil was wholly responsible for the sin that was within Man. More to the point in this context, Bowling proposed

That Christ's words This day thou shalt be in Paradise with me refers to the coming of Christ's one thousand year kingdom

and that Revelation 20:6

means the personal reign of Christ for one thousand years.

Whilst it cannot necessarily be assumed that Bowling's views were totally representative of the Sutton Valence/Egerton radicals as a whole, there is confirmatory evidence from the 1620s that these ideas formed an important element in the thinking of this group. Part of John Fenner's exposition at the Ash debate discussed in Chapter 2 was on the text

This know that in the last days perilous times shall come

and, furthermore, there is little doubt but that Turner's mentor at this stage, Thomas Brewer of Boxley, entertained such expectations for, as has already been

1. Edwards, op.cit., Vol.3, p35.

Answer : He may not, but must separate in all
worship.

Question : What is a church which is mingled with
all sorts of people, profane and wicked?

Answer : It is a church of confusion, where the
Lord's people may not tarry.¹

In addition to the objections already considered, there was a further fundamental reason for rejection of the national Church, one which Turner and his followers shared with dissenters of all shades of opinion before the outbreak of the Civil War; the established Church possessed no authority in Scripture. Of course, such a view was not novel - it had certainly been an element of the composite challenge to official church attitudes which comprised Lollardy - but it took on a meaning that became more vital as Elizabeth I's failure to achieve a real reformation of the Church became apparent. When Warham Turner challenged the vicar of Sutton Valence over the standing of the Prayer Book in relationship to the 'Word', he was reflecting one of the mainsprings of dissenting activity which had developed by the end of the sixteenth century, and which Dr. Nuttall characterises as

A passionate desire to recover the inner life
of New Testament Christianity.²

The language Turner employs is, once more, unequivocal over this issue. If attendance at the parish church is out of the question because of the 'permixt' state of the congregation, then it is equally so since 'their best church actions are unholy' and that applies to the Presbyterian mode of worship as much as to the Laudian. For Turner, as also for William Bowling, Bishops derive their authority not from Christ but from the Pope; kneeling and crossing are idolatrous and thus contrary to the dictates of the Word; the concept of a Church as being consecrated ground is false, for 'God hath made all places holy alike.' Both the Prayer Book and the Directory, published in 1644, are likewise deemed worthless, because they are

1. Turner, op.cit., pp47, 49.

2. Thomson, op.cit., p244; Nuttall, op.cit., p3; CCL x-6-4 f100.

invented by man, contrary to the commandments of God, and besides filled with errors, untruths and blasphemies.

consisting, in Thomas Brewer's vivid phrase, of 'world worship' as opposed to 'word worship.'¹ As far as Turner was concerned his own imprisonment and persecution was related precisely to this assertion, and he terms himself,

Prisoner of our Lord Jesus Christ (committed by the Bishops) neare fourteen yeares for afferming that Christ Jesus hath left in his written word sufficient direction to order his church and children in his worship so that nothing may be done over nor above nor besides what is commanded therein.²

Again, it was on scriptural grounds, or rather lack of them, that Turner rejected wholesale the concept of the legality of tithes, devoting an entire pamphlet to the subject. For him, the acceptance of the payment of tithes was tantamount to accepting a Jewish position;

thereby denying Christ came in the flesh.....
.....And whereas you alledge Tenths is of the equallest portion, I answer if it be and Christ hath not appointed it (as you afferme) then Christ hath not appointed the equallest portion for his ministers maintenance, Then he hath not done well, Then he is a sinner, Then faithe is vaine and all are dead in their sins that look for salvation to him; Thus for money you fear not to blaspheme the very saviour of the world.³

Having demonstrated the erroneous nature of the 'Babylonian' church, the

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1. Turner, op.cit., pp48, 63; Edwards, op.cit., Pt.2, p38; T. Brewer, Gospel Publique Worship, London, 1656, p200.
 2. J. Turner, The Saintes Belief, London, 1641, title page.
 3. J. Turner, Tithes Proved Unlawfull, London, 1645, pp3,6.

remainder of Turner's writings deal with the nature and organisation of 'true' worship. He divides such worship that 'the Lord requires of his children' into three main categories; Personal, 'Domesticall', and Congregative. Personal worship is the service of God when alone and should consist of reading, meditation upon the word of God, prayer, and fasting. Prayer is defined as

a pouring out of the meditations of the heart
unto the Lord by the operation of his Spirit.

Domesticall worship consists of Prayer, Reading, Conference, Teaching the Word,
and

continually convenient talke of the Saintes
to them.

and there is little to distinguish this from the demands of household godliness made by Josias Nicholls in the 1590s. Over the question of attitude towards the non-separated within the household, Turner preaches notable tolerance. There is to be no compulsion, and unbelieving servants are not to be dismissed, a statement which carries with it perhaps an important implication, and in answer to the question

Ought not Christ's servants to destroy such
wicked worshippers for his cause?

Turner's reply leaves us in no doubt as to his attitude;

No, for Christ will have his children permit
wicked worshippers quietly. For in time they
may be converted.¹

Tolerance, indeed, is a concept of fundamental importance for Turner. He had, after all, suffered imprisonment over this very issue, and he reserves some of his most acid rebukes for those 'wilful wicked men' who

take away or adde anything in God's worship

1. Turner, A Heavenly Conference....., pp26-29.

imprison or put to death for not worshipping
God as they would have them.

and if the description of the conditions he endured in prison in the Gatehouse is accurate it is not difficult to understand why he felt so strongly on this issue.¹ Such tolerance may, of course, derive from his contact through Thomas Brewer with the views of the Leyden separatists during the 1620s. John Robinson was emphatic in the distinction between the rejection in public but not in private, stating that it was wrong to

condemne the righteous because he is in
a false church.

and that

In communicating with the godly there in private prayer and the like exercises, we do not communicate with them as members of the Church but merely as Christians.²

It would seem, then, for John Turner, that overriding the necessity of the saints to gather themselves into a pure and spotless state is the higher law of the freedom of conscience, lack of which, along with other writers of the age such as William Bartlet, Turner identifies as a hallmark of Anti-Christ;³

Question : What are the markes whereby wee maye
knowe Babel or an Anti-Christian church?

Answer : By altering of God's ordinances or order
and placing men's inventions in the
stead thereof, compulsion to divine
obedience by civil authority, forcing
men against their consciences to say

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1. ibid: for a description of his imprisonment see No Age Like Unto This Age.
 2. Robinson, Of Religious Communion....., pp6, 10.
 3. W. Bartlet, Ιχθυογραφία, or a Model of the Primitive Congregational Way, London, 1647, pp128-130.

as they would have, and imprisoning
those that cannot yeald unto them.

As the name implies, Congregative worship concerns worship within the gathered church, and proceeds from the initial covenanting of a company of like-minded people. The ornaments of the newly formed church are, according to Turner, Reading, Prayer, Propheying, Officers, Contributions, Censors, and Seals, and the only permissible books are the Old and New Testaments, the Apocrypha being expressly excluded.¹

In 1646, The Canterbury Congregational Church under John Durant defined the duties of the congregation with regard to the minister as follows;

We are to love and bear a hearty affection to
them.....We must pay respect and Honour to their
persons and a redy subiection to rightful orders...
.....We must fervently and constantly pray for
them....We must strengthen and encourage them in
their Honourable and difficult work.

and went on to describe the attitudes that must be eschewed, of which the most important were

Unprofitableness under their preaching and other
Administrations, incorrigibleness under reproofs
and admonitions.....and we must according to
the ability given us of God support and maintain
them in all necessary wordly things.²

Once again, this is very close to the definition of the congregation's role which Turner outlines in his publications. In rather simpler terms, he defines the duty of the assembly as one of hearing the minister preach, yielding to the truths therein contained, praying both with him and for him, and 'showing a manifest love by

1. Turner, A Heavenly Conference....., p51.

2. CCL U37 f22.

furnishing him with all necessaries.¹ This last point was one of central importance in Turner's concept of a gathered church of visible saints, and he was drawn into a controversy which had developed in the parish of Ulcombe during the 1640s over this very issue. The Rector of Ulcombe between 1627 and 1643 had been Daniel Horsmonden, who was charged by his parishioners prior to his sequestration with saying that Strafford had been wrongfully executed and that to hear a sermon on a weekday was 'will-worship'. In fact, the main point of contention appears to have been tithes. His successor, William Belcher, who had been lecturer at St. Dionis, Backchurch, in London, until December 1642, enjoyed a brief popularity with his new 'flock' as a result of his

Preaching down of tythes as Jewish and Anti-Christian, before he was settled in Ulcombe, which made him the celebrated object of the People's Esteem there; By which stratagem he work'd the Doctor Horsmonden out, and himself into the Affections of the Parish. After which he lived some time on Contributions; but these at length failing, he sued for Tithes, even from the first Moment of his coming among them.²

Justification for such behaviour was given to the parishioners by way of a letter in which Belcher set down the reasons for the lawfulness of tithe contributions, basing his argument on Romans 13 : 6;

For this cause pay ye tribute also; for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing.

How this dispute came to Turner's notice is not known, although it is possible that

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1. Turner, A Heavenly Conference....., pp36-37.
 2. A. G. Matthews ed., Walker Revised, Oxford, 1948, p219, and Calamy Revised, Oxford, 1934, pp45-46.

he was alerted to it by William Edmitt, and Ulcombe separatist who was in touch with the Sutton Valence and Egerton conventicles during the 1630s, and whose 'privat church' remained in operation after Turner's arrest. Edmitt himself had been prosecuted for refusing to pay

the Vicars tythes pretended for two cows kept
all the summer in the parish of Frittenden

and had had forced from him 19/6d for tithe-hay contrary to the established local custom of 3d. per cow.¹ The result of all this was the specific refutation in print by Turner of the Ulcombe minister's letter. Turner argued that the correct scriptural interpretation of the maintenance of ministers is

a free gift of the people set before them
and no other

and that tithes are Jewish, acceptance of which is thus to deny the existence of Christ, and that there is no mention of Tenths in the Gospel. To Belcher's claim that

experience teaches us if men were left to their
own liberty Ministers should not have wherewith
to maintain themselves, families, and to give
to the poor as is required

Turner's reply is characteristically unimpeachable;

You say some people would give no thing through
covetousness: I beleeve it is true if you needs
must have a Babylonian church of all good and
bad together. But in Zion such people are not
appointed of God to have being. But carnall min-
isters must have carnall maintenancce and carnall
company. And whereas you say others would allow

1. CCL x-6-4 ff247, 255, x-6-11(ii) ff10, 20, 43, 72, 90-91, 114, 135;
z-3-16 f284; No Age Like Unto This Age, p3.

them nothing, Neither would they be of his Church
if he were in Christ's church.

and he dismisses Belcher's arguments with a withering description of tithes as
being

of no use but to blindfold the people to satisfie
the inordinate desire of covetous ministers, of
Belly-gods of this time who would be Christ's
servants but like not his wages.....they that like
not Christ's wages need not meddle with his work.

phraseology very similar to that employed by William Bowling in the Gravesend
tilt-boat, and as expressed in the pamphlet No Age Like Unto This Age.¹

Concerning the officers of the church, Turner is not as explicit as, for example,
Thomas Brewer, and the two writers differ over the concept of Propheying. For
Turner this gift is a

Teaching of the word of God in the Church by
Doctrine, Interpretation, Revelation, Exhortation,
by a member that is not in any office or ministrie.

whereas Brewer's view would seem to argue for such a gift being exercised by, and
restricted to, a defined Prophet or Prophets.² As one would expect, however, there
is complete accord between the two separatists over the question of the minister,
both writers explicitly stating that the choice of the minister must be made by the
whole congregation and that his authority extended only over the church of which
he was pastor, in essence reflecting the very heart of Congregationalism. The
office of Deacon is similarly conceived by these radicals, his duty being the
receiving and distribution of the contributions of the Church's members.³

Finally, over the critical question of the correct attitude to be taken over 'a
brother that falleth into sin', Turner displays again that his views are in accord

1. Turner, Tithes Proved Unlawfull, pp1-5; Edwards, op.cit., pt.2, p39.

2. Brewer, op.cit., pp132, 171; Turner, A Heavenly Conference...., pp35-36.

3. ibid.

with other exponents of early Independency. In his argument with the Church of England minister Mr. Bernard over the whole position of the Leyden church, John Robinson set out clearly what was at stake over this particular issue. The piece of Scripture which gave rise to this was Matthew 18 : 15-17;

Moreover, if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone; if he shall hear thee thou hast gained a brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church; but if he neglect to hear the church let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.

Whilst Bernard maintained that

Tell the church is tell the chief officers
of the church

Robinson's interpretation was

Well, the words are cleare as the sun, tell the
Church, that is the congregation or assembly
whereof the offender is a member.¹

an affirmation of what was a fundamental separatist position in the argument with non-separatist puritans. Precisely this line is taken by Turner. The correct approach of a member of a true church to a fallen brother is quite simply to follow the words of the Gospel, that is, to pray to God for remission, to keep it secret, to watch for an appropriate moment to talk to the sinner about his fault and then to use moderate language. Only if these efforts fail, combined with the approaches of others, should the church be informed and the congregative power of excommunication be employed in the event of no reformation being made by the individual

1. Robinson, Justification of Separation....., p164.

concerned.¹

That John Turner was an early and significant torch-bearer for Congregationalism in Kent cannot be doubted and his career is of some value in tracing the early links between the separatism of the 1620s and 1630s and the formed churches of the Civil War period and after, and it is this which lifts him from relative provincial obscurity to a position of some importance in the study of evolving alternative ecclesiologies in this period. The critical question still remains, however, as to whether Turner, and those like him, would have been condemned to a life of parochial eccentricity had it not been for the appearance of Archbishop Laud. In Turner's case it is possible that he would have ended up in Amsterdam or Leyden, but, like most speculation of this nature, it cannot be denied that such an appraisal is totally conjectural. Equally, the figures outlined in Table 2 above do more than suggest that the 1630s was a crucial decade within the context of this particular argument, and, in that sense, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that Laud's role was absolutely seminal.

It is ironic, and informative, that John Turner left no legacy behind him in his own parish in the form of an established Congregational Church, for reasons which will become clear. Equally influential during the Civil War period in the spread and more formal organization of Independency in what formally had been the Diocese of Canterbury, however, was the Canterbury Congregational Church, founded in 1645. Fortunately, the first Church Book of this assembly has survived to afford an invaluable insight into the formation and creation of a fully-formed dissenting church in the early days following the collapse of episcopal government and control. On October 12th, 1645, nine men from various parishes in the city of Canterbury covenanted together to form a separated church under the initial guidance of William Jones. The immediate question arising from this is how far a direct lineal connection between this church, or rather its first members, and the kind of nonconformity discussed in the first two chapters of this study can be postulated. A thorough examination of the Act Books for the Canterbury Deanery

1. Turner, A Heavenly Conference..., pp33, 49.

between 1592 and 1641 throws very little light on this. The original covenanters of this church were William Jones, William Buckhurst, John Dickenson, William Reynolds, Vincent Burton, Zachariah Lee, John Bisset, Edward Dutch, and Josias Nicholls.¹ Of these, only three can be shown to have displayed opposition to their parish churches in the years before the fall of Laud. Josias Nicholls, whose name does not appear in any of the Act Books, is something of a known quantity in that, as the grandson of the puritan minister of Eastwell and cousin of the notorious Charles Nicholls, some nonconformist ancestry can at least be ascribed to him. Of the remainder, only John Dickenson can be positively identified as a potential radical. In 1632, William Buckhurst had been presented for refusing to pay his church cese in the parish of St. Mary Northgate, and it would be rash to assume that non-payment of cese was a sign of liturgical scruple even if, given his subsequent history, in William Buckhurst's case this might have been true. In the same year, John Dickenson was presented for refusing to respond or kneel at the appropriate moments of the Prayer Book service, evidence of a harder kind in that the inference of doctrinal revolt can be drawn with a degree of confidence.² He was presented for the same offence in 1638, but it would be foolhardy to draw any sweeping conclusions from such scraps.

The text of the covenant has already been discussed above. By the end of 1645, the congregation had risen to twenty-three, and a further thirty members joined the following year, of whom not one appeared in the Act Books or Visitation Records for the decades 1620 to 1640.³ Numbers of members as recorded in the Church Book between 1645 and 1658, when the Church suffered its first period of persecution, are given below in Table 3, although the total membership figures must be treated with some caution since the vagueness surrounding the registering

1. CCL U37 f1.

2. CCL x-6-10 f181, 199; see x-7-2 f59 for an interesting complaint about Dickenson's behaviour in the church at Harbledown which he was evidently in the habit of attending for the sermon.

3. CCL U37 ff2-4.

of deaths during this period makes it impossible to arrive at an accurate total. What is immediately apparent from these figures is the number of women in the congregation, outnumbering the men by nearly two to one.¹

Table 4
Membership of the Canterbury Congregational Church
1645-1658

Year	Male	Female	Male Total	Female Total	Total Congregation
1645	14	9	14	9	23
1646	6	24	20	33	53
1647	8	11	28	44	72
1648	0	2	28	46	74
1649	3	5	31	51	82
1650	3	8	34	59	93
1651	2	4	36	63	99
1652	2	1	38	64	102
1653	0	0	38	64	102
1654	0	3	38	67	105
1655	2	3	40	70	110
1656	1	2	41	72	113
1657	1	6	42	78	120
1658	1	6	43	79	122

These figures have to be treated with caution since no account can be taken of dismissions to other churches - there is no way of knowing if all such dismissions were recorded within the existing Church Book - and the same applies to excommunications. In addition, whilst husbands and wives are recorded, no mention is made of their children as members of the church; actual congregations would also doubtless have been swelled by non-covenanted parties.

On May 15th, 1646, the members of the church tackled the task of choosing a pastor and they set aside June 27th, under which date in the Church Book is

1. For a brief discussion on the part played by women in Kentish radicalism, see Appendix II.

recorded the following entry;

This day according to the former order was kept as a day of fasting and prayer; and in the end thereof wee did chuse and ordaine our Brother John Durant for the Pastor. Ther being present the Pastor of the church of Dover with some Bretheren of that church and the church of Sandwich who did approve of the choice and gave us the right hand of fellowship.¹

It is obviously of note that there appear to have been two further Congregational churches at Dover and Sandwich which will be examined in further detail below. The choice of John Durant, not one of the signatories to the original covenant, is of equal interest. Durant was not a Kentishman by birth, but had come to the county from Cornwall via London. He had already run foul of the authorities. On Monday, June 7th, 1641, an order had been issued in the House of Commons for him to appear along with four other preachers but he and one other failed to attend, the remainder being given by the Speaker

a sharp Reprehension, and a general distaste of this House, of their proceedings

and they were further warned that

if they should offend at any time in the like kind again, this House would take care that they should be severely punished.²

It is unlikely that Durant had ever been ordained. The Commons order refers to him as 'lay-preacher', a title expanded upon by the hostile pen of Thomas Edwards;

There is one Master Durance, a preacher at Sandwich in Kent, a bold conceited man, and an Independent,

1. CCL U37 f10.

2. Journals of the House of Commons 1640-1642, pp168, 170.

who since the beginning of this Parliament was a washing-ball maker, or seller of washing-balls here in London, but now turned preacher; and never being ordained Minister, hath consecrated himself to be one of the Preists of the high places.¹

Durant secured the appointment of lecturer at St. Peter's, Sandwich in 1643 where he appears to have built up a considerable following if only because of the radical preaching style which did little to commend him to the author of Gangraena;

There is one John Durance, an Independent. . . . who preaches a Lecture in the weekday at Sandwich in Kent, and hath a lecture in Canterbury too, and would have had a lecture also in Dover for the further spreading of Independency; but by the godly ministers of Dover opposing it, and writing up to London against him, such means were used as he was put by, and kept from coming thither. Now among many other of his pranks, the Reader make take notice of these; He hath at Sandwich in the Church publickly prayed to God two or three severall times, that the King might be brought up in chains to the Parliament: upon which prayer one or two of Sandwich sent to Master Durance, to know what his meaning was in that Prayer: upon putting the question, Mr. Symonds, an Independent minister in the same towne, and his great friend (but more politick) being with him answered Mr. Durance meaning was that the King might be brought in chains of gold; whereupon Master Durance replied that was none of his meaning; but he meant, hee might be brought in chains of iron.²

His reputation thus clearly preceded him when he eventually joined the Canterbury Church in 1646 and was doubtless an important factor in the congregation's selection of him as their pastor. Under his ministry, the Church quickly began to evolve a

1. Edwards, op.cit., pt.2, p150.

2. ibid., pp175-176; Jones, loc.cit., p193.

discipline; days of fasting and humiliation were organised, as well as a day set aside

in which the whole church shall meet together
and then every member shall declare their
experiences.

It was equally not long before a second Congregational Church appeared in the city, although there is no evidence to suggest that this evolved out of any schism within Durant's assembly. On March 26th, 1646, the right hand of Fellowship was extended to this 'sister' church and its representatives, Mr. Player, Mr. Knight, Mr. Owen, and Mr. Lee, the last of which may have been the Zachariah Lee who had been one of the founders of the original Independent church there in 1645. The conditions imposed on the concession of fellowship epitomised the heart of the Congregational way;

1. That the aforesaid brethren doe make a generall confession of their faith at least in the fundamentals of the Christian religion in that are orthodox and sound.
2. That they professe with reference to the church state in particular that the members ought to be visible saints, and that the power of the church in admission, excommunication, choice of officers &c., with the administration of all the Censures of the Church is in the church of the particular congregation solely and independently.
3. That the particular members doe make out a worke of grace upon their hearts in some clear and competent measure.
4. That all afterward enter into solemne covenant or agreement to walke together as a church of Christ in the way and worship of the Gospell.¹

Unlike Durant, the minister of the second Independent Church in Canterbury, John

1. CCL U37 f10.

Player, had been ordained and had held the living at Kennington in the Charing Deanery since 1620. In 1633 and 1634 he had been summoned for refusing to read the Book of Sports declaration to his parishioners but, unlike his more notorious counterpart in this offence, Richard Culmer, he does not appear to have been suspended for any length of time. In 1644, he wrote from Kennington to Richard Culmer apologising that ill-health precluded him from attending as a witness at the trial of William Laud.¹ John Player appears to represent, thus, an interesting example of a basically orthodox Puritan minister driven to adopt an extreme standpoint in the face of episcopal oppression and the fact that he presented Robert Bartlett, a Kennington parishioner, who had tenuous links in 1629 with the Ashford conventiclors

for that hee hath obstinatly kept his childe from
being brought unto the church to bee baptised but
hathe wither himselfe or some other person of his
part baptised it at home at his owne house

tends to support this assessment.²

Throughout 1647 Durant's church continued to take shape. In May and June, they tackled the task of appointing Deacons, and William Reynolds, Josias Nicholls, and Zachariah Lee, all original covenanters, were duly elected, Lee apparently having rejoined his 'mother' church if, indeed, he ever left it. By September, however, the first signs of doctrinal division and of the fissiparous tendency that seems to have plagued the Dissenting Churches after the heady days of actual establishment are detectable. A note in the Church Book under September 3rd reads

Upon a debate conserning the business between
the brethren and the Brother Buckhurst it was
fully agreed that there shall bee a message sent

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1. Matthews, Calamy Revised, p392; LPL VG 4/22 f107; Laud, Works, Vol.IV, pp253-254; W. Prynne, Canterburie's Doome, London, 1644, p149.
 2. CCL x-6-7 f258, x-6-8 ff45, 66, 69, 144.

to desire the churches of Dover, Sandwich, and
heer in the citye of Canterbury to entreat them
to send some to advise with them what to doe in
the said business.

Five days later, representatives from the Canterbury and Dover churches sat down to discuss what was clearly a challenge from William Buckhurst, one of the founders of the original church. It is not clear who opened the proceedings, but it must have been, from the nature of later statements, one of the Deacons of the Canterbury church or even Durant himself. In any event, the following statement was made;

That when God did putt it into the hearts of some of us to sett our faces towards Syon, our Brother Buckhurst did joyne himself freely with us in those meetings which were preparatorye unto our church constitution. And that hee did exercise often with us in them. And that upon our solemne day of joining in a church bodye, hee was present, made his confession as the rest of us did and joyned in entring into the covenant. That notwithstanding since that tyme, hee hath at first by degree and since totally neglected and forsaken the church meetings upon which some of the Brethren had recourse to him and desiring satisfaction His answear was that hee scrupled the church covenant as concerning him therby baned from Societie.¹

The implications of this statement are intriguing, since Buckhurst's objections would tend to suggest that a rigid exclusivism was being operated by Durant's church, possibly spilling over into social duties. In fact, the grounds for his doctrinal opposition appear to have been threefold; the millenarian opinions of John Durant, the ordination of the pastor without the laying on of hands, and a

1. CCL U37 ff11-12; the statement is also of some interest in its description of the kind of processes that took place prior to the founding of a separated church.

declared preference for Presbyterianism. To the first of these charges

wee answered that wee did conceive hee had noe ground justly to be offended thereat; seeing all that hee could produce of our Pastors owning that point was that hee knew him once say hee liked of Mr Meades opinions that way.....our Pastor had never declared the same in any church meetings.¹

In fact, there is sound evidence that Durant, like many of the early Nonconformists, did hold millenarian views. Certainly, Dr.Capp includes him firmly in his list of ministers publishing three or more works between 1640 and 1653 holding such beliefs. More to the point, Durant wrote by way of a public reply to the letter mentioned in chapter 4 from the millenarian churches in London

Amidst those sad thoughts of heart, which wee have had by reason upon the abundance of iniquity of palpable sinners, and the waxing cold of the love of professing saints; in this last houre of the world, it hath been noe smal refreshing to us to consider that the Lord hath a remnant of faithful ones who as virgins keep themselves pure.

and the year before this he had consciously refrained from publishing his own views on the advent of the Fifth Monarchy because he wanted to avoid 'disputations' which might have a deleterious effect on his church.² To Buckhurst's other scruples the assembled church leaders argued that

imposition of hands was not (nor held)
as essentiall to ordination

and that the Presbyterian form of church government was not scriptural. Over the question of the covenant they were equally immoveable in their opinion, deeming a covenant to be not only lawful, but

1. ibid.

2. ibid., f20; Capp, op.cit., p47; Jones, loc.cit., p200.

absolutely necessary to the constitution
of a church.

All that remained was to decide whether William Buckhurst had any grounds for absenting himself from the church's services and whether or not the Church could give him 'dismissal', presumably to a Presbyterian assembly; they concluded that he did not, they could not, and that he was thus guilty of 'schism'. The whole affair seems to have dragged on into 1648 when he appears to have applied for membership of Player's Congregational Church in Canterbury, which suggests that personal dislike of Durant may have been at the root of his whole attitude. In January 1648, Durant wrote to the 'sister' church

this church could not dismiss the Brother Buckhurst unlesse he shoud first acknowleage his sin in entring into this church doubting and by his irregularitye in the manner of his withdrawing: According to the judgement of those churches with whom this church advised about the Brother Buckhurst. Therefore that till such tyme as the Brother Buckhurst come and solemnye ackowleage his sin in joyning upon soe solemne a day doubting and his unorderly manner of withdraweing.....this church cannot positively and finally conclude anything more about him.¹

Although there may be an element of personal grievance behind Buckhurst's behaviour, the episode reveals that at an early stage the Canterbury Congregational Church was in danger from the very divisiveness that it, by its own background and eventual constitution, had created within the Church of England in the years leading to the collapse of prelacy. It is ironic that having as individuals thwarted the attempts of Laud to impose a single, uniform ecclesiastical discipline on the Diocese, that the very same men and women should then have created the same situation within their own church. In this, Durant's church was doubtless not

1. CCL U37 ff12-13.

unique but merely one example amongst many on a national scale of one of the inevitable consequences of the proliferation of opinion in the wake of the cessation of ecclesiastical jurisdiction. The same situation was probably at the root of Turner's failure to leave behind him any form of lasting monument to his activities in Sutton Valence, for it seems that many of the Sutton Valence circle became Quakers following the Quaker missions into Kent in the 1650s, John Barrington and his own brother Thomas Turner being exemplary of this. When, in 1586, the Catholic recusant Clare Marten stated that

shee wolde not be of this religion now stablished
by auctoritye and that shee wolde not reade the
scriptures for they make much contention¹

she was, in a sense, implicitly anticipating exactly what would happen once any deviation from an established theological or ecclesiological orthodoxy was permitted, and there is much in her deposition for those historians who like to see the Reformation as but the first step in the ladder towards seventeenth-century sectarianism.

From the Buckhurst incident onwards, Durant's church was plagued with divisions of a doctrinal nature and he spent much of his ministry attempting to combine the mutually antipathetic qualities of control and tolerance in order to keep his church together. In May 1648, Ralph Farmer, who had joined the church in the previous year reported to the church

that hee was offended with our sister Ray and
that hee had told her of it between him and her
and had taken a brother or two with him and gone
to her and yet could not winne her.

Sarah Ray's offence concerned her maintenance of corrupt Christological opinions, but Farmer's statement is an illuminating example of the Gospel injunction of 'Tell

1. CCL x-1-15 f158; for evidence of Quaker success at the expense of Turner's group, see KAO N/FQZ ff25, 31-34.

it unto the church' in action.¹ Equally revealing is the fact that by February 1649, John Durant felt impelled to make the following public statement to the assembled church;

I have once and again made a motion unto you
And it hath been from my sincer affection and
duty. As also from a desire that this church
night keep on and hold up the glorye and sweet-
ness of Gospell communion. Now my motion did relate
unto two things viz. 1. Scandalls 2. Scruples.
And with reference to both it was this that if any
member should take offence from another; or have
any scruples in regard of any opinion or practise
of the church in generall That then that member
soe scandalized or scrupling would make it known
in an orderly way for satisfaction. Notwithstanding
this motion thus made I have cause to complain
that it hath not been observed But some have
taken scandalously and entertained scruples: And
therefore have absented themselves from breaking
of bread and church meetings. This hath been and
is a great source of trouble to my spirit.²

and he went on to lay down the procedure for dealing with this problem;

1. That if any member hold or entertayne any
opinion contrary either to the knowen tenents,
or practise of this church The said member
doe either by word or writing offer the same
to the Churches consideration
2. That uppon such tendarr the Church doe set
apart some tyme solemnlye and anxiouslye to
debate the same freely with the said member
that satisfaction may be given or taken.
3. That if heerupon the thing bee not soe cleared
upp as that the member scrupling bee satisfied

1. CCL U37 f13; see above p105.

2. ibid.

That then the said member may bee required to have his (or her) faith to himself. Or in the case hee professe that hee cannot and it appear to the church to be reall and conscientious That then hee or shee uppon ther desire may have leave to withdrawe comunion and to walke soe as christ shall direct them.

adding that if the church did not accept these proposals, he would have no alternative but to seek to be 'dismissed from my office'.¹

In spite of this, a further incident of anti-Trinitarianism emerged the following month in the form of the opinions of Sister Fancocke, who was also charged with frequent absenteeism along with two other members of the church who were guilty of refusing to bring their children to the church for baptism. So serious had the situation become by 1650, that the church leaders believed that a fresh start was necessary, the form of which is indicative of the tensions which were threatening to split the church irrevocably;

This day (according to order) was kept and in the choise therof the Church renewd their covenant, and as an expedient to our future establishment there wear propositions asserted unto, and professed by all to bee the truths of Jesus Christ necessary to be professed and witnessed unto these tymes viz. ,

1. That the Baptisme of water; preaching the word; church fellowship; breaking of bread; prayers; church officers (as pastors, teachers, elders, and deacons) and church censures (as admonition excommunication etc) weer ordinances and institutions of divine right, appointed and commanded by Jesus Christ.
2. That there are to be observed by all saints and churches (how high so ever their attainments may be) until the coming again of Jesus Christ in the flesh as hee ascended.

1. CCL U37 ff13-14.

3. That the ordinance of breaking of bread in particular to be observed (and it may bee upon every first day of the weeke) and all the members of the church ought to come and partake therof except in the case of such or otherwise they bee disinabled.¹

The revised credo of Durant's church deserves quotation at length because it is immensely revealing concerning the doctrinal differences that had been fermenting within this assembly. The source of these differences is, of course, a complex affair. Most of these opinions are to be found in Edwards' list and were, if he is to be believed, thus current and much-discussed in London, if not elsewhere, at this time. In this context, it is also worthy of note that Kent was subject to visits from several of the exponents of these ideas so hated by the author of Gangraena. In 1644 or 1645, Thomas Webbe went on a tour of Suffolk, Essex, and Kent, where he 'vented many strange opinions' and asserted 'severall Antinomian doctrines', and he was known for his criticism of preaching in general. There is no evidence, however, that ties him specifically with East Kent and his subsequent appearance in Essex may suggest that he was primarily active in the Rochester Diocese. Anti-paedobaptist notions can be traced as current in Canterbury, however. The future leading light of East Kent Quakerism, Luke Howard of Dover, recorded

In the year 1643 and 1644 the People call'd Baptists began to have entrance into Kent and Anne Stevens of Canterbury (who was afterwards my wife) being the first that received them there, was dipped into the Belief and church of W. Kiffin.

an assertion confirmed by Thomas Edwards, who noted that

one Kiffin an Anabaptiste went in his progresse in Kent, and did a great deal of hurt.

1. ibid.

and the Canterbury Baptist church dates from this mission.¹

The activities of itinerants such as Kiffin, Lambe, and Peters take on greater meaning, perhaps, in the light of further evidence concerning internal strife which emerged during 1650 in spite of the renewed covenant and the considerable pastoral efforts made by the minister himself. In April, one Terry was admonished for drinking the King's health and for absenteeism, and Margaret Courthopp was accused of 'adhering to heresy' and of consorting with 'ranting persons', Laurence Clarkson's journeys into Kent being possibly responsible for the emergence of such radicalism in this area.²

The essence of Congregationalism was, and still is, much bound up with the bounds set on the authority of each individual minister within his own church, hence it is remarkable that Durant was actively involved in the troubles of a doctrinal nature which beset the Staplehurst Congregational Church in 1649. In one sense, however, it was perhaps natural that the Staplehurst saints should turn to Durant in their hour of crisis since the Canterbury church had been deeply involved in the institution of that church. On March 12th, 1647, the Canterbury Church was visited by

Thomas Usburne and Thomas Howsegoe from the Christians who live about Staplehurst to desire our advice how they may regularly and comfortably come up into the order of the gospel etc., And accordingly there was a letter drawn up and sent to them.³

It is unfortunate that much of the information concerning the Staplehurst Church has to be gleaned indirectly since the first Church Book for this assembly has not survived, the earliest extant document being a Memoranda Book belonging to one

1. Edwards, op.cit., pt.1, pp74-75; L.Howard, A Looking Glass for Baptists, London, 1673, p1; Hill, W.T.U.D., pp226-227.

2. CCL U37 ff15-16.

3. CCL U37 f11.

of its first pastors, probably Daniel Poyntel, which dates from 1668. Little is known of Thomas Usburne or Osborne, although it is possible that he was related to Joseph Usburne/Osborne, the vicar of Brenchley in 1646 and of Benenden from 1658 to 1662, who was born in Staplehurst in 1629, and who was to become a notable nonconformist preacher in the 1680s.¹ Thomas Howsegoe was the subject of an interesting presentment by the Wye churchwardens in 1623;

We the churchwardens of Wie present that on Whitsonday last one named Mr Howsigoe being in our church in a place nie to the pulpett our Minister, Mr Sheppard being in the pulpett exhorting the communicants to draw nere to the communion table to receave the holy communion which was then presentlie to be administered spake aloud in church these wordes, Men, brethren, and fathers or some suchlike words to the interrupting of our minister.

When the communion had finished, Howsegoe strode to the table and stated that he would take the afternoon services, refusing to show his authority to do so when challenged by the churchwardens. The result was

in the afternoone of the same day at the time of evening prayer our Minister Mr Sheppard coming to his seate to reade divine service the afore-named Mr Howsigoe was first gotten into our ministers seate and our minister laying his hand on the comon prayer booke in the place where it useth to lie that he might read comon prayer the abovenamed Mr Howsigoe laid his hold of it to keepe it from our minister.

An unseemly struggle ensued in which Thomas Howsigoe was eventually ejected from the church, although it is quite clear that he was not without supporters

1. Matthews, Calamy Revised, p375; KAO N/C 347/A1.

throughout this undignified episode.¹

On May 23rd, 1647, the Canterbury Congregational Church sent messengers to Staplehurst to advise and instruct the Independents there concerning the setting up of a formal church, and a week later, Brother Jones reported back,

confirming the constitution of the church at Staplehurst and the Church did approve of what he did in giving the right hand of fellowship to them; and did further order that ther should be a letter drawn up and sent to the said church which was accordingly done.²

By December 1649, the Staplehurst Church had clearly run into difficulties of a theological nature and had split into two factions, one of which had

withdrawn comunion from the rest of the congregation

the reason for which becoming clear in an entry in the Canterbury Church book for the following month;

This day in order to our satisfaction about the business of the breech at Staplehurst, the church agreed to appoint the Brother Dickenson to desire and to demand of the Brother Howsegoe and the Brother Joy whether did they hold the opinion of universall redemption; and whether they did denye a power in the church by way of authoritye (and beyond that of love) to deal with offending members.³

Once again, the problem of the exercise of discipline appears to have been at the root of this schism, although it is equally probable that the division owed something to the restlessness of Thomas Howsegoe, who was clearly not a quiescent spirit

1. CCL x-5-8 f263.

2. CCL U37 f13.

3. CCL U37 f14.

and whose search for his own particular 'new Jerusalem' was eventually to take him via the Seekers to the Quaker movement. Of equal concern to Durant was the main theological difference which characterized the two groups within the Staplehurst assembly. It is clear that both Howsegoe and Robert Joy were at this stage defending an Arminian doctrine of salvation in the face of what would appear to have been the orthodox Congregationalist view, in this part of Kent at any rate, of divine election.¹ Durant himself, in spite of his earlier connections with the London Independent minister, John Goodwin, whose views on the universality of redemption through Christ were well known in the capital during the 1640s, was a staunch opponent of the Arminian approach to salvation. In 1656, he visited Dover expressly to combat the growth there of the 'errours of Arminius';

And the church did joyntly agree that the Pastor should in the name of this church declare their faith in the following points viz. 1st That ther is a particular and certayne election of some persons from all eternitye out of free grace 2: That the Lord Jesus Christ came not into the world to dye for all regenerate but only for those Elect ones which hee calls by the name of his sheep 3: That ther is special grace given forth in the work of regeneration and conversion which is irresistible and that it is not in the power or liberty of mans will to accept or not accept therof.²

In April 1650, John Durant reported back to his church concerning the settlement of affairs at Staplehurst in which he played a major role;

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1. Kentish Baptist Churches, as will be shown, were predominantly General as opposed to Particular - did such a situation partly arise out of the stand taken by the Independents?
 2. Aylmer, *op.cit.*, p20; Jones *loc.cit.*, pp193-195; CCL U37 f20; Durant's church can thus be seen as supportive local evidence for Dr. Tyacke's essay on Arminianism quoted above, although Turner is silent on the theology of salvation.

Advise was given upon the whole thus:

1. Wee could have wished that before that withdrawement and breach had actually been made ther had been advise taken of other churches.
2. Wee doe humbly advise the brethren walking with Mr Brayne to beware those corruptions in doctrine and defect in discipline together with other failings that have been among them. And to persevere in bearing witness to the doctrines and discipline of Jesus Christ and against the errors that are contrary to either.
3. Wee desire that the brethren with Mr Brayne may bee encouraged to goe on to renew their church-state for a pure and peaceable enjoyment of ordinances according to the mind of Christ.
4. For those who are tender hearted and shall appear humbled for the former failings upon their desire to returne, wee advise they may be lovingly embraced.
5. For the Brother Howsegoe wee doe wish him to consider his wayes and to bee humbled before the Lord for his failings, that soe wee may see him in such a condition that our soules may rejoyce in.
6. And for those that have any way contemned him in his failings wee desire them to consider what guilt they have contracted to themselves therby.

The whole settlement is characteristic of Durant's spirit of toleration and compassion which permeates this series of statements and those already examined concerning the need to listen and to accept the opinions of 'restless spirits' within each congregation, as well of his attempt to pursue a moderate course when faced with the dilemma of one church dealing with another. He continued by stating

the Brethren with Mr Brayne had renewed their church estate And that hee had in the name of this church renewed to them the right hand of

fellowship. Hee again declared that being consulted for advise in the matter of joyning with the church of Halden with this of Staplehurst hee assented and concurred in this.¹

an informative statement which indicates the existence of a hitherto unknown Independent assembly in the Wealden parish of Halden some seven miles distant from Staplehurst during the 1640s. Robert Joy appears to have become reconciled to the Staplehurst church since he was amongst those whose names appear on a list as candidates for the short-lived Barebones Parliament.² If Howsegoe was likewise reconciled, it is also clear that his doubts lingered. His sojourn with the Seekers has already been noted, and it was, perhaps, his experiences with the Staplehurst Independents, as much as his own spiritual turmoil, that helped to push him in the ultimate direction of the complete rejection of organised church worship.

The precise relationship of Durant's church with the Dover Congregationalists is less easy to determine, but there was clearly an organized assembly of Independents in the port by the beginning of 1646, since its pastor, along with that from Sandwich, was present at Durant's induction. A letter dated April 13th, 1646, from Dover to the Assembly of Divines at Westminster throws some light on early Independency in Dover;

Worthy sir: Our true respects of you prefixed
We entreat your favour to acquaint us what you
think will be the result at last about the
Independents; if they must be tolerated, it is
then in vain for us to strive against it by
any humane helps, and must expect to live in all
confusion and disorder, except it be in our
Families, and there we shall hardly avoid it, for
there are some that creep in Houses. We desire you
to take notice that for three years past there

1. CCL U37 f15.

2. J. Nickolls, Original Letters and Papers of State, London, 1743, p96;
A. Woolrych, Commonwealth to Protectorate, Oxford, 1982, p118.

hath been some differences about that way in Dover; but of late they are faln into a Congregational Church, have made members, and ordained a Pastor, one Mr. Davies of London, who will settle here with them: Hereupon they are presently so high-flown, that they will have our publike meeting place commonly called the Church to preach a weekly lecture, though we have an order from the Committee of Parliament, that there shall be none without the consent of the ministers of Dover, and have acquainted them with it, yet some have threatened, if the key be kept away they will break open the doore; and since Mr Davies journey to London, the Members of this church meeting every day Lords day twice and once in the week, Mr Mascall (a man employed by the state to be a perfector of the Customs) undertakes to feed the flock.

Further information submitted by two Dover townsmen was sufficient to convince Thomas Edwards of the danger posed to orthodoxy in the port, especially in view of the statement made by one of the Dover Independents that

the Scots and the Assembly were pests and plagues of the Commonwealth the Prebytery was Anti-Christian; and speaking of the ministers called them an ugly tribe.¹

The Dover Church was under the joint pastorate of John Davis and Robert Mascall at least until 1651, when the latter was given dismissal to join the Canterbury Church under John Durant. Both men were present at the meeting concerning the apostasy of William Buckhurst, and both men spoke against his request for dismissal elsewhere. Mascall was also instrumental in the establishment of the Staplehurst Church in 1647, although he does not appear to have taken any part in helping to heal the divisions discussed above. By 1651, he had risen to the position of Deacon in the Canterbury Church and played an important part in the

1. Edwards, op.cit., pt.2, pp163-164, pt.3, p24; Matthews, Calamy Revised, p158.

maintenance of Dissent under persecution following the Restoration and the clerical ejections of 1662. As yet, there is no evidence that the Dover Church suffered from differences of opinion.¹ John Davis eventually became Chaplain to the unpopular Major-General, Thomas Kelsey, although it would seem that he had been garrison Chaplain at Dover Castle before the latter's appointment. In June 1650, he wrote to the Army in Scotland, some of whose officers had called upon the saintly elements in England to hold days of prayer for the furtherance of God's work against the backsliding Scots who had accepted Charles II. On behalf of the Dover garrison John Davis framed a letter of support for the Army;

Sirs, wee account ourselves really honoured to bee called forth to joyne in soe good a worke as to keepe a solemne time for seeking of God's fate in matter of so great concernment to the whole nation yourselves and us. Notice was given of your letter read in the publique place and meeting in the towne to invite those that fear God to come and joyne in the worke with us. Would to God those grosse enormities of Drunkenesse, swearing, open prophaneness of the Lord's Day contempt of the ordinances of Jesus Christ which which you are pleased to write are too much to be found amongst our companies alsoe but wee hope our endeavour in severall places shall be for the Reformations and taking such a course as is agreable to the Gospell and Discipline of the Church. God is a just and jealous God and will not hold them guiltless that takes his name in vaine. Our hearts are with you and our prayers for you and if anyway wee may bee subservient to you in your affaires bee confident none shall bee more willing to serve you.²

The absence of the Church Book for this Dover Independent Church makes it

1. CCL U37 ff11-12, 16.

2. Worcester College, Oxford, Clarke MS18, f41.

impossible to trace with any certainty any connection between it, its members, and the incident of nonconformity in Dover during the 1630s, details of which have been discussed in Chapter 2.

It has already been noted that John Durant was closely connected with the development of Congregationalism in Sandwich, and even after his ordination in Canterbury he appears to have continued to lecture in Sandwich, gathering a church together in a house that had formerly belonged to one of the Prebends, preaching and administering the sacraments there. His colleague John Symonds, became pastor of the Sandwich Church following Durant's call to Canterbury, but evidence concerning his ministry is scant. He clashed with the Sandwich magistracy in 1646 over the question of the prevalence of conventicling during the Sunday services, his defence being,

Can you blame them, when they have nothing
but bread and cheese?¹

By 1648, it would seem that the Sandwich Church was without a pastor, but by the following year the vacancy had been filled by Francis Prentice. In March 1649, Prentice fell into controversy with one of the members of the Canterbury Church, by the name of Hills, who claimed that since he had been an ordained minister he had the right to baptise whomsoever he wished, but little more is known of Prentice's ministry saving the fact that, like John Davis, he had been the author of a letter to the army in Scotland which is somewhat more explicit in its phraseology over the concept of the Army as a divine agent and a source of salvation from the uncertainties of the times;

Soe wee are perswaded in our hearts that God will
make the Army further instrumentall to carry on
God's worke in these nations (if not elsewhere) to
destroy and bringe downe any whoever that shall

1. Edwards, op.cit., pt.3, pp97, 109.

engage for that late Tyrant's interest.¹

and Dr. Capp has seen this letter as important evidence of the general rise of millenarian expectations amongst the gathered churches following the execution of Charles I, as well as the daily hope of the establishment of Sion on earth by means of the Army.² By 1652, conflict had emerged in the Sandwich Church over the question of church maintenance, several of the congregation apparently scrupling over the question of the church receiving financial assistance from the town's magistracy. The whole problem, given the early attitudes of Independents such as John Turner towards the question of the minister's financial position and the attitude of Congregational Churches in general towards the relationship of gathered saints with the civil magistrate, is eminently understandable. It is equally clear that even figures such as John Durant had deviated from the standards of theoretical Congregational ecclesiology since he had not long been pastor of the Canterbury Church before he was relieved of reliance upon erratic contributions from the congregation and his financial position secured by agreement with the church assembly, a development which ran clean counter to the idea of the minister supporting himself either from gifts 'freely given' or, like the Apostles, from the fruits of their own labours. There is no evidence to suggest what the outcome of this dispute was, but it forms interesting confirmatory data concerning the dilemma already noted as facing the separatist churches once they became formal and organized.³

The Independent Church at Adisham probably dates from 1649. On October 8th, the Canterbury Church received a letter

from some christians in and about Adisham
informing that they weer joyned together in
church fellowship giving an account of the

1. CCL U37 ff13-14; Worcester College, Oxford, Clarke MS18 f42.

2. Capp, *op.cit.*, p54.

3. CCL U37 f14.

manner thereof, upon the reading and consideration of which the church was fully satisfied in their church state and therefore did order that a letter should be drawn up and sent to them by the hands of the Deacon or Brother Lee, who were chosen to give the right hand of fellowship to them in the name of this church; and also to exhort that church with full purpose of heart to cleave unto the Lord.¹

This entry in the Canterbury Church book, when taken with those concerning the Staplehurst Church, shows clearly how influential a force Durant's assembly was in the maintenance and spread of religious Independency in this area. The first pastor of the Adisham Church, who was to prove Durant's equal in terms of importance as a figure of nonconformity, was Charles Nicholls, grandson of the influential Kentish Puritan of the 1580s, Josias Nicholls. Both Calamy Revised and Dr. Nuttall assert that Charles Nicholls was a member of the Canterbury Church prior to his joining Adisham in 1650, remaining to become pastor there as a result. The evidence for this is, however, somewhat ambiguous, the Canterbury Church book merely stating

At this tyme upon the desire of the church at Adisham the church ordered the Deacon and our Brother Nicholls to goe to them upon the thirde day of the weeke, to assist and approve of what they shall regularlye doe in the choice of an officer.²

Moreover, his name does not appear in the list of members as recorded in the Church book of the Canterbury Church between 1645 and 1650, and hence this reference could refer equally to his relation, Josias Nicholls, who was one of the

1. CCL U37 f14.

2. ibid.; Matthews, Calamy Revised, p365; Nuttall, loc.cit., p181.

original covenanters of Durant's church.¹

In 1651, Charles Nicholls became engaged in a heated argument with the Presbyterian minister Richard Culmer, a row which, as with many of the controversies of this period, went into print. By this time, the seeds that radicals such as Culmer had sown in the late 1630s had produced a harvest very different from that which they had at first imagined, and Culmer went into print to defend the institution of tithes, non-payment of which, along with non-attendance, he believed to be on the increase. Charles Nicholls responded with a published attack on tithes which ranks with Turner's writings in its unequivocal rejection of payments to the clergy. He takes Culmer's two main charges, that those who refuse to pay tithes are Prophane and guilty of 'levelisme', and proceeds to demolish them. In defence of those charged with prophanity, Nicholls writes,

But many who are dead in Christ to tythes,
sanctifie the Sabboth, which they in no case
can spare, and delight in Sermons, though not
in those satyrs and Dialogues which are stuffed
with subtle slanders Wherefore I could not but
speak the truth to their vindication who frequent
Ale-houses lesse then many of Master Culmer's
tribe.²

and he continues by mocking the arguments employed by Culmer to show that the non-payment of tithes is potentially socially disintegrative;

It goes against my will, I meane my conscience,
to pay Tyth rent or Landlords rent, then Tom calls
himself a Leveller, which he explaines with this
profoude proverbe, Joane should have been as
good as my Lady, here to flatter the Committee,
and to blinde the people Mr.Culmer would perswade
that wilfulnesse was all the conscientiousnesse

1. CCL U37 f16.

2. R.Culmer, The Ministers Hue and Cry, London, 1651, pp20-21; C.Nicholls, The Hue and Cry after the Priests, London, 1651, p7.

that men used in not paying Tyths; But here I assert it, that the Scripture-guided-conscience holdes the handes of many from paying of Tyths.

Before touching on the heart of the matter, which for Nicholls, as for John Turner, is the fact that there is no Scriptural basis for the acceptance of tithes, Nicholls aims a sharp blow at the Presbyterians who claim that, by refusing to pay tithes, which are lawful, those parishioners thus acting are guilty of 'combination against Law' and this sedition;

But when they wanted the Bishops down who were established by Law, that they might get their rooms, then it was not sedition in them for to move against them. Then they pleaded to be eased by the Parliament in the correction of the oppressing laws, and that is all the combination against law that I know honest men to use in respect of tythes; even humbly to desire the Parliament to repeal that law, which enforceth conscientious men against their consciences.¹

and he concludes his argument with a bitter indictment of tithes as not only being contrary to the dictates of the Gospel but for being positively obstructive in the process of attaining the Gospel age at this time;

As for the light of the Gospel, it is of a more divine nature then to be quenched by the decay of the oyl of tyths; and it did shine brightest when it had none of that foraigne fewel and when the lamps have been fullest of that oyl, the light of the Gospel hath been most thick and cloudy, and filled with snuffie stenches of domineering humane inventions.²

1. ibid., pp7, 14.

2. ibid., p16.

It is somewhat ironic to see the Presbyterian order being designated as the heir of Rome!

In 1653, Charles Nicholls was amongst those suggested as being worthy to sit in the Commons in a letter to Cromwell from the churches in Kent, and in the same year he was at the centre of another dispute, this time with the Presbyterian minister of Deal, Thomas Gage. Gage was the minister of the Deal Presbyterian church and his written record of his clash with Nicholls, although obviously partisan, provides a useful insight into the ideas and church practices of the Adisham Independent. On March 12th, there was a public disputation arranged in the Deal Church between Charles Nicholls on the one hand, and three or four 'able divines' on the other, who included Thomas Gage, William Stanley, and Henry Harflete. Nicholls' main line of argument was the familiar theme already encountered in the writings of Robinson, Brewer, and, in particular, John Turner. Gage outlines the matter in his introduction;

Secondly they boast of their pure preaching of the word: whereas in this my small treatise and disproof of Mr Nichols his errours, you shall discover that some of them have no authority to preach, no laying on of hands of the Presbytery, no mission, no vocation, much less to the administration of the sacraments.¹

and he continues,

Such boastings and beggings of victory against me having already been spread abroad by a wilfull and self-conceited people, and threats divulged of accusing me of falshood in my relation of my conference with Mr Nichols: I have (Gentle Reader) thought fit to give thee notice of the subject of our dispute, which were these three propositions sent unto me by Mr Nichols viz.

1. Nickolls, op.cit., p96; T.Gage, A Full Survey of Sion and Babylon, London, 1653, Sig.A1.

1. Parochial Churches are Babylonian Churches
2. We (that is the Church I serve in Christ) are the house of God
3. Officiating Parish ministers are Babylonish¹

The whole affair, both in itself and in its content, is an interesting continuation of the trend observable at Ash in 1625 with the Fenner/Huntley debate over the whole question of separation and what actually constitutes a 'true' church - itself a mirror of the ecclesiological arguments raging to and fro between the reformed or separatist churches overseas and the established ministry at home - and recurring in the house of Edward Dering in 1635. The details of this latter conference were sent to Laud by Dering himself and they cast valuable light not only within this present context, but also once more on the position of the Dover minister John Reading as representative of the middle-ground church polity which was to suffer inevitably in an age of ecclesiological polarisation. Dering wrote;

- May it please your Grace
 In these inferior employments wherein I serve, I have mett with some particulars fitt so I conceive to be presented to your Grace and so hath the Deane of Canterbury advised me. The separatists neare me have encreased both in number and in novell opinions of late, one of them desiring satisfaction in some points did to that purpose meete with Mr Reading of Dover att my howse and where Mr Reading using all your able practise of solid judgement and patient moderation though it wrought not on him who desired the conference, yett it did happily resettle another there present. But these doctrines have since unsettled the understanding of a poor woman lately distracted with ungrounded devotion. The positions delivered to me were 1 That their is no covenant between God and us: 2 we have no true ministry 3 wee have no true church govern-

1. ibid., Sig.A3.

ment and 4 wee have many unlawful ceremonyes.

Other points at issue in this debate concerned the Creed and the administration of the sacraments.¹ The list, which is probably the work of Turner's associate, John Fenner, virtually represents the main line of nascent Independency in this area which has already been discussed with reference to Turner himself, and it can be seen as a vital link in the chain connecting the 1630s with the 1650s in its approximation to the very issues at stake in the Deal debate between Nicholls and Gage.

As the disputation unfolded it became increasingly clear that what was at stake was the well-worn concept of the mixed state of established church assemblies. Prebyterian now as opposed to episcopal in the 1630s, and the correct attitude of the 'saints' to that fact. Gage asserts that Nicholls stated that

we were Babylonish, qua mixed, as consisting of all sorts, wicked and good together: And this was his last refuge, and a pretty one indeed for to unchurch a people, because there are some wicked among them.²

Furthermore, Nicholls' own definition as to what constitutes a 'true' church is exactly akin to the interpretation given by Turner, for the former stated that

These that profess the Name of Christ without superstitious inventions of man are a true church.

Over the question of ministerial authority, Nicholls predictably attacks what he sees as the neo-sacerdotalism of the Presbyterian way;

Here Mr Nicholls denying the Major, that true ordination according to Christ's word is by

1. KAO U350 C2/54.

2. Gage, op.cit., p14; echoes here of Robert Abbot's complaint in 1639, 'It is no small charge to unchurch a church, to unminister a ministry, and to unworship a worship', quoted by Patrick Collinson in 'Cranbrook and the Fletchers', p202.

imposition of hands by the Presbytery, said, that he came in to his flock by the Election of the people, which he said was the true ordination according to Christ's word.

a point that he had stressed in his earlier conflict with Richard Culmer in which he had affirmed that

every church of Christ hath undoubted right to choose their owne officers.

Finally, Gage reveals the mode of conducting the sacrament of the Lord's supper within the Adisham Church;

at which Mr Nichols allows a lay-man, or gifted brother, to make a prayer at the setting apart those empty Elements for a Sacramental use to the Soul.¹

The outcome of this debate is unknown - Thomas Gage concluded confidently with the assertion that the Presbyterian divines got the better of their opponent; doubtless, much the same line was taken by Charles Nicholls.

The remaining Congregational Churches emerging in what had been the Canterbury Diocese are revealed accidentally through Quaker sources. In May 1655, John Stubbs and William Caton were at Maidstone, the latter disputing with the Presbyterians there whilst the former tackled the Congregationalists. They met with little success and were both cruelly treated, the main source of opposition being the Presbyterians. They likewise visited Lydd where, as will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 6, Stubbs enjoyed a certain amount of success amongst the Baptists in that parish, and Caton preached to the Independents, although with limited impact. It was not only at Lydd that these two itinerants were to score successes at the expense of the Congregationalists and the Baptists. It has already been noted that the Independent Churches at Canterbury, Staplehurst, and Dover

1. ibid., pp37, 45, 61; Nicholls, op.cit., p8.

felt the effects of their teaching; likewise, Caton records that he was also active at Ashford and Cranbrook, enjoying some success there, and that he concluded his mission to Kent in 1655 by holding at Sandwich

a service in particular among the Dutch people at their steeple-house, but at that time the truth could get but little entrance in that place.¹

The reference to Sandwich foreigners having their own church is of interest, although it is likely that this refers to the parish church of St. Clements, which had been traditionally hired out to the 'strangers' for the sum of 40s per annum.²

The progress of Congregationalism in this part of Kent during the late 1650s is not easy to discern. The Church Book of the Canterbury Church ends its entries in 1658, although there is a good deal of information concerning the church in the 1690s and thereafter. The only entries for 1656 concern the absenteeism of Sister Peirpoint and her eventual excommunication for refusing to submit to the church's discipline. In the same year, as has already been noted, Durant made a personal visit to the Dover Congregational Church in order to combat the influence of Quakerism there. As will be shown in greater detail in Chapter 7, Dover was to become an important link in the chain of the organisation of the Friends in East Kent and the port produced one of the most important figures of provincial Quakerism in the form of the shoemaker, Luke Howard. The only entry for 1657 concerns a dispute between two of the members of the church, Brothers Reynolds and Starr. The member of the Starr family was not Comfort Starr, who was to succeed Durant as pastor of the Canterbury Church, but Jehosophat Starr, who had joined the assembly in 1652 and who may have been related to the Starrs of Ashford who had gone into exile in America during the 1630s. The issue at stake appears to have been financial, Starr owing William Reynolds an unspecified

1. N. Penney, The First Publishers of Truth, London, 1907, pp134, 136, 142.

2. W. Boys, Collections for an History of Sandwich, Canterbury, 1792, p294.

amount of money.¹

The final entry in the Church Book concerns the readmission of John Bissett following his public repentance, and it would seem from a cryptic remark made in that part of the book concerning the registration of members that the church came under fire from 1658 onwards, adding only two further members to the congregation between 1658 and 1668. In August 1661, Henry Oxinden of Maydekin wrote to his cousin at Barham,

If you have not this newes already, then know that there are very strickt letters from the Council to secure such as have been active under the late usurp't and tirannical power and that there is cause to suspect retaine their principles. In order thereto the Canterbury Deputy Lieutenants have silenced John Durant and some think Ventriss and blinde Tayler were so served yesterday.

but Durant continued to hold a regular conventicle in Canterbury up until the Declaration of Indulgence in 1672, when he received permission to hold a meeting outside the city in Longport. The memory of both Parliament and the Canterbury magistracy was, however, long and he eventually took his church into exile in Holland in 1679.²

The letter from Henry Oxinden quoted above is an appropriate document in the sense that what evidence concerning the last days of Congregationalism under the Interregnum administration is largely concentrated, as far as East Kent is concerned, in and around the activities of Charles Nicholls of Adisham, whose friendship and correspondance with Henry Oxinden is of some value in highlighting this particular area of Independency under assault. There is little tangible evidence concerning Nicholls and the Adisham Congregationalists after 1655. The Episcopal Returns for 1669 mention him as an itinerant preacher visiting Independent

1. CCL U37 ff4-5, 20.

2. BL Addit.MS28004, f259; Jones, loc.cit., pp201-203.

congregations at Ash, Staple, Nonington, Womenswold, Dover, and Sandwich. In the last of these places, in the parish of St. Clements, he enjoyed the patronage of Bartholomew Coombes, a future Mayor of Sandwich, in whose barn Sandwich Congregationalists assembled for their illicit conventicles. In one sense, the situation regarding nonconformists had, indeed, been restored by 1660, the major difference between conventicles then and those of the 1630s being that doctrinally and denominationally the assemblies of the 1660s were plainly identifiable. It is also interesting to note that under persecution, the various denominations might occasionally combine for worship, and there is a suggestion that at the Sandwich conventicles, both Independents and Presbyterians were present. At Dover, Nicholls was reported for conventicling in 1665, escaping the clutches of the authorities by, on one occasion, slipping out of the back-door when the house in which he was preaching was raided. At Ash, he enjoyed the patronage of Mr. St. Nicholas, whose wife, as has already been noted, was present at the Fenner/Huntley debate in the parish in 1625.¹

The names of the members of the Adisham conventicle are given in a reference included in the Archdiaconal Visitation of 1662;

Those that follow come not to our congregation:
Mr Charles Nicholls who himself keeps a congregation sometimes at his house sometimes abroad,
John and Elizabeth Reynolds, Edward Hamon and his wife, Elizabeth Austen, Elizabeth Turner, Mr Nichols wife, Henry Browne of Corting and his wife.²

A marginal note refers to Henry Browne and his wife as 'separatists of one Turner's congregation', an enigmatic remark which can scarcely refer to an assembly at Sutton Valence, but which may indicate that the husband of Elizabeth Turner, Mark Turner, held conventicles at his house in which he acted in some official

1. Lyon Turner, *op. cit.*, pp12-16; PRO SP/29/129/14; Bodl. Lib., Tanner MS124 f108.

2. CCL z-4-7 f198.

capacity.¹ It is worth noting that, excluding the Nicholls, who are mentioned elsewhere, and the Brownes, who probably came from outside of the parish of Adisham, the number of those at the Adisham conventicle is the same as that given in the survey of nonconformity for the Lathe of St. Augustine conducted in 1662, and preserved amongst the Tanner MSS in the Bodleian Library, a fact which may encourage the acceptance of the figures given in that document as being, by and large, accurate.

That the various conventicles at which Nicholls preached were interlinking is suggested by a presentment from 1666 for the parish of Womenswold, where the churchwarden, William Tucker, was cited for

permitting one Nicholls an excommunicate parson
to preach in their parishe church at a funeral
sermon of one coombes wife of Sandwich, the
daughter of Mr Marsh of their parish.

The presentment makes it clear that Nicholls' presence was arranged by Bartholomew Coombes and that Nicholls proceeded to

preach to a great concourse of factious people,
a selected tribe or company of his followers
and disciples purposely (it seems) got together
to be his auditors by a contrivance between
them the said Coombs and Nicholls.²

The whole issue of the patronage of separatists, influential or otherwise, is one of importance in an understanding of the mechanics of religious radicalism during this period. Examples have been cited from the 1590s of the lay support that encouraged preachers such as George Dickenson and Robert Jessup, whilst the evident contribution of Thomas Brewer, 'cheifest patron of the Kentish Brownests', requires little further comment, especially as far as John Turner is

1. This same group was presented for absenteeism in 1666, see CCL x-7-10 ff2-5.

2. CCL x-7-10 f17.

concerned. Of the separatists considered so far in this study, very few wills have survived to give any impression of their relative economic status, although John Fenner's will indicates possession of a variety of parcels of land in several parishes, including Sutton Valence, whilst, at the other end of the temporal spectrum, Charles Nicholls is known to have paid taxes for six hearths, information which suggests that such men were not without means.¹ However, the role of the wealthier layman was clearly of some importance. It has already been noted that Nicholls enjoyed the patronage of the St. Nicholas family at Ash, but the main source of support was Robert Hales of Howletts, a modest country estate in Bekesbourne, near Canterbury. Nicholls' letters to Henry Oxinden are full of references to Howletts and it is reasonably clear that Hales' house became the centre of East Kent Congregationalism during the late 1650s and early 1660s - in 1662, he wrote to Katherine Oxinden that he had 'been at howletts over and over' and that 'Younge Mr Hales hath been twice at my house', and this is by no means the only reference to the Hales family. Other letters make it equally clear that Nicholls was not only active in East Kent, but travelled, presumably to preach, into the Weald and to Romney Marsh.²

Henry Oxinden's own position with regard to the Independents is somewhat confusing, since he ended up desperately seeking preferment within the Church of England following his ordination in 1663. During the early 1650s, however, it would seem that he flirted with more radical company. In June 1655, he wrote to the mercurial Marchamont Needham, partly in verse;

Then John of Leyden, Nol and all,
The goblin ghostly traine
Brave rebel saintes triumphant shall
Begin the second reign

sentiments that, given the recipient of the letter, might be possibly construed as

1. KAO PRC 17/74 f341; Matthew, Calamy Revised, p365.

2. BL Addit. MS28004 ff64, 66; Addit. MS44847 ff43, 46.

sardonic if it were not for the conclusion of the letter which is written in language much representative of the times;

Were not I in haste I should further
enlarge by letting you know that sith
I cannot enjoy your presence I dayly
contemplate your picture and have no
smal ado to refrain from being a Papist
when I behold it, so much honour do I
hold due to the SAINTS amongst whom your
deare selfe is esteemed none of the least.

Henry Oxinden was also familiar with Rest Fenner, future deacon of Durant's church, and bought books from his Stationer's shop in Canterbury, and he likewise exchanged letters with Robert Hales. It would seem that, in addition, he was involved on a local political level with more militant types such as Lawrence Knott, who eventually became a prominent Dover Quaker, and Captain Kenwick.¹ Nevertheless, he was later to disappoint Charles Nicholls and their friendship went through a period of strain, presumably over Oxinden's eventual drift towards religious respectability and eventual ordination. In September 1662, Henry Oxinden wrote to his wife;

C(harles) N(icholls) is so silent: for
I believe nobodie can perswade Him into
a good temper towards mee

and Nicholls later wrote reproachfully to Henry Oxinden,

I will not make this paper so like a
Hearse-cloath as to tell thee all the
disquiets of my disappoyntment, partly
in the fayler of my expectation, more
espetially in that thou couldst not tarry
thyself 3 score miles from me without
giveing me the least notice thereof.

1. BL Addit. MS28003, f303; Addit. MS28004 ff50, 52.

and concluding

I now looke on Denton-Barham mournfully
and now thou art out, account myself a
stranger to those parts.

By 1663, the differences between the two men had been settled, however, and a more buoyant Nicholls wrote,

Thankes (deare friend) for shewing me kindnes
that triumphed in brightness in spight of
Midnight, that turned morpheus out of his
Dominion in our eyes; that made rest uneasy
and watching a repose. Good H: shall not we
to howletts once more? You talkt not of
goeing this weeke: if you and your Lady
will waite on them Satterday why may not I
step over night to meete you there! and arest
those bayleifes that shall interrupt and
excommunicat the Bishop if he shall dare to
Interdict.¹

Charles Nicholls was not the only minister to enjoy the patronage of Howletts.

Thomas Ventress, ejected minister of St. Margarets, Canterbury, held conventicles in his former parish and, according to Calamy,

Sir Robert Hales and his family at Beaksbourn
were his constant attendants and great friends.

Likewise, Edward Coppin, the ejected minister of Wooton, near Dover, retired to Bekesbourne, his birthplace, in 1663,

and was in great esteem with Sir Robert Hales
and his Family, that were his neighbours. There
also when Liberty was given he preach'd in his
owne House to such as would come to hear him.²

1. BL Addit. MS28003, f26; Addit. MS28004 f41; Addit. MS44847 f6.

2. E. Calamy, The Nonconformists Memorial, London, 1775, pp65-57, 71.

Before leaving Nicholls, however, it would be inappropriate not to mention the contents of a letter, undated, but probably written some time in 1664, which he wrote to Henry Oxinden which clarifies some of the former's views and is thus of interest in that it helps to place Nicholls more firmly within the framework of developing Congregationalist thought and practice so far discussed in this study. The letter would appear to take the form of a commentary on a sermon preached by Oxinden, and Nicholls attacks the unscriptural basis of the established church both in its physical appearance and in its hierarchical aspects;

Extricate, if you can, Prelatical impositions from the laborinth of your Axioms, they who worship God by wayes of their own devising, and not his prescription. Say, where is your Divine Prescription for Archbishops, Deanes, Priestes, Parsons, Vicars? Apostles, Prophetts, Evangellists, Pastors, and teachers, I know, but what are these? Where hath Christ our Lawgiver by himself, or principle embassador'd extraordinary prescribed holy grounds, places, or vestments, or utensels: Good tell me where he hath prescribed an imposition of sett formes of prayer.....impositions so paramount and peremptorie that without such sheckels no man can run Gods errand, though nower so expresly sent him. Were Paul alive againe I doubt whether this gag would not be put into his mouth, and whether thatt once doomd pestilent fellow would not passe among the Phanatiques.

It is a familiar argument, reminiscent of Lollard preference for prayers in fields, and echoing the claims of separatists such as Turner that 'God hath made all places holy alike.'

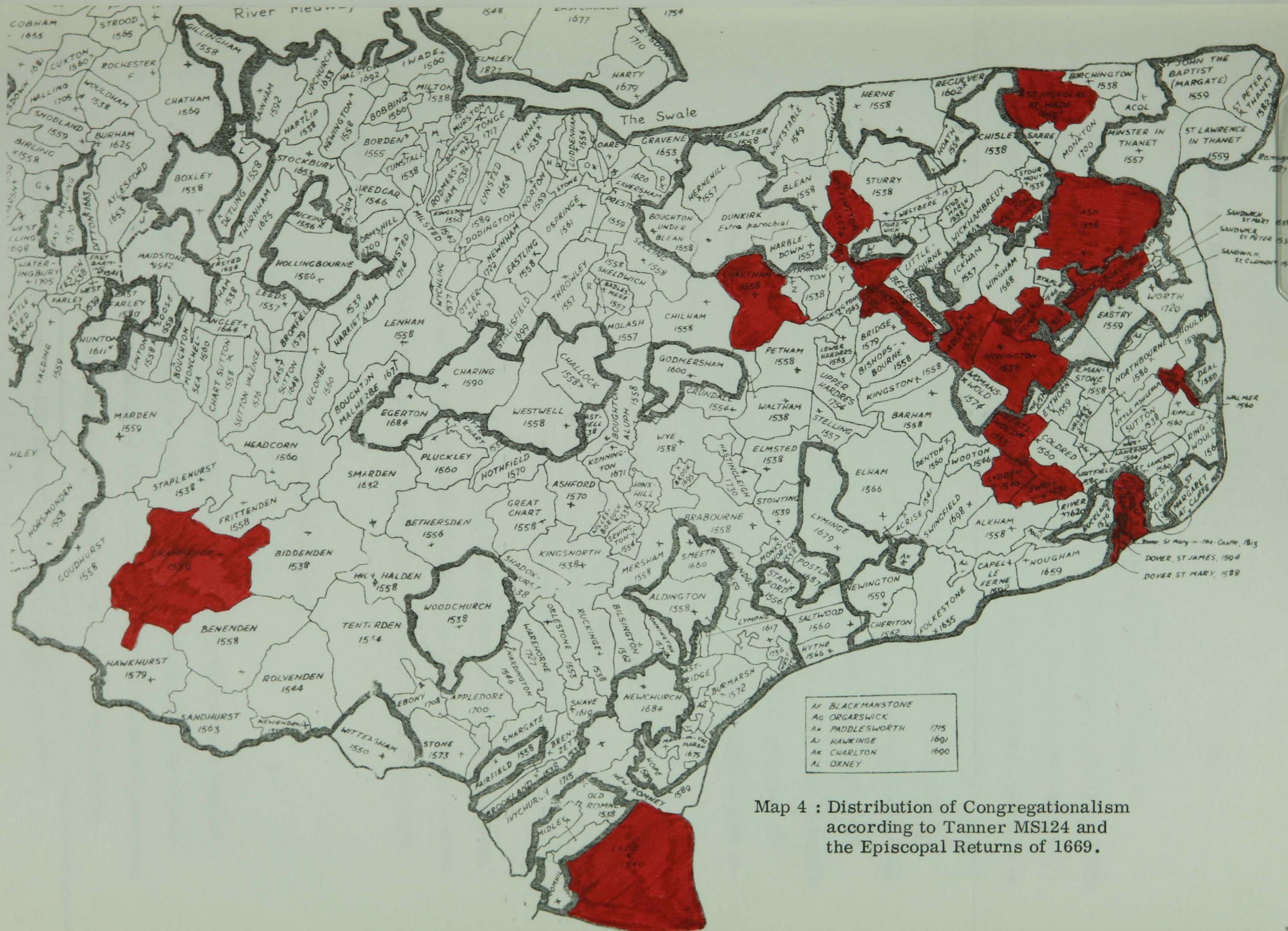
Christ himself being askt, where God must be worshipped John 4th answered neither in

that mountaine nor at Jerusalem, and assigned no place, but levelling all places in himself, the great Mount of God, he answers that they who worship God must worship him in Spirit, and in truth, and then anywhere, everywhere will be found holy ground.¹

To present a complete picture of Congregationalism by the end of the period in question is, understandably, impossible but two further documents may, perhaps, be alluded to by way of a conclusion. Amongst the Tanner MSS in the Bodleian Library, Oxford, is a document entitled a "Survey of conformity 166 $\frac{2}{3}$ in the Lathe of St. Augustine." These two folios record numbers of Independents, Anabaptists, Quakers, and the numbers 'whereof women'. The survey deals with seventy-eight parishes in East Kent, and its findings are recorded with reference to Independency on Map 4 on the following page, the largest concentrations being at Canterbury and Ash. In 1669, a similar exercise was conducted for the whole Diocese, and its findings are also recorded on the Map overleaf. Both sets of figures must, as always, be treated with caution - there is, for example, no mention of Staplehurst in the Episcopal Returns of 1669 and the authorities also occasionally confuse the denominations of certain conventicles, as those at Davington and Godmersham - but, taken together with the information presented in this Chapter, they can be said to afford some measure of the achievement of the visible saints in the twenty or so years before the Restoration and the return of ecclesiological conservatism.²

1. BL Addit. MS28004 ff177-178.

2. Bodl. Lib., Tanner MS124 ff108-109; Lyon Turner, op.cit., pp12-20.



Map 4 : Distribution of Congregationalism according to Tanner MS124 and the Episcopal Returns of 1669.

Chapter 6 : Baptist Assemblies in the Diocese of Canterbury, 1640-1660.

Attempts to trace the evolution of Baptist Churches in the Diocese of Canterbury are bedevilled by the same research problem referred to in the previous chapter; all too few of the original Church Books of these churches have survived. However, those that have, taken together with other sources in manuscript, such as Quaker commentaries, and printed works permit some form of picture to emerge.

It has already been taken as an accepted fact that the vast majority of the Baptist assemblies in the area under study were Arminian, or General, rather than Particular - that is, that the Baptist Churches of Kent by and large rejected any notion of Election or a chosen 'regenerate'. There is a suggestion in Luke Howard's description of the emergence of Baptist views in Kent in the early 1640s that this may not have been so at first. Describing the mission of William Kiffin to Kent in 1643 and 1644, Howard records that his future wife was

the first that received them there, was dipped
into the belief and church of W. Kiffin, who
then was of the opinion commonly called the
Particular Election and Reprobation of persons.

It was, according to the same account, only later that two of the leading converts, Mark Elfreth and Nicholas Woodman, were rebaptised following a general reaction against the Particular viewpoint, and Howard goes on to assert that it was from these two men

from whence did arise all the Baptists
which now are in Kent.¹

It is, of course, partly this phenomenon of the preponderance of General Baptist tenets that has led recent writers, notably Christopher Hill, to suggest, albeit cautiously, the possibility of some kind of underground tradition in doctrinal terms operating from Lollardy through the Reformation to separatism in the

1. Nuttall, loc.cit., pp181-182; Howard, A Looking Glass....., pp1-2.

seventeenth century.¹ The existence of such a tradition is extremely difficult to prove either one way or the other, although the question of the dominance of Arminian views amongst the Baptists in this region of Kent likewise remains to be answered. It has been suggested in the previous chapter that the preponderance of Calvinist attitudes to salvation amongst the Congregational Churches in this area may have something to do with this phenomenon. It may be equally significant that the views held by the Free-Willers under the direction of Henry Hart during the 1540s and 1550s in the parishes of Pluckley, Lenham, and eventually Faversham, were unequivocally Arminian as far as the concept of predestination was concerned. The deposition of John Plume of Lenham which betrayed the views of another of Hart's adherents, Humphrey Middleton, exemplifies this;

he saithe that umfrey middilton beying in
Coles house att faversham apon Lamas Daye
he saide that Adam was elected to be salvid
And that all men, being then in Adams Loynes
were predestynate to be salvid and that ther
were no reprobates.

adding that a central belief of the group was the opinion that 'predestynacyon is a dampnable doctryne'.² Another of the group, Lawrence Ramsey, deposed

that henry harte saide and affermed as it
is conteyned in tharticles that is ther is
no man so chosen or predestynate but that
he may condempne himselfe. Nether is ther
anye so reprobate but that he maye if he
will kepe the commandements and be salvid.³

Freedom of will was an important part of continental anabaptist theology, particularly amongst the Melchiorites, but such opinions were not their exclusive

1. Hill, loc.cit., pp58-59.

2. BL Harleian MS421 f133.

3. ibid., f134.

preserve. It is thus rash to see Hart as a direct forerunner of General Baptist theology because of his views on Free-Will; evidence for the continuation of such a tradition needs to rest on more explicit evidence than the nomenclature of hostile contemporaries and to be less dependent on what may be doctrinal coincidence. More to the point, there seems no grounds for believing that the seventeenth century Baptist Churches felt any kinship with their anabaptist precursors, continental or otherwise - indeed, in general, the Baptists went out of their way to repudiate contemporary hostile charges that they were out to create a second Munster, and the connection appears to owe more to subsequent historiography, particularly amongst denominational historians of relatively recent times bent on the quest for respectable tradition.¹

One other anabaptist doctrine requires examination within this context and that is the whole question of baptism in the established church. Attacks on the sacrament of Baptism can again be seen as part of Kentish Lollardy. In 1511, the Grebill family of Benenden were amongst those interrogated as result of Warham's investigation into the nature and extent of Wealden Lollardy, and before she was condemned to be burnt, Agnes Grebill deposed a series of heresies, including disparaging remarks as to the inefficacy of Baptism, although her views on this may merely reflect a general sacramentarianism going beyond the rejection of transubstantiation. More identifiable is the belief of another martyr following these proceedings, William Carder, who stated

That Robert Reignoldes of Tenterden the
Friday of the first weke in Lent last past
came and dyned at this deponents house and
there redde in a booke a sermon of seynt Austyn
spekyng ageynst the sacramente of baptisme.
And after that he had redd it he asked of
this deponent: How say ye nowe of the opinion
of heretikes, what avayleth to crysten a
childe in colde water? And this deponent

1. Horst, op.cit., pp122-135.

answered agayn: Ye be full of questyons.
Beleve ye as ye will, I will beleve as a
cristen man shold do.¹

It is likewise virtually certain that rejection of paedobaptism formed part of the teaching of Henry Hart. One of the most detailed descriptions of the attitudes held by the Faversham Free-Willers comes in the form of a retrospective sermon preached before Cranmer by the Maidstone schoolmaster Thomas Cole, by way of recantation. In this sermon, Cole attacked the concepts which he had hitherto maintained as a member of Hart's circle, including

to deny that children be borne in originall
synne, or beyng so fallen, cannot be renewed
agayne by repentaunce: or to denye the baptisme
of infantes.²

Evidence for the continuity of Anabaptist views has been discussed in other studies; opposition to paedobaptism on doctrinal grounds, however, emerges only rarely in the Act Books for the Canterbury Diocese between 1560 and 1640.³ Whilst there are over a dozen examples of parishioners refusing to bring their children to be baptised - an offence which can certainly be defined after 1660 as being indicative of deep scruples concerning infant baptism - and a handful of examples concerning misbehaviour during the baptismal service, such attitudes cannot necessarily be construed as being exemplary of opposition to baptism per se. More often than not, this kind of behaviour reflects a general, not always denominational, opposition to the rites of the established church, and the Sutton Valence/Egerton conventiclers,

1. LPL Reg. Warham ff159-175.

2. T. Cole, A Godly and Frutefull Sermon made at Maydstone, London, 1553, Sig. C8.

3. See, for example, D. B. Heriot, "Anabaptism in England during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries" in Transactions of the Congregationalist Historical Society, London, 1933-1936, Vol. 12, pp256-271; D. Loades, "Anabaptism and English Sectarianism in the Mid-Sixteenth Century" in Studies in Church History, Subsidia 2, Oxford, 1979, pp59-70; Horst, op.cit.

who, as has been demonstrated, maintained infant baptism as an important feature of their beliefs, are a case in point. In fact, only once before the emergence of seventeenth century Baptist theology following the decisive action of John Smyth and his followers in the Netherlands does a specific example of what might be vestigial anabaptism occur in the Archdiaconal records for the Diocese of Canterbury. In 1593, the churchwardens for the parish of Hartlip in the Sittingbourne Deanery presented

one Richard Holbrooke who for three weekes space remayning as a scrivener in this parish did not only absent himself from divine service but openly professed he would not come to church yet before he had continued one moneth here he left his place lest the articles of recusante might touche him. We further present the said Richard Holbrooke upon the foresaid article for sowing erronious doctrine here as namely that infants ought not to be baptized and that the solemnization of marriage now used in our churche was unlawful.

It is worth noting that at roughly the same time, the Consistory Court of the French Church in Canterbury summoned Pierre Rotin to appear to answer questions

as to a rumour running that he favoured
the Anabaptists.¹

Such scraps are suggestive but they could, especially in the case of Richard Holbrooke, also be the result of some form of rationalistic composite radicalism, the process concerning which has been discussed in Chapter 3 of this study. On the whole, however, it would appear that the case for connecting the Baptist Churches

1. CCL x-3-6 f129; F.W.Cross, "History of the Walloon and Huguenot Church at Canterbury" in Publications of the Huguenot Society, London, 1898, Vol.15, p57.

in this part of Kent, in particular in the 1640s, with anabaptist precursors of the previous century remains, at present, unproven, and that these churches, like separatism as a whole, were dependent to a far more fundamental extent on the consequences of doctrinal speculation that was part and parcel of the post-Reformation religious scene in England. Of course, the concept of some kind of residual tradition at work in the grey hinterland of rural society is an attractive one, and such an approach may not be unhelpful. On the other hand, if a self-conscious linear tradition is discarded in favour of an approach which envisages the continuity of a common 'pool' of anti-authoritarian attitudes capable of absorbing a variety of notions, foreign as well as indigenous, then this might form the basis of an explanation of the durability of certain 'heretical' beliefs. A firm example of this is the recurrence of opposition to tithes, theological argument developing what was a plainly unpopular institution for obvious reasons. Such familiar topics of ill-articulated discontent required only two conditions to be transformed into central issues of doctrinal debate; the polarisation of religious attitudes and the collapse of ecclesiastical authority or enforcement of orthodoxy - the 1640s saw both these conditions become reality.

The earliest Baptist Church in the Canterbury Diocese is traditionally that at Eythorne, a tiny village just off the Dover-Canterbury road, which, even today, proudly proclaims a tradition of having been in definite existence since 1624.¹ The source of this tradition is not clear and certainly does not fit into Luke Howard's description of the advent of the General Baptists in Kent in 1643. In the final analysis, it would seem to stem from the interest in denominational historiography which emerged during the nineteenth century. The Baptist historian, Ivimey, quotes a letter sent to him by the then minister of the Eythorne Church, John Giles;

more then 220 years ago persons of the general
baptist denomination met for worshipping of
God at Eythorne. They seem to have been in

1. W.P. Clark, Eythorne: Our Baptist Heritage, Ramsgate, 1980, p15.

a church state almost from their existence
at least there is proof they were so in 1624.
Their number of members then was from 20 to
30. They used to meet in different private
houses, and particularly at Street-End.¹

and this statement solidifies following the publication of Adam Taylor's monumental
treatise on the English General Baptists in 1818;

In 1624 the number of members was upwards of twenty;
and, under many discouraging circumstances,
a strict attention to discipline was maintained.²

The detail and tone of John Giles' letter are not easy to explain away, and he may have had reference to a manuscript source no longer extant. However, acceptance of so early a date is questionable without that source for there is no hint of nonconformity in Eythorne in the Act Books or Visitation Records for the period 1560 to 1640. Under the administration of Whitgift, and even more so of Laud, it is difficult to accept that conventicling could go on for any length of time totally undetected, especially in view of the proximity of the parish to Canterbury. Moreover, there were no requests for licenses for worship in 1672 following the Declaration of Indulgence from this parish, and the Compton Census returns of 1676 for Eythorne record the existence of only twelve nonconformists out of a total figure of eighty-nine parishioners. It is likely, however, that Baptist views were being maintained in Eythorne prior to the 1670s and that the subsequent Baptist Church there owed its inception to the holders of these views. The survey of nonconformity of 1662 mentioned in the previous chapter revealed the existence of twenty-eight 'anabaptists' in the parish, by far the largest single representation out of all the parishes surveyed, and the leaders appear to have been James Robins and James Henry.³ In addition to this concrete evidence, there is also the possibility

1. J. Ivimey, A History of the English Baptists, London, 1814, Vol.2, p217.

2. A. Taylor, A History of the English General Baptists, London, 1818, p282.

3. Lyon Turner, op.cit., p10; Bodl. Lib., Tanner MS124 f108.

that certain families, who were later to become the mainstay of the Eythorne Baptist Church - the Knotts and the Birches, for example - had ceased to bring their children to baptism after 1653. It is thus likely that whilst the actual Church there was not formally constituted until after the Restoration, the ideas, attitudes, and organization of this group were developing quietly during the Interregnum period.¹

That this may have been so is equally understandable given the existence of flourishing Baptist churches in Canterbury and Dover, in which towns the names of the Knott and Birch families can be traced. The Dover Baptist Church Book, now on deposit at Dr. Williams Library in London, gives no precise information concerning the date of this foundation. Compared to the detail afforded by the Canterbury Church Book, it is a frustrating document in that it contains little detail of the organisation and discipline of the church, most of its information being restricted to the registration of births, marriages and deaths. It does contain a reference to the signing of a covenant in 1667, but it is almost certain that the church had been in existence long before that date. The present Unitarian Church on the corner of Snargate Street in Dover, which joined the British and Foreign Unitarian Association in 1825, grew out of the Dover General Baptist Church and claims the year 1643 as the date of its foundation. Given that the Church Book records births from 1645 onwards, such a date is clearly acceptable.² The first registered birth was that of a son born to Mark Elfreth, who, as has been noted, was, along with Anne Stevens and Nicholas Woodman, amongst the first to be converted by William Kiffin in 1643. As to further information concerning the early years of the church, the Church Book is unhelpful, although a study of the folios recording the marriages and births, taken in conjunction with the writings of the Quakers William Caton and Luke Howard, permit a limited picture to emerge. What

1. A. C. Miller, Eythorne - The Story of a Village Baptist Church, London, 1924, pp13-14.

2. Dr. Williams Library (hereafter DWL) Dover Baptist Church Book (hereafter DBChB) f98; I am grateful to the Reverend D. Skelton for information concerning the Dover Unitarians.

is of initial interest, perhaps, is that none of those presented for attending Trendall's conventicle in 1639 appear to have joined the Dover Baptists, circumstantial evidence which may allow his conventicle to be designated as proto-Congregationalist. The initial Dover Baptist assembly appears to have revolved around the figures of Mark Elfreth of Dover and Thomas Partridge and John Prescott, who both came from the neighbouring village of Guston. As early as 1615, Partridge and Prescott had been reported at the Metropolitan Visitation for stubbornly remaining covered during services, whilst four years later, the churchwardens of St. Mary's presented other future members of the Baptist Church, Lawrence Knott and John Fines, for non-attendance and for walking out of the church once the minister had concluded his sermon, further important examples of what might be termed the 'common Puritan ancestry' behind later separatism. Knott may have been related to the Knotts of Eythorne, and it has already been noted that he later became a Quaker, although he served as Captain of Sandgate Castle during the early 1650s and campaigned amongst the Baptists of Hythe on Henry Oxinden's behalf before his conversion.¹ Similarly, another member of the Partridge family had been presented in 1623 for refusing to stand at the saying of the Creed and for refusing to kneel during the communion service.²

By the 1650s, the Baptists in Dover clearly had become an organised assembly with their own meeting-place since, in 1655, William Caton and John Stubbs opened their mission to Kent in Dover, Caton noting in his Journal

And shortly after we had liberty to have a meeting in the Baptists Meeting-place, unto which many people resorted: and the Lord was with us, and gave us mouth and wisdom, not only powerfully to declare, but also zealously to contend for the everlasting truth, which was then much

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1. LPL VG 4/11 f54; CCL x-9-4 ff293, 335-339; D. Gardiner ed., The Oxinden and Peyton Letters 1642-1670, London, 1937.
 2. CCL z-4-3 f27.

opposed and gainsayed by both professors
and profane; howbeit, some began to
adhere to it, and to be affected with it.

The pastors of this Baptist church appear to have been John Feetness, Edward Prescott, and Richard Hobbes, the last of these possibly having been the initial pastor when the church was founded. One of the Baptists who was present at this meeting with the Quakers, and who was a personal friend of Hobbes, was Luke Howard who, as will be shown in the ensuing chapter, had suffered ever since his conversion to Baptist tenets in 1643 some sort of spiritual crisis and who had been casting round in despair for the spiritual enrichment which he was eventually to find within the Quaker movement.¹ Howard was to become a central figure in the organisation of the Friends in East Kent up until his death following years of persecution in 1697.

Of earlier foundation than the Dover Church, and possibly the earliest of the Baptist Churches in the half of Kent covered in this study, was that in the Wealden parish of Smarden. The actual date of the assembly there is not recorded in the surviving Church Book although, as with the Dover Church Book, the section dealing with the registration of births opens under the year 1640 and it is thus possible that the church was formally constituted in this year. Such a date does not fit in with the chronology given by either Thomas Edwards or Luke Howard and is of interest in providing some balance to the picture of emerging separatist churches in this area.² Not all such foundations were thus dependent upon the fruits of the proselytizing missions of London sectaries; Howard's wife may have been the first to be 'dipped' in East Kent following Kiffin's progress, but it is difficult to accept this, in view of the dating of the Smarden Baptist assembly, as

1. J. Barclay ed., The Journal of the Lives and Gospel Labours of William Caton and John Burnyeat, London, 1839, p18; W. Holyoake, Dover Baptists, Dover, 1914, p9; L. V. Hodgkin, The Shoemaker of Dover, London, 1943, p14.

2. KAO Smarden Baptist Church Book (hereafter KAO 23/SMA) f9.

being true for the whole area. Indeed, the implications of this geographical division may be important. Of the Congregational Churches examined in the previous chapter, it is of note that the three main urban churches of Canterbury, Dover, and Sandwich were all ministered to by outsiders, even if the original impetus for their creation was indigenous. Equally, the churches of Staplehurst and Adisham chose local men for their respective pastors. Given this, and the contrast between the foundation of the Canterbury and Dover Baptist Churches with that of Smarden, it may be possible to draw some kind of distinction in terms of radicalism between the two areas and to suggest that Wealden sectarian development may have been far more dependent on some kind of residual, native nonconformity whilst that in the urban areas of East Kent drew its inspiration from outside influences.

The development of the General Baptist Churches in the Weald is a complex affair and nowhere is this more amply demonstrated than by the fact that the first pastor of the Smarden Baptist Church was Richard Kingsnorth, a parishioner of Staplehurst, and that the Church met at his home at Spilshill in Staplehurst. The dating of Kingsnorth's conversion to Baptist views is also the subject of some confusion which appears to arise from the dating of the Smarden Church.¹ As has been seen, this church was probably operating as early as 1640, but there is little doubt that Kingsnorth's pastorate did not commence until 1644. In that year, the curate of Marden, Francis Cornwell, preached a visitation sermon at Cranbrook against paedobaptism. The sermon had a profound effect on one of those present, Christopher Blackwood, who was vicar of Staplehurst following the sequestration of the previous incumbent, John Brown, in the March of that year.² Blackwood, to the fury of Thomas Edwards, later published an account of the occasion;

there being a sermon preached at Cranbrooke

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1. Nuttall, loc.cit.; Dictionary of National Biography (hereafter DNB), Kingsnorth, Richard; R.Chambers, The Strict Baptist Chapels of England, Rushden, 1952, Vol.3, p5; Taylor, op.cit., p108.
 2. Matthews, Walker Revised, p212; Edwards, op.cit., Pt.3, p98.

in Kent by Mr Frances Cornewall, against paedobaptisme, therein was by him asserted that it was an AntiChristian innovation, a humane tradition and that it had neither precept, nor example, nor yet true deduction from the Word, or words to the like effect. Divers of the ministers thereabouts (some whereof were present and heard him) being much offended hereat (myselfe meantime being silent on both sides) agreed together that we should in our private studies examine the question and at our next meeting which was within a fortnight, bring our collections according as we found it; according to which agreement, I studying the question at large found that it was a humane tradition, and that it contained more evill in it then ever I could have imagined.

Blackwood's objections to infant baptism led him to the acceptance of a wider view concerning separatism. His chief opposition to the whole concept of paedobaptism appears to have been linked to the question of committed belief of which, of course, no child is capable;

Give an example of any one baptised in a gathered church without faith - the scripture is silent herein.

Hence, whilst he, like Turner, Fenner, and Brewer, rejected this aspect of the liturgy on scriptural grounds, his conclusions are somewhat different from these precursors of Kentish Congregationalism over the issue of infant baptism. Like them, his insistence on the paramount authority of the 'Word' leads him to demand 'pure worship', and thus tithes are to be replaced by 'contributions according to the Scripture', and the concept of the mixed assembly is likewise rejected;

I will now give you one instance viz.
Their mistake in the matter of the church,
for so many hundred years, taking mixed
multitudes thereof, when the Scriptures
makes saints in possession the matters thereof.¹

and the same holds for the organization of the church, whether it be parochial or 'presbyterial'. However, he insisted, quoting Acts 16 : 15, on the lawfulness of adult baptism for believers and this was to lead him out onto a limb, for he eventually reasoned that a truly gathered church of baptised believers was of necessity 'Particular' in its view of salvation, and hence he turned his back on the Arminian standpoint. It is probably on these grounds that Blackwood never became pastor of a Baptist Church in Kent, and he finally left the county to travel to Ireland as one of the chaplains to Cromwell's army. Such an attitude was reinforced by, if not actually derived from, Francis Cornwell's own position on this question.

Citing Hebrews 2 : 4, Cornwell asserted

Because of this popish consequence of the Baptism
of the Infants of Beleevers doth instate all
the Infants of the beleeving Gentiles to be
borne in a covenant of Grace, and to have a
right to a promise of life in Christ Jesus.
As Mr Thomas Wilson affirmed in his sermon at
Maidstone, that the covenant infants saved by
their parents faith which is opposed to the
sacred word.²

The reference to Thomas Wilson is, of course, of interest in its implication of the wholehearted immersion of dissenters in the great doctrinal issues of the day being seen at work on a provincial level.

Whether Richard Kingsnorth was present at the Cranbrook sermon is not known,

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1. C. Blackwood, The Storming of Anti-Christ in his two Last and Strongest Garrisons, London, 1644, Pt.1, pp1, 7, Pt.2, p5.
 2. F. Cornwell, The Vindication of the Royal Commission of King Jesus, London, 1645, pp5-6.

but it can be inferred that he probably heard of the whole matter from Blackwood who, as has been stated, was vicar of Kingsnorth's parish at Staplehurst at this time. There is little doubt that Richard Kingsnorth was an Arminian in his view of salvation; such was the spirit of toleration in these early days of organised dissent that differences between the two men does not have appeared to have hindered the development of Baptist assemblies in this area, and they were both subsequently baptised by William Jeffery, an influential figure from Sevenoaks who played an important part in the creation of Baptist Churches at Bessels Green, Speldhurst, and Pembury, all parishes just over the diocesan border in what had been the Bishop of Rochester's jurisdiction.¹

The Smarden Church Book opens with a covenant signed by one hundred and nineteen men and women. Although it is undated, given the allusion to Spilshill, it was probably undertaken in 1644;

Wee who's names ar hear onto subscribed do
in the sight and strength that the Lord hath
given us; willingly give up ourselves to the
Lord, and onto on another in oneness of
Spirit to be his people, in, and of that one
faith of the Gospell that was once delivered
to the saints; striving together for that one
Faith and order of the Gospell, so to bee
a Congregation of the Lord Jesus as hee hath
in our age given power to his saintes to do,
and bee; doeing our duty, in the case of all
his ordinances, and acording to that power
which hee hath in this age left unto his
saintes, and given unto us; watching over
and careing for on another for good. And
timely, and orderly at all convenient times
ot meet together at Spilshill or els where
at the church meeting or brotherly meeting
appoynted by the church, ther to honour and
worship God in holding out this our Light

1. Taylor, op.cit., p108.

faith and practise to all that shall thereto
hear and behold the same, and to give acounte
for our actions each member on to another,
and to the church when by ther officers they
shall Requir it, either privat, or publique
in the spirit of meekness, to bee informed
and Reformed according to the writen word of
God.

Of those who subscribed to this affirmation, the Kingsnorth family was predominant, Richard clearly being the guiding hand, his brother, Daniel, appearing as one of the Deacons, and twelve other members of the family appending their signatures.¹ There is no evidence from the Act Books for Staplehurst of Smarden to suggest any notable tradition of nonconformity in this family prior to the 1640s, although this does not necessarily imply that they harboured no doubts concerning the established church prior to this date. Alice Kingsnorth of Ulcombe was cited during Harpsfield's Visitation in 1557 for refusing to attend the church for any services, and other names display a similarly tenuous link in terms of family between the overtly Protestant nonconformists of the Marian period and the covenanters of 1644; Stephen, John, and Christian Buss all signed the covenant above, whilst Richard Buss was incarcerated by Harpsfield for non-reception. Another covenanter was Henry Snoth, whose surname was certainly borne by one of the many martyrs burnt in Kent during Mary's reign, but in all these cases, the inadequacy of the parish registers has made it impossible to establish accurate genealogical links.² In addition to this, other names can be tied in with post-Marian nonconformity. Robert Edmett, for example, joined the Spilshill group in 1644, whilst William Edmett of Ulcombe had earlier been, as has been seen, a major figure of unorthodoxy in the same parish from 1632 until the collapse of Laud's regime. Likewise, John Skoonds of Leeds was presented for refusing to kneel during a communion

1. KAO 23/SMA ff1-2.

2. Whatmore, op.cit., Pt.1, p124, Pt.2, pp207-208; Foxe, Acts and Monuments, Vol.8, pp504-506.

service in 1630, Thomas Skoonds being an important member of Kingsnorth's circle until his defection to the Quakers, probably in 1657. It has to be admitted that much of this evidence is circumstantial and yet it can only add to the general impression of the fundamental part played by family and kinship ties in the fostering and continuity of critical and independent religious attitudes both before and during the period in question.¹

A number of the covenanters of 1644 were also to sign the Kentish Petition demanding the trial of the King and the rest of the 'Grand Delinquents' in 1648. Doubts as to the authenticity of the many signatures on this Petition have been cast by Professor Everitt, and he bases his suggestion on the marginal comments made by Speaker Lenthall on his own copy of the document, in which Lenthall suggests that blocks of signatures are written in one hand and therefore suspect. It is difficult to comment on this except to say that a good number of the names uncovered in this study appear on the Petition and that the following members of Kingsnorth's Church all appear to have signed in their own hand; Richard Kingsnorth, Thomas Turner, Richard Johnson, Francis Cornwell, John Henerker, Richard Henerker.²

The haphazard documentation of the events and decisions of the Smarden Church as recorded in the Church Book makes it no easy task to trace the development of this assembly as accurately as, for example, the Congregational Church at Canterbury under John Durant. It would seem fairly clear, however, that by the 1650s, the Smarden Church was suffering the same process of internal strife and division that has been observed in the previous chapter as being an endemic condition of these churches once they became institutionalized. At about this time, Richard Kingsnorth felt obliged to make a statement over the question of the duty each and everyone of the Church's members had in watching over the spiritual progress of

1. CCL x-6-4 ff247, 255, x-6-11(ii) ff10, 43, 72, 90-91, 114, z-3-16 f287; LPL VG 4/20 f32, 4/12 f46.

2. A. Everitt, The Community of Kent and the Great Rebellion, Leicester, 1973, p272; Bodl. Lib. Tanner MS57, ff478-481; Professor Everitt's views may require modification in the light of this, and following Professor Underdown's Prothero Lecture of 1980 entitled "The Problem of Popular Allegiance in the English Civil War".

their fellows, and it can only be assumed, in the light of Durant's experience, that he was impelled to do so because the stringent exercise of this form of discipline was beginning to show signs of degenerating into mere gossip. He opened his speech to the church by reminding the congregation of the agreement into which they had entered upon signing the covenant;

to declare there grievances that hee or shee undergoeth by Reasone of the known conervation, or actions of others, as of any persone in pticular, or the Church in generall; not in way of accusation but in way of Information.

and concluded by ruling

That no Brother or Sister shal speake eyther truth or falshood behind his bretheren or sisters bake to defame, or slander them, vile or evell; and whose doth shalbe accounted Bablers, and they the same that hear it, and do not presently Reprove it.

and that

That sinne forgiven shall not be againe mentioned except it be for the first cause.¹

A more concrete example of the attempt of the church to exercise discipline in a social as well as a religious sense amongst its members is afforded by a footnote dated November 20th, 1653, which reads as follows;

It was agreed by the church between Bro: William Archer, and Bro: Robert Thomson, that Brother Archer upon his own cost shall put in a sufficient beame in Bro: Thomsons mill house, between this time and the sixe and

1. KAO 23/SMA f3.

twentyeth day of May nixt, when it shal be most convenient for both of them; the on giveing the other forthinghts warning for to end and fullfill the bargaine of worke about the mill, the whiche bargaine of worke not being done according to the promise to the Church, Bro: Archer hath confest to bee in his sinn; and also his standing out against the Admonition of the Church; and if he did any other way offend by ignorance or weakness, he professeth hearty sorrow for the same.

It would seem that Kingsnorth's attempts to exert discipline met with only limited success since, in the same year, he, along with Andrew Hills, Nathaniel Rowe, and Robert Thomson, issued another statement concerning the 'wel ordering of the Churche', stressing that if the Church deems an action to be sinful as a result of an appeal to Scriptures, then such an action must be confessed as a sin, and that it was likewise a sin to stand out against 'a Lawfull orderly Church admonition.'¹

By the mid-1650s, divisiveness within the church no longer appears to have been solely a consequence of behavioural problems. The activities of the Quaker missionaries to the Weald in 1655 have already been noted with regard to their effect on the Congregational Church there, and they seem to have had a similar impact on some of the members of Kingsnorth's Church. On April 10th, 1655, the issues threatening the peace of various congregations were discussed at a Quarterly meeting held at 'Uddimor' in the county of Sussex. The initial problems appear to have been concerned with the issue of alms distribution, for which there was, apparently, no machinery, and of excommunication. Equally, the threat posed by the Quakers, and the attitude of Baptist members to the Quakers, had clearly become a cause for concern;

Moreover it is desired that every member would be very lawfull that when they have

1. ibid., f300.

occat i one, to have any discours with the persons called quakers, they would be very carefull that they do not render unto them Railing for Railing, but contrariwise, ther moderation be known to all men, and a different between the servants of the Lord, and the servants of Satane, Also that every on be very carefull to forbear laughing, and soffing (sic) whereby the Aversary may take occat i one to pervert the truth.¹

That the presence and teaching of the Quakers, as in the Staplehurst Congregational Church, was beginning to sow seeds of doubt within Kingsnorth's Church can be deduced from the contents and rulings of a series of Church meetings held in March and April 1656. Following an assembly of the various Baptist Church leaders, including William Jeffery, Matthew Caffyn, and Richard Kingsnorth, who had met to decide what 'might best conduce to the present curieng the distractions, and Devissions of, and in Churches', the leading members of the Smarden Church met at Kingsnorth's house on March 28th, and drew up a statement of rules for the congrega tion which demanded regular Church meetings, at least once a fortnight, on the grounds that the neglect thereof was the 'forerunner of Apostasie', and that any member entertaining doubts about faith or Church order must be given liberty to express their views, an informatively parallel development to that which had evolved in Durant's Church;

Because wee judg, that Churches out of order, ar not to break but to Reform; and the way wee judg is first to Reform in Doctrine, then in Disseplane, according to the word of God.

and the statement concludes with a plea for serious employment of scriptural authority in theological debate, again indicative of the dangers emerging once

1. ibid., f24.

interpretation of the scriptures was opened to all;

If any brother, or sister, transported with
pation, do so Reason as tending Rather to
vaine Jangling and confusion, then godly
edifying; then we judg it fitt for the
congregation to silence such an on, with a
present Reproofe. Nay, further; though
hee seeme to carry it with good words, and
faier speeches, if it runn into absurditys,
so as to cleave the hearts of the simpl;
contrary to the drift of scriptur, the natur
of ffaith, and the matter intended, they are
to be avoyded, and ther mouths stopt, as
unrully.¹

If the Quakers won over a notable convert in the Staplehurst Congregational Church in Thomas Howsegoe, then much the same can be said with regard to the Smarden Baptist Church in the shape of Thomas Scoonds. As a prominent member of this assembly, he had been heavily involved in the formulation of discipline as discussed above. In December 1657, Scoonds had made a lengthy statement attacking the concept of a Particular or Elect salvation - itself, perhaps, informative of the kind of doctrinal wranglings going on within this church at that time - but it is possible to detect in his speech to the congregation a trend of thinking which was to eventually to lead him away from that very discipline in which he had been involved only shortly before;

I believe that all the faithfull professd
Discipls of Jesus Christ, make up but one
body; for as the Body is one, and hath many
members, and all the members of that Body,
beeing many are one body, for by one Spirit
wee are Baptised into one Body.²

1. ibid., f25.

2. ibid., f280.

and he concluded his statement by referring to the Light that Christ commanded should be allowed to shine before all men through his disciples. By 1660, it is thus not surprising to find him being persecuted as a Quaker for holding conventicles and for refusing to swear oaths, along with other former members of the Smarden Church, Thomas Watkins and Thomas Turner.¹ The real trial for Kingsnorth's Church, a schism which was to divide not only the congregation but also Kingsnorth's own family, was, however, yet to come in the years following the Restoration.

The first Church Book of the Ashford Baptist Church does not appear to have survived, but a note on the flyleaf of the subsequent book, which dates from 1689, suggests that a Baptist Church was formally constituted in the parish in 1653 and other evidence may argue for a slightly earlier date than that. The note is of additional interest in that it reveals the existence of some form of network;

This church appears from Papers and the Church Book to be of ancient date in the year 1653 wee find there was a congregation of Baptists assembled here at Wye Naccolt and places adjacent who formed themselves into a church estate and constituted eleven articles of their faith and practice.²

In fact, the Baptist Church at Ashford probably dates from 1649 and its inception was bound up closely with the career of Samuel Fisher. Educated at Trinity College and the Puritan New Inn Hall, Oxford, Fisher was chaplain to Sir Arthur Haselrigg before accepting a lectureship in the parish of Lydd in 1632. Following the abolition of episcopacy, he was duly offered the living of the parish by the Assembly of Divines. Fisher was clearly a genuine scholar, and it was not long before he began to entertain serious doubts about infant baptism. In 1643, the churchwardens of Lydd prevented him from offering the pulpit at Lydd to a Baptist preacher - possibly

1. KAO N/FQZ ff23, 25.

2. Ashford Baptist Church Book, note attached to inside front cover; I am grateful to the Trustee of this Church, Mr. V. G. Clark for access to, and permission to quote from, this volume.

Luke Howard - and it was at this stage that he probably decided to abandon the Presbyterian way.¹ Luke Howard appears to have played an important part in Fisher's conversion. In his later testimony to Samuel Fisher, Howard wrote,

through providence I came acquainted with him and entered into serious discourse with him about their common practice of singing David's psalmes in Rhime and Meeter, and reporting it to be a part of God's worship. And further signified unto him, that God was a spirit and must be worshipped in spirit and Truth; these discoveries and openings of Truth which God had manifested unto me, had some influence on him, for he was from that time, stopt from giving David's Conditions to the People, to sing anymore; and began to also make a further search into his ordination and commission from man to preach, and questioned his maintenance of Tythes, and his conscience began to be awakened; and he set himself to enquire and seek after knowledge of the Lord, and being in this enquiring state, there came a poor travelling man to Lidd, called an Ana-Baptist, with whom he had some discourse and Reasoning, by whom he was perswaded to be baptised in water.²

Howard's retrospective account is slightly muddled since he employs the language characteristic of his Quaker years although he is clearly referring to events that took place before his conversion in 1655. His scruples over Psalm-singing are of additional interest in that they independently mirrored the feelings of William Dewsbury.³

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1. DNB, Fisher, Samuel; S. Fisher, Baby Baptism Meer Babism, London, 1653, p12; T. Crosby, History of the English Baptists, London, 1738, Vol.1, p360; Hill, W.T.U.D., pp259-260, 268; A.C. Watson, A History of Religious Dissent and Nonconformity in Ashford, Ashford, 1979, p5.
 2. S. Fisher, The Testimony of Truth Exalted, London, 1679, Sig.b1.
 3. W.C. Braithwaite, The Beginnings of Quakerism, Cambridge, 1961, p63.

Following Fisher's conversion to the Baptist way,

he soon gave up his benefice, not consulting with Carnal Reason, what should become of his wife and children, but took Land to graze Cattle towards his maintenance, and then he preached freely, according as he received freely.¹

By 1649, Fisher was a Baptist minister at Ashford and it was in that capacity that he represented his church in a public debate with the Presbyterians over the whole question of the lawfulness of paedobaptism. The account of the dispute reveals how far Fisher had moved away from the constraints of Scriptural allusion in theological disputation of this kind, itself a development upon his part that must have, in one sense, prepared him intellectually to embrace Quakerism. It is clear that he was extremely unhappy with the ground rules for the debate as laid down by his opponents,

That the Arguments used in the Disputation should bee onely express Scriptures, or Arguments of necessarie consequence from them, all Autorities of Fathers and Churches laid aside; though the practice of the Church was pleaded for, yet would not be yeilded too

and

That the form of the disputation should be syllogistical, which Mr Fisher, after manie reasons alleged by the Ministers to enforce the same, at last yeilded to.²

Throughout the entire debate, Fisher's frustration with the sophistry of his Presbyterian opponents becomes evident, and the affair ended with an acrimonious exchange between the two sides, in which the Presbyterians concluded,

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1. Fisher, Testimony of Truth..., sig.A2, the testimony of Ellis Hookes.
 2. S. Fisher, Infants Baptism Maintained, London, 1649, sig.A3.

The opinion which destroyeth the comforts
that the holie ghost administereth over
the loss of children by death is
a desperate and ungodlie opinion. But
such is the opinion of the Anabaptists
concerning little children ergo it is
desperate and ungodlie. The minor proved
It destroyes the hope that the parents can
have of the salvation of their children
for it makes them in no better condition
than the Turks and pagans.

to which Fisher retorted that

for ought he knew, the children of Turks
and Pagans might all bee saved.¹

In desperation, Fisher attempted, when the debate was officially declared to be at an end, to preach to the congregation, and the whole affair nearly turned into a riot as rival groups argued with each other as to whether he should be allowed to address them. In the end, to avoid violence, Fisher withdrew his request, but the whole affair is of some interest in its representation of the development of Fisher's approach, which was not unique. The 'radical revolution' was beginning to move one step further ahead. Initially, the chief complaint of the separatists and radicals against the episcopal church was that it was a church ungrounded in Scripture. Now, following the triumph of the saints over prelacy, a further revolution was at hand, which claimed that rigid adherence to Scriptural precedent was a moribund doctrine; in the minds of men such as Howsegoe, Howard, and Samuel Fisher, the way was being prepared for the ecstatic appeal to the spirit which was a fundamental part of Quakerism.

Fisher became a Quaker following the Caton/Stubbs mission to Kent in 1655, and for the remainder of his life, as will be shown in the ensuing chapter, he was an ardent advocate on behalf of the Friends. The account of his conversion can be

1. ibid., p7.

gleaned from several Quaker sources, On June 18th, 1655, Alexander Parker wrote from Hawkshurst to Margaret Fell;

Dear and pretious sister since my last unto thee from Captain Dunkes I have been in much service, and my care and travells and burthens hath bene great. And the fourth day I parted with my dear and pretious one George hee went to a meeting near the seacoast where were many peoples and some of the chief Baptist teachers one was bitter and did oppose his name was Hamon. Another of the chiefest teachers one Samuel Fisher is much convinced and did publickly oppose Hamon; George was at his house And both hee and his wife were very loveing.¹

Further details are given by George Fox himself;

When the meeting was over, Samuel Fisher's wife said Now we may discern this day between flesh and spirit, and distinguish spiritual teaching from fleshly, Samuel Fisher, with many others, reasoned for the word of life, which had been declared that day; and the other pastor and his party reasoned against it.²

Further details concerning the Ashford Church do not appear to have survived. If the details in the Baptist Church Book are accurate, by 1690, the congregation stood at about seventy-six, of whom forty-six were women.³

Details of the remaining Baptist Churches in this area before 1662 are sparse and sketchy. Once again, much reliance has to be placed on Quaker sources, whilst

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1. Library of the Society of Friends (hereafter LSF) Caton MSS 3/94 f279.
 2. G. Fox, The Journal of George Fox, London, 1852, p199.
 3. N. Penney ed., The First Publishers of the Truth, London, 1907, p142; Watson, op.cit., p7.

Whitley notes that the following parishes in Kent possessed Baptist Churches; Ashford, Biddenden, Canterbury, Cranbrook, Deptford, Dover, Eythorne, Faversham, Maidstone, Marden, Sevenoaks, Smarden, and Staplehurst, though in these last two cases he may have confused the two in relation to Richard Kingsnorth's church.¹

The account of Fisher's conversion as given by Fox makes it clear that there was an 'abundance of their people' at Lydd, and suggests that George Hammon was an important figure within the Baptist community in that area. In fact, he was Baptist minister of the Biddenden Baptist Church, representing Benenden in 1653. The Biddenden Church, according to Dr. Nuttall's article on the growth of dissenting churches in Kent before 1700, was

formed at some time prior to 25.10 (December)
1648, on which date its MS church book opens

but Dr. Nuttall has admitted that this statement is merely a repetition of an assertion previously made by Whitley. The MS church book for this Church, in spite of an extensive search, does not appear to have survived and without it there is very little information that can be gleaned about this assembly.²

The Canterbury Baptist Church probably dates from Kiffin's mission into Kent in 1643 and 1644, which has already been referred to in the context of the conversion of Luke Howard's eventual wife, Anne Stevens. It is possible that Kiffin continued his mission in and around Ashford. Edwards records that in 1645

there were some men and some women to the number of nine, Dipped in a River near Ashford; one of this company was Dipped three times, because he was afraid of water, all the body was not under the water, but he was almost drowned and

1. W. T. Whitley, The Minutes of the General Assembly of the General Baptist Churches, London, 1909, Vol.1, pplix-lx.

2. Nuttall, loc.cit.

strangled by the water. And the last Summer
an old man being dipped about Ashford, as soon
as he came above the water, swore, Godsfoot
you had almost strangled me.¹

Whilst hearsay evidence of this sort must, of course, be treated with considerable caution, it is a statement of some interest in that it indicates the possible presence of Baptists in Ashford a full four years before Samuel Fisher's appearance there. Little is known of the early days of the Canterbury Church. In November 1654, eleven parishioners wrote to Henry Denne at Fenstanton asking for his help in the organization of their church, but none of their names appear for religious offences in the Act Books prior to 1642. By 1681, the church was being ministered to by Daniel Saffery (the M. Savory of Ashford in 1653?), and one of its deacons was John Nott, who was probably related to the Eythorne and Dover Knotts, who had been presented for absenteeism in 1663 by the churchwardens of the parish of St. Andrews.²

Of the other churches in Whitley's list in those parishes which had formerly been within the Diocese of Canterbury little is known for the period up to 1660. The Cranbrook church appears to have been a subdivision of the Biddenden assembly. Taylor asserts that

it was agreed for mutual accommodation that
the members of this congregation should meet
for public worship in three divisions

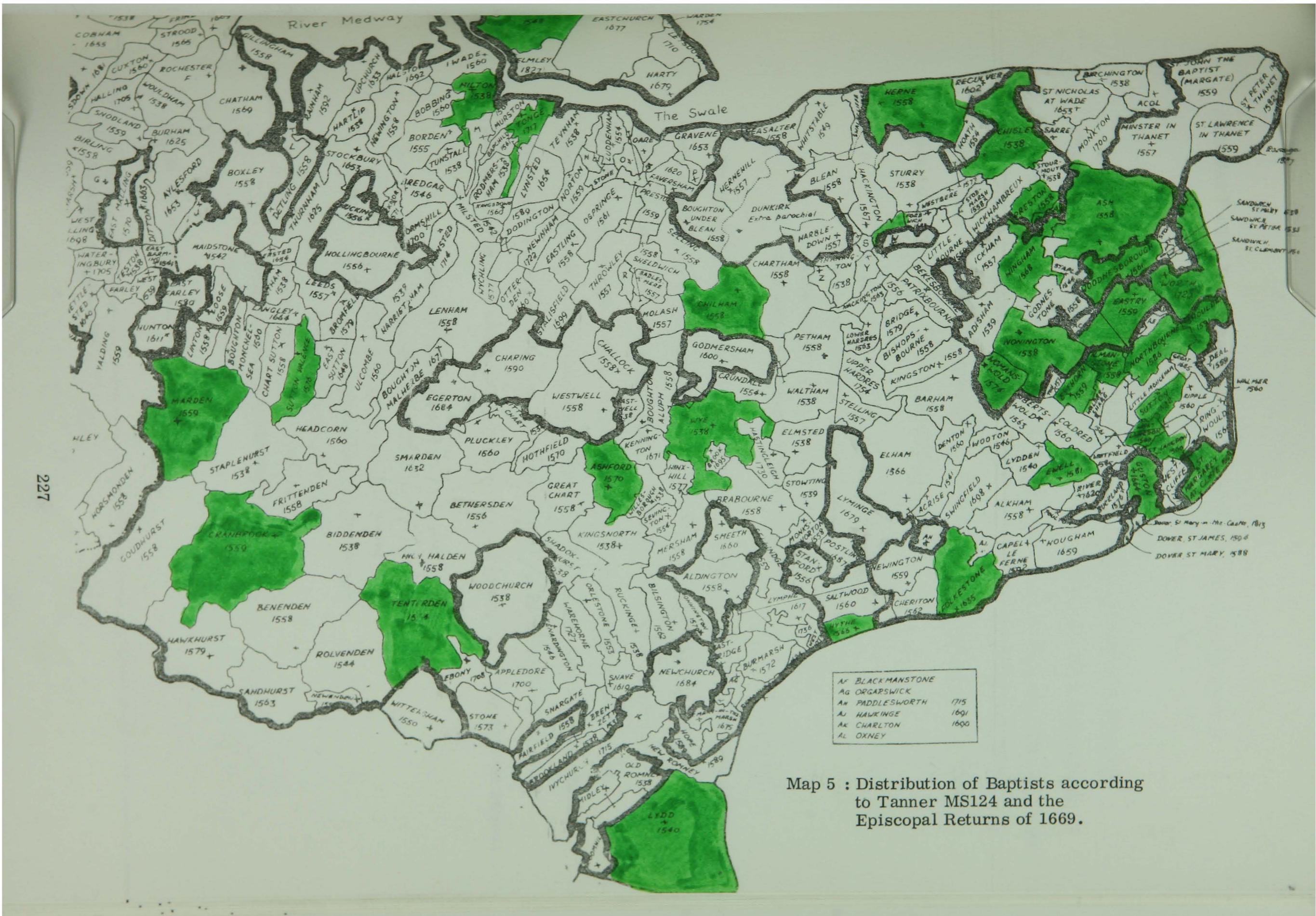
comprising Cranbrook, Biddenden, and Rolvenden under the joint pastorate of George Hammon and James Blackmore, both of whom were in Maidstone Prison by 1660 from whence they petitioned the King, an action they were forced to repeat eight years later.

The 1662 survey records one hundred and seventy-six Baptists living in the Lathe of St. Augustine, the largest concentrations being at Eythorne (28) and Northbourne (18). The pastors of the Northbourne assembly were noted as being

1. Edwards, op.cit., Pt.1, p75.

2. Taylor, op.cit., pp163-164, 273; CCL x-7-2 ff128-129; Nickolls, op.cit., p96.

Issac Slatter and James Golden, but by 1669 there appears to have been no Baptist meeting in the parish. It must be noted, however, that the same Episcopal Return makes no mention of Eythorne Baptists either. The findings of these two documents are, as in the previous chapter, recorded on Map 5 overleaf.



Af	BLACKMANSTONE	
Ag	ORGARSWICK	
An	PADDLESWORTH	1715
Aj	HAWKINGE	1691
Ak	CHARLTON	1690
Al	OXNEY	

Map 5 : Distribution of Baptists according to Tanner MS124 and the Episcopal Returns of 1669.

Chapter 7 : The Development of the Quaker Movement in the Diocese of
Canterbury, 1655-1660.

The impact of the Quaker movement on this part of Kent can be fairly divided into two distinct stages; the mission of the Friends to this area and the development of Quaker meetings and organisation by those whom they had converted.

The first Friends to arrive in Kent were William Caton and John Stubbs. In 1654, Caton 'met with my dear brother John Stubbs, who also came up to London from out of the North', and the following year

it was upon us to go into Kent towards Dover which accordingly we did (upon the 13th day of the First month 1655) in much weakness and fear, we being but young in truth.¹

On March 19th, John Stubbs wrote to Francis Howgill, giving a detailed account of their experiences in Dover, and especially of their treatment at the hands of the authorities and various churches there. It would seem that the mayor and captain of the Castle, though hostile, were prepared to tolerate them as long as they behaved themselves and, with that behind them, they began their ministry which was to have a decisive effect on the development of nonconformity in the area. Stubbs described the chain of events following their initial interview with the mayor;

after our departure from them one went in the forenoone to a steeplehouse and the other to a Baptist meeting. William was pulled downe in the steeplehouse though little violence but had liberty to speake in the yard; I had as much liberty amongst the Baptists as I could desire.

In the afternoon, Stubbs

1. Barclay, op.cit., pp16-17.

went to A Steeplehouse of Independents
here are many High Ayre spirits as ever
I met with both in the fort and in the
towne oh who is sufficeint to encounter
with such a generacon there was a Captain in
that Baptists meeting and his wife who
sent for us to there lodgeing upon the first
day all night.¹

It is highly probable that the 'Captain' was Miles Temple. In July 1646, following Nicholas North's letter to Thomas Edwards concerning the errors of William Bowling, North preached a sermon in St. James', Dover, against Bowling's 'erroneous, hereticall and wild disputation.' Upon hearing of the sermon, 'Captain Temple, a great stickler in this Town for the maintenance of all sects' wrote to North;

Doubtlesse you may get into your peoples
affections with enveighing against any
pretenders to religion, as if all such did
hold such points as your story wherewith you
filled up your hour. But I pray, Sir, be
honest as to tell them this afternoon that
it was very likely that Tiltboat Gent. your
companion to London was an Atheist one of your
Church of England; For such swearers, drunkards,
blasphemers, do use to gon in your Tilt-boat,
and there talk of Religion according to your
story; But all wise men know your objects of
spleen called Independents, Anabaptists, etc.,
hold fundamentalls in Religion and can main-
tain it by Scripture better than yourself.²

Although Temple later was to open his 'great House in the Market Place' to the Friends for meetings it appears that he remained somewhat neutral in his attitude

1. LSF Swarthmore MS3 f151.

2. Edwards, op.cit., Pt.3, pp39-40.

to the various sects that sprung up after 1642, but it is clear that he actively encouraged and supported them, presumably from a belief in the necessity for religious toleration. The most important convert made in Dover, however, was Luke Howard, a local shoemaker. Howard had been an apprentice in Dover during the 1630s but, with the collapse of Charles I's administration, he had gone to London where he had for a time been a member of the celebrated Church in Coleman Street under the pastorate of John Goodwin. He returned to Dover as a soldier in the Castle garrison and it was at this stage that he began his quest for spiritual fulfilment:

So did I amongst the People called Brownists,
also the best priests so called both
Prebyterians and Independents, and then
amongst the Baptists, with whom my mind
sooner joynd than any other.

His conversion to Baptist views must have taken place in 1643 or 1644, although, unlike Mark Elfreth, there is no mention of him in the Dover Church Book. In later years he married Anne Stevens, purportedly one of the first to be baptised in East Kent.¹ However, it is equally clear that he remained unhappy with his faith and finally rejected all belief in favour of hedonism. The words of Caton and Stubbs thus fell on receptive ears and, as will be shown, Luke Howard was to become one of the major figures of early Quakerism in East Kent.

In his letter to Howgill, John Stubbs conveys the impression that, although disapproving, the Dover authorities were reasonably tolerant in their attitude. Other sources are not so charitable in this respect. The Sufferings Book of the East Kent Quakers records

Then the Mayor and divers of the Rulers
of the Towne began to be moved with anger
in their hearts against them Insomuch

1. Hodgkin, op.cit., pp10-17; L. Howard, A Looking Glass for Baptists, London, 1673, pp1-6.

that they assembled and consulted
together, and sent for William and John
before them to Examination, which accordingly
was done; And then not finding anything
worthy of punishment they finally
concluded with this viz Chargeing William
and John very strictly to depart the Towne;
and gave order that none should entertaine
them any longer, and stricktly commanded
the Innkeeper to turne them out of his
house, upon the penalty of the pulling-
downe of his signe.

It was at this stage that Howard stepped in and offered to lodge them at his home, much to the Mayor's disapproval, and, after a heated exchange, Howard agreed to appear at the next Sessions to answer for his actions, stating

Is there any Hue and Cry after them, or,
are they Theeves or Murderers, or what is
the matter: I say they are my Friends,
and why may not I receive and keep my
Friends in my house, as well as you keep
your Friends in your House?¹

From Dover, the two Quakers went to Folkestone to meet contacts there whose names had been supplied them by Howard. It was at the house of one of these, Thomas Nichols, that they stayed and held several 'good meetings'. Leaving Folkestone, they visited Sandgate Castle, whose Captain was Lawrence Knott, another important Dover convert, where they were

Violently dealt with by the multitude
and especially by the Baptists there, and from thence to Hythe and Romney,
arriving at Lydd 'where there were many high Professours.' Here they made
initial contact with Samuel Fisher, and first sowed the seeds of doubt which were

1. KAO N/FQZ 2, ff7-9.

to result in his rejection of the Baptist Church there.¹

It was at Maidstone that John Stubbs and William Caton first encountered real opposition and persecution which left a permanent impression upon the Quakers in their attitude towards that town, as well as serving to indicate the threat that opponents of Quakerism felt the movement and its adherents to be. The fears that the Quaker emissaries instilled in localities has been the subject of much discussion, but the manuscript evidence relating to this part of Kent does not permit any positive statement to be made in this context. It is possible to infer that local authorities saw Quakers as something of a threat to their position - the interchange between Howard and Valentine Tadnell is indicative of this, Howard at one stage refusing to open his door on the grounds that the Mayor had 'no authority' - and this would certainly explain the attitude of the Maidstone magistracy towards John Stubbs and William Caton.² On the other hand, the early Quakers around Fox found the same ambivalence of attitude in the Justices of the towns they visited, persecution thus being often directly related to the religious disposition and the character of the local magistracy.

Having visited a Baptist assembly upon their arrival, they went to an inn for 'halfe an hower', and then Stubbs visited the parish church to tackle the Presbyterians whilst Caton preached to the Congregationalists, the former being hauled out of the pulpit, set in stocks, and finally brought before Lambert Godfrey, the Recorder, who examined him. Godfrey, rather like Tadnell at Dover, insinuated that Stubbs must be a vagrant, and eventually committed him to prison until work could be found for him. The following day he was re-examined and returned to prison, along with Caton who had by this time been likewise apprehended. In a letter to Margaret Fell, William Caton gave a full picture of the treatment they had to suffer;

And the day after wee were brought before

1. ibid.

2. For a discussion of this, see Hill, W.T.U.D. Chapter 10; Braithwaite, op.cit., pp51-96.

the Magistrates examined and sent to the house of Correction and there wee were searched and had our money and our Inkehornes and our Bible and such things as wee had in our pockets taken from us, and then had to the stockes, and there we were stripped and whipped, and then had irons and great clogs of wood laid upon us and in that manner with such cruell useing of us they would have compelled us to have wrought, but wee did see our calling that it was at that time to suffer for the testimony of the truth.¹

Denied food, and given water only following the intervention of some soldiers, they were eventually released, their papers burnt before them, and an order given to return them to the North, although they escaped soon afterwards. It is perhaps possible to postulate two further reasons for Quaker unpopularity at this stage. Both Caton and Stubbs clearly used inns as their bases until they had established a network of contacts, and thus may have caused some to interpret their whole approach as indistinguishable from the Ranters, whilst it is also clear that the early Quakers in Kent received a good deal of support from the Army, whose soldiers were never popular in the county, especially with the advent of Major-General Kelsey in 1655.²

The second part of the Stubbs/Caton mission in 1655 and 1656 was a far more organised and structured affair, consisting of pursuing and strengthening the links that had been forged as well as with meeting up with other itinerant Quaker preachers, including the founder of the movement, George Fox, in what looks like a concerted attempt to plant the roots of their beliefs firmly in the county. It would seem that as early as April 1655 it had been decided that Kent should be visited again, Howgill noting in a letter that 'there are seven gone towards Kent', the seven being William Caton and John Stubbs, who characteristically re-opened their mission to the

1. N/FQZ 2 ff10-11; LSF Caton MS 3/9 ff21-23.

2. Morton, op.cit., p97.

county by starting at Maidstone, Thomas Robertson, Ambrose Rigge, Alexander Parker, George Fox, and Henry Parker.¹ Stubbs and Caton's visit to Maidstone proved uneventful- although Godfrey put out a Hue and Cry against the two men, they managed to preach unmolested and to leave the town before being re-arrested. From Maidstone they travelled to Dover, whilst the rest set out from Rochester to go into the Weald, the whole group meeting up at Romney where Samuel Fisher's conversion was confirmed. At this point they split up once more, Caton and Stubbs returning along the East coast to Sandwich, whilst Alexander Parker went to Cranbrook, Romney, Hythe, Lydd, Folkestone, Dover, Canterbury, Brabourne, Ashford, and Biddenden, before passing into Sussex.² Details of the former mission are scant. At Dover they stayed with Luke Howard, who acted as a receiver of correspondance for them there, and they held meetings at his house. At Canterbury they

had exceedingly good service amongst the Baptists and Independents (so called), and had pritty good liberty to declare the Truth amongst them.

At Sandwich, Caton preached to a Stranger congregation, but to little effect.³ Valuable light is thrown, however, on the nature of their approach to their mission by the accounts of several conversions of this time. When William Caton encountered Thomas Elgar of Sandwich, an Independent, in the latter's shop, the following exchange took place;

William standing still awhile, by and by utters these words, The Scribes and Pharisees never saw Jesus. Thomas answered, That they did not see Jesus as they oughte to see him I grant; But that they did see Jesus I do affirme. Sometimes after Thomas answer William

1. LSF Caton MS 3/65 f54, 3/7 f172, 3/94 f279; KAO N/FQZ 2 f12; Fox, Journal, p198.

2. LSF Caton MS 3/97 f297.

3. KAO N/FQZ ff12-13.

again expresses the same words, The Scribes and Pharisees never saw Jesus. Then Thomas called for his Bible, and opening upon John 8 Read unto William these words; The Scribes and the Pharisees brought unto Jesus a woman taken in the Act of Adultery - the Law commanded that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou? So that they did see Jesus I do affirm. William standing silent, never reasoning nor disputing by and by again repeated the same words.¹

This enigmatic, anti-disputative approach appears to have taken many listeners by surprise in an age used to the cut and thrust of textual debate. A similar example of this can be seen in the conversion of the Dover Congregationalist, Thomas Everden, as a result of the mission of George Harrison;

George looking wistly upon him said Thou art a Dog; and so left him. Which words confounded him, and he meditating long upon them wrought such an effect That he could never get cleere of them Till he received and lived in the truth.²

The impact of Alexander Parker's mission to the Weald is equally informative in suggesting other reasons for local hostility to Quakers and in describing how the movement was consolidated in that area. At Canterbury, Parker was brought before the mayor, who was described as being an Independent and was thus possibly Zachariah Lee, a deacon of Durant's congregation. Their meeting is worthy of quoting at length for it is pregnant with information concerning attitudes towards, and the effect of, Quakerism at this local level;

And wee went before him, And at the first

-
1. ibid., f13.
 2. ibid.; this exchange is reminiscent of George Fox's greeting to a Ranter, 'Repent, thou swine and beast', Braithwaite, op.cit., p70.

1

envy gott up in him against the hatt, and was something bitter. And asked if wee knew that he was the Maior of the Towne wee tolde him according as his man told us wee knew and in obedience to Authority wee came to him And I said if our hatt does offend any I should not resist they might take it off and he said it offended him I asked him what it was that offended him whether it was anything of God that was exulted above God, and hee began to coale againe, then he asked mee what calling was I of I told him I was a minister of the word of god; he said hee was afraide I was a Jesuite and asked mee if I received noe order from the Pope I answered Noe, Then he seekes out the declaration against Jesuits and oath of abjuration; then I told him in obeydience to the command of Christ I could nott swear, but witnessed against all popish ways.¹

Lee's misconception concerning Parker's faith is not as ridiculous as at first may appear - Richard Coppin, the Ranter, who was subjected to persecution following a series of sermons preached at Rochester, was accused by one of his critics of 'playing the Jesuit'.² Of greater interest, however, is the question of hat-honour. Of all the forms of outward behaviour, the refusal to uncover and the use of 'thee' and 'thou' must rank as the most known essentials of Quakerism. When Thomas Ellwood failed to remove his hat upon meeting some of his friends, their immediate remark was, 'What, Tom, a Quaker?', and they were doubtless taken aback when he replied 'Yes'. Cases of remaining covered are discussed at greater length in Appendix 1 below, but it remains difficult to assess exactly how anti-social such

1. LSF Caton MS 3/94 ff281-282.

2. W. Rosewell, The Serpents Subtilty Discovered, London, 1656, p16: see also in this context Keeble, Autobiography of Richard Baxter, p74; W. Lamont, Richard Baxter and the Millennium, London, 1979, pp47-49.

behaviour was deemed when knowledge of the social conventions of the period still remains so incomplete. Evidence from Quaker testimonies concerning the impact of conversion on other members of the family certainly make it clear that the refusal to remove the hat in the presence of the head of the household created tensions often leading to violence - Thomas Ellwood recorded that his father thrashed him in front of the servants and refused to permit him to eat with the family so long as he wore his 'hive' on his head. George Fox was equally explicit in his assertion of the need to remain covered in the presence of judges, which a recent writer has seen as stemming from a direct assault upon pride.¹ In this context, it is clear that the Mayor of Canterbury saw Parker's refusal to pay him hat-honour as significant, as did Colonel Kendrick of Cranbrook, although in this latter example Parker was able to convince Kendrick of the rationale behind this gesture. Parker also went out of his way to make it clear that he meant no disrespect to the Canterbury Mayor but that his behaviour was linked to the belief that such an honour was reserved for God only;

soe hee asked mee if I had seen the oath and shewed mee the paper and I tooke it and was past it over, And then I was moved to take off my hatt, and said in the presence of God I renounce and deny all the thinges therein contained.²

By reserving such an honour for God alone, the Quaker may be implying a form of egalitarianism which has attracted some recent authorities to interpret this gesture as a form of social levelling. Such an interpretation is attractive to a generation which seeks to explain its own social distinctions by referring to precedent, and yet it is hard to escape the impression conveyed by the writings of these early Quakers that what underlay their various forms of behaviour was an

1. Braithwaite, *op.cit.*, pp492-493; H. Barbour, The Quakers in Puritan England, New York, 1964, pp 165-166.

2. LSF Caton MS 3/94 ff283, 286.

abiding spiritual or moral concern, not social or economic; the wholesale attack on pride and pleasure, vanity and extravagance which lay at the heart of the 'war of the Lamb' had the aim not of levelling in a social sense but rather of forming

a new Man, a new Heart, new Thoughts,
and a new Obedience.¹

It must be admitted, however, that the potentially disintegrative element of such behaviour in social terms was not lost on hostile contemporaries. In a letter to Monck in 1657, Colonel Daniel makes clear the danger of these attitudes within a hierarchical organisation such as the Army;

My Lord, the whole world is governed by superiority and distance in relations and, when that's taken away, unavoidably anarchy is ushered in.....I do profess I am afraid lest by the spreading of these humours the public suffer, for they are a very uncertain generation to execute commands, and liberty with equality is so pleasing to ignorance that proselytes will be daily brought inand when I think of the Levelling design that had like to have torn the army to pieces, it makes me more bold to give my opinion that these things be curbed in time.²

Further Quaker missions visited Kent in subsequent years. In 1656, Fox, Francis Howgill, and Richard Hubberthorne all travelled through the county, the last of them returning in 1657 for a lengthier ministry. From a letter written by him to George Fox, dated March 20th, it is clear that such a mission was needed;

I have been in Kent neare three weekes
and it was the good pleasure of god to

1. Barbour, op.cit., p41; J. Naylor, Works, London, 1716, pp391-392.

2. Thurloe, State Papers....., Vol.6, p167; Hill, W.T.U.D., p247.

make it serviseable for the pulling downe
much deceit which was setting up amongst
them. Some were under strang and desperate
temptations and others were run out in
sines and lyinge wonders for which cause
some turned from the truth and others
stopped from entering into it. Some had
given occasion to the word against the truth
with burning there bibles and other actings.¹

The evidence for relating activities of Quaker converts in Kent to developments on a national level is too scanty to permit generalisations to be made, but it is worth noting that the years 1656 and 1657 were something of a watershed for the movement as a whole. It was in these years that James Nayler made his celebrated entry into Bristol and was subsequently brutally punished, provoking Samuel Fisher into printed criticism. In addition, the Quaker movement was subject to the kind of doctrinal fission that has been observed in other developing nonconformist assemblies in previous chapters; John Perrot, arrested in Canterbury along with Luke Howard in 1661, formulated an opinion during 1656/7 that heads should remain covered during prayer.² It can thus be surmised from Hubberthorne's remarks that the Quakers in Kent reflected these developments to a degree, and it may be possible to identify the dramatic action of burning of bibles as being indicative of rifts in the movement, as represented by the doctrinal differences between James Nayler, for example, and George Fox; between those who subscribed to adherence to the mystical direction of the 'inner light' by symbolically destroying the Scriptures, and those who maintained a more formal and conservative approach to the organisation of the movement.

That Samuel Fisher should condemn Nayler's activities at this time is appropriate, for he was experiencing a twofold pressure of some intensity; the

1. LSF Caton MS 3/112 f355, 3/118 f372, 3/119 f379, 3/150 f450; Swarthmore MS4 f14.

2. Fisher, Testimony of Truth , p621; KAO N/FQZ/2 f25.

apostasy of his wife and the development of a pressing vocation to travel and expose the Light to the Jews. Much has been written about the active role of women within developing dissent and sectarianism, but it is equally hard not to admire the many wives whose patience and loyalty to their husbands whilst suffering imprisonment and persecution, and resultant penury, for their beliefs has gone largely unrecorded.¹ Moreover, the tensions that these developments must have created within the family structure - vide John Fenner's legal battle with his brother, Edward - are readily understandable, and such would seem to be the case between Fisher and his wife by 1657. It must be remembered that Fisher had initially given up a living worth between £200 and £500 per annum at Lydd and had taken to farming during the later 1640s, an act in itself which would have required more than a degree of support from his family. It would also seem that, upon her first contact with the Quakers, Fisher's wife was sympathetic to their message and mission, but such feelings did not last. Hubberthorne wrote,

Samuel Fisher's wife was under strong temptations and of A wicked spirit of Jelosie which ruled her was strange in her which brought wicked lying thoughts into her mind which shee beleaved and with it her mind set against her husband and other, and would not suffer him to come neare her but the ground of that was made manifest to her to bee false and shee saw that condemnation belonged unto her for it and so that diferance was reconciled.

Such a reconciliation was, however, only skin-deep for Hubberthorne continued further on,

there is a vaine light in her full of vaine imaginations and jelosies and shee doth

1. For a discussion of women in relation to sectarianism discussed in this study, see Appendix II.

nourish them with sloathfulness lyinge
in bed for the most part of every day
and when shee feels any guilt and judgement
cominge upon her then shee keeps it off as
much as shee can by lightnes.¹

By July, this state of affairs had not improved for, writing to Margaret Fell from Brabourne on July 2nd, William Dewsbury remarked,

since I came into Kent I have bene with
Samuel Fisher some moveings there is in
him towards the Jewes which will be ful-
filled in the Lord's time he waiting to
bee faithful, at present his wife is in
bondage to the unclean spirits which is
some tryall to him.²

It appears that the idea of finding Fisher's wife alternative accommodation away from her husband was even mooted at one stage, evidence that would tend to confirm the impression that, by 1657, she may just have had enough of the precarious existence which was the inevitable concomitant of marriage to a religious radical at this time.

As with the other sects of this period, the Quakers certainly entertained millenarian expectations and it has been argued that some of them viewed the development of their movement as the beginning of the process by which the rule of the Saints with Christ at their head would be established on Earth. The concept of a mission to the Turks, Rome, and the Jews was thus part of this general view. In his Epistle to the Romans, St. Paul wrote of the future conversion of the Jews;

And so all Israel shall be saved: as it
is written, There shall come out of Sion
the Deliverer, and shall turn away
ungodliness from Jacob

1. LSF Swarthmore MS4 f14.

2. LSF Caton MS 3/168 ff492-493.

which is itself a gloss of Isaiah 59 : 20;

And the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and
unto them that turn from transgression
in Jacob, saith the Lord.

So there was sound scriptural authority for a group steeped in textual knowledge and synthesis to interpret that the Word made it clear that the conversion of the Jews would be a sign that the Kingdom of Heaven was at hand. Several missions did in fact attempt to reach the Middle-East, but with understandably little success.¹ Nor should it be felt that the Quakers held a monopoly on this attitude; at the same time, negotiations were being held with Rabbi Manasseh ben-Israel for a return of the Jews to England after a gap of some four hundred years for much the same reason. It is thus of some interest from the point of view of Kentish Quakerism to see Fisher contemplating such a journey, although there is no evidence to suggest that he actually went.

Whilst there were further Quaker missions to Kent after 1657 - William Caton visited the county in 1658 and 1660 - the growth and development of the movement after 1657 was very much in the hands of individuals who had previously been 'convinced' in the county. When Margaret Fell visited Kent with her daughter in 1669, the towns and parishes she went to correspond in the main with those which had been visited by the earlier missions, and this tends to suggest that the development of Quakerism in this part of Kent differed radically from that of the other religious groups so far studied.² In the case of the Independent and Baptist Churches, especially in Sandwich, Canterbury, Dover, and part of the Weald, it has been seen that although external influences had a part to play - the mission of Kiffin, for example in 1643/4 - these churches evolved from an identifiable separatist or semi-separatist situation within the Diocese. The Quaker cells, on

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1. Braithwaite, op.cit., Chapter 16 gives details of the various overseas missions undertaken by Friends.
 2. LSF Swarthmore MS4 f272, Caton MSS 3/26 f45, 3/27 f45, 3/28 ff46-47, 3/29 ff48-49, 3/173 ff510-512.

the other hand, seem to have sprung up as a direct result of the travels and itinerary of William Caton, John Stubbs, Alexander Parker, and others, and thus resemble the impact of Christopher Vitels and the spread of Familism during the 1570s, and in this context it is interesting to note that John Evelyn referred to a remnant of Familists in the Isle of Ely during James II's reign as 'a sort of refin'd Quakers'.¹

The name that dominates early Quaker evolution and organisation in East Kent in particular, is that of the Dover shoemaker, Luke Howard.

As has been already mentioned, Howard had flirted with nearly all of the sects, and particularly with the Baptists, prior to his conversion, an experience unique neither locally or nationally, following the first visit of John Stubbs and William Caton to Dover in 1655. The narrative of Howard's conversion has already been discussed, but it emerges that he launched straight into his own ministry without further guidance. At an early meeting in 1655, the Dover Friends, 'beginning one of the first', were sitting in silence when their meeting was interrupted by a visit from the Baptists whose Pastor, John Fitness, announced,

That he had a word from the Lord to speak
amongst them

and asked for permission to address the assembly. The result was a short disputation between Fitness and Luke Howard, the latter eventually turning his attention to Fitness' father-in-law, Joseph Templeman, who was converted by Howard's logic.² Of greater moment, however, was the role played by Howard in the conversion of one of the prisoners of Dover Castle, John Lilburne, one of the most famous and notorious figures of religious and political radicalism during the

1. J.W. Martin, "Christopher Vitel: an Elizabethan Mechanick Preacher" in Sixteenth-Century Journal, Vol.10, No.2, 1979, pp15-22; Evelyn's remark is quoted by Felicity Heal in her article "The Family of Love and the Diocese of Ely" in Studies in Church History, Vol.9, Cambridge, 1972, p222.

2. N/FQZ2 f9.

1640s, and unofficial leader of the civilian Levellers. Lilburne had been in prison in Dover since October 1655 and he turned to the Quakers during the final period of his turbulent life for reasons that can, perhaps, never be known with any degree of certainty. The account of his conversion is given in detail in the Sufferings Book, and it would seem that the initiative had come from Lilburne himself, for he asked that Luke Howard be given permission to visit the Castle 'to speake with him about Religion.' Howard duly went and

John useing these words to Luke Howard I pray
Sir of what Opinion are you? Luke Howard
answered None which struck him into that
silence for sometime That he could not speake.
And then he said to Luke Howard What must I
say, and how must I speake? Luke Howard
answered Thou mayest speake what is in thy
owne minde, and after thy owne manner. Who
replied againe You say you are of noe opinion
Luke Howard said, I doe say; For really I am
of noe opinion, soe he knowing not what to
say at present begg'd of Luke Howard To come
up another tyme; the which Luke Howard did.

Lilburne was eventually invited to attend one of the Quaker meetings in the town and his gaolers granted him this privilege. Lilburne stated that he liked what he heard but that his 'Wisdome was above it' and left the meeting, pursued by one of the Friends, George Harrison. When Harrison shouted after him 'Friend, thou art too High for Truth', the effect on Lilburne was, almost literally, stunning and soon after he became a regular member of Luke Howard's assembly

bearing a testimony for Truth, both by
writeing and speakeing unto his Death.¹

It has already been observed that Howard's house became a focal point in the movement of correspondence between Margaret Fell and George Fox on the one hand,

1. ibid., f13; P. Gregg, Freeborn John, London, 1961, pp340-345.

and the missionaries to Dover and other parts of Kent on the other. Preserved in the Swarthmore MSS are two letters from Howard, written in a hand and with spelling of some eccentricity. The first letter gives some idea of the organisation of the movement in which Howard was involved. Dated October 9th, 1659, and addressed to William Caton, Howard indicates that their contacts have spread;

up to ellamwood there is a fine sprenckelen
of the troweth and sum aded wich are of a
good report and of a good savor....whe met
at one of ther hoeses and it was a fine
meting at wich I was moch refreched and
John feele (Philly?) and I stayed all night
at anothers houece.

Less surprisingly, there was also evidently a Quaker meeting at Deal, which met not without opposition, this time from the Baptists who, under Samuel Taverner, were as active there as in Dover;

with grete vielance thay brock ut in a
raige to the macken of ther folle knowen
to all the sober pepel so we hauf apoynted
anoether meting ther the nackes ferst day
if the Lord will and estKent ther to mete.

Other parishes which Howard appears to have visited regularly were 'Aginton' (Aldington?), and Canterbury, although it is clear in a second letter to Caton the following year that he was having difficulty in keeping some individuals within the movement, possibly as a result of constant persecution;

power W Bene hath had moch of it and knowes
not what to say to it.¹

By 1660, Howard and his associates were beginning to feel the effects of increasing persecution as the forces of religious conservatism gathered and consolidated. That repression was in the air Howard made clear to Caton;

1. LSF Swarthmore MS4 ff256, 266.

hear is great chaing in ouer casel boeth
in goufenor and oethers tomas wilson is
oute houwe was the capten and his leftenant
and william coling houwe was maior is in
capten and john edwardes the post is his
leftenant I was one first day with the
goufenor in ther meting but he was afended
sence I hear he is willing to haife me come
to him; so as the Lord ordereth it it may
be in my going to him; hear hath bein so
much ingaiging with the prest that ther
names begen to stenke.¹

and it was not long before Howard began to suffer at the hands of the new administration. William Cullen, the erstwhile mayor, had little sympathy for Howard and had only been prevented from committing him to prison in 1659 for opposing the minister of St. Mary's 'in his fals doctrine' by the timely intervention of Captain Miles Temple, the local champion of toleration. He suggested that the priest in question, Nathaniel Barry, ought to appear in person and make his statement, and when Barry failed to attend, Cullen had no alternative but to release the Quaker. His subsequent behaviour can hardly have endeared him to William Cullen and is reminiscent of Caton's and Stubbs' second visit to Maidstone in its provocativeness; Howard insisted on going to St. Mary's and sitting there in silence, doubtless with hat on head;

Yet the prests enmity rose at his presence and caused the people to carry him away by violence and rent his clothes off his back and laid him downe in the graveyard. And all this was for sitting silent while he was giveing bread and wine to the parish people; yet Presbyterians caused four doores to be shut to keep him out. Then Luke Howard got on a tombstone and lookt in of a window, called to them saying,

1. ibid.

You cannot be made partakers of the Table
of the Lord and the Table of Devils and so
left them.¹

Soon after this, he was arrested twice for holding conventicles, the second of which consisted of fifteen townsmen, including Edward Warry, who was to become an important member of the movement towards the end of the century in Dover, and in 1661, Howard was arrested yet again for being present at a Quaker 'conventicle' in Canterbury, whose mainspring appears to have been Henry Rogers.²

Throughout 1661 and 1662 the pace of persecution quickened, and Howard was almost constantly in Dover Castle, from which he launched an impressive literary campaign aimed chiefly at the rulers and townspeople of Dover. His first letter was addressed to John Golder, the new Mayor of Dover, who, according to Howard, was chiefly responsible for putting him in a 'hole' in the Castle. Defiance rings through the address;

at present I am led rather to deale gently
with thee and to bring thee to God's witness
in thy owne conscience, That thou mayest see
thy Evill and Repent: which would be the best
worke thou couldest sit thyself about. And
therefore in the morning watch Hatch not
mischeefe upon thy bed; and ~~when~~ thou arisest
having power in thy hand, put it into practice
against such as thinketh no evill of any man.³

Having made an oblique comparison between the priests that the Jews employed to enable them to crucify Christ 'legally' and the role of the Dover ministers in his own imprisonment, Howard continued by showing the fundamental reason behind the letter;

1. KAO N/FQZ2 ff18-19.

2. KAO N/FQZ1 ff5, 23, 26-27.

3. KAO N/FQZ2 f28.

But what has thou to plead for thyselfe,
that is Law. Oh thou poore angry blinde
man, that thou abusethe thyself and thy
stewardship by turning the power that is
in thy hand (by which thou art proued) to
Ruine Familys. For severall Familys depend
on mee.

Not only does he assert that his confinement is related to no legal process, but that his family and dependents are thereby punished likewise. Three days later, he wrote a similar letter to William Stoakes, 'Maulster and Ruler in Dover', urging him to reject the 'carnall' side of his nature which prevented him from admitting that 'us called Quakers' acted only in the spirit of love and human compassion.¹ These letters were followed by his first publication in which he sets out again the main reasons for his objections to imprisonment, objections which may give some clue as to what it was about the Friends that found an empathetic response in John Lilburne. The title of the piece is called

A warning from the Lord unto the Rulers
of Dover

and is subtitled

Also a christian man's plea for his liberty,
as he is so indeed and in truth; And also as
he is free-born Englishman he lays claim to
his birthright, by way of Expostulation with
the Rulers of Dover, who rob him and many others
of it, refusing to show us any order for their
so doing.²

Equally, perhaps, Lilburne's influence may well be detected here as operating on Howard, for the subtitle of the pamphlet sounds more of the late 1640s than the

1. ibid.

2. L. Howard, A Warning from the Lord Unto the Rulers of Dover, London, 1661, front cover.

early 1660s.

Towards the end of 1661, Howard changed his tactics from bombarding the Mayor and Elders of Dover to publicising the conditions under which he and his associates were kept in the Castle for 'all sober men' to see. Howard, John Harrison, Thomas Coule, John Hogben, John Philley, and Lawrence Knott, were all, for offences ranging from conventicling through nonpayment of tithes to refusal to bear arms or swear oaths, placed in the same area as Thomas Tunbridge, the first of their number to be imprisoned. Howard described the cell in which they were confined;

therefore the Gouvernour said He would undertake to convince a Quaker, and if he did not come on his knees by Christmas day (as he called it) he would turne him out which he hath not yet done. And his way to doe it was to put him into a Roome, the place where the prisoners did use to goe to ease ther Bodys, there being no other place of passage to all the Roomes of the Prison, in which there was no chimney, but a ground flowered Roome, wherein lay much Mans Dung (the which Dung in some weekes after was carried out by Charles Rich) and he suffered not to have a fire in seven weeks.

By the end of the year, Howard's family was clearly in severe financial straits; writing to the Deputy Governor of the Castle he stated that

My trade is spoiled, My men are gon,
my windows are shut up.¹

The remainder of Howard's career and ministry falls outside of the scope of this study, but it remains to be noted that even from prison the power of his message and his refusal to be crushed converted no less a figure than the Castle Governor's

1. KAO N/FQZ2 ff35, 37.

wife who, along with her sister, sent Howard money and food in October 1662 and visited him in his cell. Howard continued to defy the authorities and to stand as 'a witness to the Truth' up to the end of the century; he died in 1697, a major figure in the development of the Quaker movement in East Kent, whose influence was also felt as far apart as Hastings and London.¹

The appeal of the Friends has been the subject of some discussion, and, in a notable chapter, Christopher Hill suggests that

Quakers drew their rank and file largely
from Ranter and Seeker groupings.

Given the paucity of the evidence concerning the existence of such sects in this part of Kent, it is difficult to make any concrete pronouncement upon this view.² It is notable that Luke Howard's spiritual autobiography by and large fits into this pattern, if it can be accepted that his rejection of Baptist tenets and his temporary descent into a 'long night of the soul' was a period of individualistic 'seeking' for answers which he eventually found amongst the Friends. Certainly, this can be said more positively about an influential Wealden convert to Quakerism, Thomas Howsegoe of Staplehurst.

It has already been observed that Howsegoe's doubts had caused a split in the Congregational Church at Staplehurst soon after its foundation, and that he subsequently became the leader of a Seeker community there by 1655. In June, the parish was visited by George Fox, Alexander Parker, and Ambrose Rigge, who held several large meetings especially amongst the Baptists, who were represented by Richard Kingsnorth. It was as a result of this that Thomas Howsegoe, his family, and several of his followers were converted to Quakerism. Information concerning Howsegoe's subsequent ministry is scant although, like Howard, he clearly played an important role as postmaster, and the only other reference to him is that he had a cow worth £3.11.0 taken from him for his refusal to pay his church cess in

1. *ibid.*, ff42, 47; Hodgkin, *op.cit.*, pp14, 54.

2. Hill, *W. T. U. D.*, p252.

October 1656. However, he published a pamphlet, a copy of which was carefully preserved by Edward Warry of Dover for consultation by the East Kent Friends, itself a measure of the esteem in which he was held at a provincial level.¹

The target of Howsegoe's prose is a familiar one; the urban magistracy, in this case of Maidstone. It is stylistically typical of the early Quaker genre of admonition pieces such as Howard's A Warning from the Lord Unto the Rulers of Dover, and Samuel Fisher's A Warning from the Lord Unto the Inhabitants of Lidd. Howsegoe opens by reminding the people of Kent that the struggles of the preceding decade have left Kent relatively unscathed;

Thou wast less indeed in the fire, in the
furnace, then many other Shires and Counties;
not so much blood was shed in thee, not so
much plunder done in thee; but thou hast
forgotten the hand by which thou wast smitten,
and hast not minded him whose Arm was stretched
over thee to save

and proceeds to berate them for setting up churches full of words and lip-service;

and so they cry, Lo here, Lo there is
Christ: Babel, confused in their Languages,
rejecting the corner-stone, and builds
not upon the Rock of Ages, against which
the powers of hell and death shall not
prevail.

The nature of these churches form his next target, criticising the Presbyterians for their love of hierarchy;

that you say you know me, and worship me, and
yet by your works deny me, saith the Lord,

1. See above, pp104, 159; Alexander Parker noted that the Baptists were 'much confused'; Rigge, op.cit., p9; LSF Swarthmore MS4 f256; KAO N/FQZ1 f169; Howsegoe's pamphlet is bound into the Quaker Sufferings Book for East Kent and annotated by Warry.

striving who shall be greatest among you, and in your hearts and habits out of my fear, and in the vanities, lusts, profits, honors, places and wordly preferments, seeking to establish yourselves and posteritie in the midst of the earth, and build and make great your own houses, but the house of God lyeth wast, not minding the poor and needy within you, nor those honest simple hearted ones who were ever found faithful to that cause and trust committed unto them with you, who freely kept all, ventured all, Estates, Wives, Children, yea, and their own lives in the high places of the field for no other end, but that they might enjoy free, true, pure libertie to worship me, saith the Lord, in purity.¹

It is a moving and eloquent testimonial to those who had been betrayed by the false reformation of Presbyterianism. From this, Howsegoe proceeds to make a point which was clearly deeply felt by the Quakers of this time, as it had been by Puritans when faced with opposition from episcopacy over nonconformity. What these early Friends found hard to accept - and Howard addresses the Dover magistracy in much the same tone - was the principle whereby they, the 'innocent harmless saints', were persecuted by the local authorities whilst 'Drunkards, Swearers, Riotous' men, and thieves,

find more favor of many or most of the
Powers of this Nation

and he continues by alluding to the punishments handed out to 'innocent Josephs' that leave the reader in little doubt as to the fact that the memory of Godfrey's treatment of John Stubbs and William Caton had left a deep impression on the consciousness of the early Quakers in this area.

From the Presbyterians, he moves on to the Independents, and the passage

1. T. Howsegoe, A Word from the North sounded into the South, London, 1657, pp7-10.

in which he criticises them contains all the passion that one would expect from an erstwhile Congregationalist whilst, perhaps, giving a hint as to what had been at the root of his rejection of their way;

And you who call your selves Independents
in these Townes, you are become many of
you more proud, and vain, and light in
your attires, and more envious and malicious
in your practises against the children of
light then that people of the Nation and
Towns that you say you are separated from;
and though you talk of Liberty, and Freedom,
and Church Priviledges as you call them,
and though you once cryed out against your
forefathers, the Bishops and the Presbyters,
when you were servants and in bondage under
them, yet now youselves being become Masters
your hands are as heavie as their loynes.¹

Following this Miltonic analysis of the various churches, he concluded his message with a section addressed to Michael Lensey, the 'High Sheriff of the County', and gives a general warning to all the magistrates and justices of Kent that they shed 'no innocent blood'. The language is unequivocal and violent and may go a long way to reinforcing the view that contemporary objections to the Quakers was very much based on their anti-authoritarian line. When Howsegoe charged the magistrates of Kent with the statement

I warn you, Meddle not with them that cannot
bow to the wils of any but God alone; touch
not God's anointed, harm not his innocent
lambs, who are as the apple of his eie.

one can only applaud the conviction but equally understand the attitudes of those in authority against whom such attacks were made, and it is here, perhaps, if anywhere, that some form of social egalitarianism can be seen at work within the

1. ibid., p12.

Quaker conviction especially when this approach is linked with their wholesale attack on tithes. Concerning these payments, Howsegoe is characteristically blunt;

I desire and warn you all in Authoritie to take heed that you do not lend you ear to the Priests of this Countie that preach for hire, and divine for monie, and if it be not put into their mouths they prepare war against their Neighbour; for that Generation the Scriptures of truth declare to be bloodie they smote the Prophets, they cried crucifie the Son of God. Therefore take heed you Powers that you do not go beyond your Power to compel any to pay Tithes to maintain a Gospel ministrie, when God hath ordained that they were to live of the Gospel, and should live of the Gospel and not of the Law.¹

It is this attack on tithes, combined with the opposition and challenge to authority, which made the Quakers a radical group even if they never went as far as Winstanley in demanding redistribution of land, and which has gone some way to revising what had been the traditional interpretation of the early Quaker movement as a pacifist, quietist organisation which appealed to defeated religious revolutionaries.²

That Howsegoe was deemed a vital component of early Quakerism in Kent and in the Weald in particular by the leaders of the movement can be seen from the eloquent and sincere testimony made to him by William Caton who, by chance, was staying with Howsegoe when the latter died. Writing not in one of the printed Quaker testimonies published with half an eye on posterity, but in a private letter dated November 16th, 1660, to George Fox, Caton described what happened;

Since I came from London I have had exceedingly good service in this country both at Sutton,

1. ibid., pp15, 17-18.

2. For a general discussion of this, see A. Cole, "The Quakers and the English Revolution" in T. Aston ed., Crisis in Europe, London, 1965, pp343-348.

Crambrocke, Tenterden but especially at Staplehurst and that in Thomas Howsegoe's family, for it was so ordered that I came to his house the same day that he begun to be very ill, and that very night I began to despaire of his life, and it was upon me to put him in mind of his settling things in order And then he seemed to be indifferant free, but that night it happened to be omitted and the day following it was put off it being expected that he might be in better capacitye to doe the thing afterwards; but too bee brefe the thing was neglected till the very latter end for the distemper turned up into his head and did soe much overcome the naturall that he became wholly unsensible and so he continued for severall days.¹

Caton's concern was clearly not only for his colleague's health at this stage for, by failing to make his will, Howsegoe's estate could not necessarily be relied upon by the Quakers, and in particular this might have effected them in terms of the use of his house as a meeting-place. Caton noted,

it is hoped that the house may yet be kept open for the service of the Truth though his eldest Son is like to have the chiefest pre-terminacy in ordering of things.

and the experience of Samuel Fisher's wife must have been enough to have brought home to the Quaker leaders that in this area the family could not necessarily be relied upon to uphold the views of its former head. The funeral was no small affair;

It was upon me to stay till the funeral was over, which was the last Thirde day; and abundance of Friends there were at it, yea, several out of Sussex, so that it was a very honourable burial; and after that his body

1. Swarthmore MS4 f272.

was laid in the ground, Friends drew into the meeting place with several of the world, where we had an exceeding pretious meeting; for the power and the presence of the Lord was abundantly manifested amongst us, to the consolation of Friends in general. And that nighte it was upon me to return to his house againe, where I had a very good service, and in the morning I left them in a pritty good hopeful posture, but assuredly he will be very much missed in those partes, and I beleeve there will be nowe more necessity of Friends visiting then pritty often than there was before: I desire thou wouldest be mindful of them.¹

and this final comment is perhaps the greatest indication of how important Thomas Howsegoe was for the Quaker movement in this particular area of Kent.

One further figure is worthy of mention before a general analysis of the impact of Quakerism in this part of Kent is undertaken, and that is Samuel Fisher. His conversion has already been discussed and, again, like Howard, he seems to have found what he was looking for amongst the Friends, although the grounds for his conversion are not easy to detect. He was clearly an intellectual and it may have been that the concept of truth was what he found attractive as opposed to the more apocalyptic facet of the movement which had found a response in, for example, Thomas Howsegoe. His exchange with the Baptist pastor of Biddenden, George Hammon, may be indicative of this, as is the fact that there was a distinct gap between his first and subsequent contact with the Quakers, a gap which he used to ponder upon their initial message before making his mind up. Luke Howard describes the event;

And he stirred up one George Hammond (a Baptist pastor as he called himself) to oppose and contradict the truth, who in much envy, uttered himself publickly against the

1. ibid.

word of God. At which Samuel Fisher was much troubled in spirit and could not be satisfied until he stood up in the same meeting, and bore as a publick testimony for the Truth, and against the revilings of the said George Hammond and said to George Hammond, dear Brother, You are very near and dear unto me, but the Truth is neerer and dearer to me: This is the everlasting truth and Gospel. And more words he spake to that effect, contrary to the Expectations of most people for they rather thought he would have taken part wth George Hammond.¹

The Baptist pastor was clearly shaken, offering in reply the statement 'Our Brother Fisher is bewitch'd'. From that moment on, Fisher became an important figure although, unlike Howard and Howsegoe, his ministry was soon to spread beyond the provincial boundaries of the county of Kent. The following year, he published a declaration full of the kind of imagery associated with these pre-Restoration years before the militancy of Quakerism had been tamed in the interests of preservation in the face of religious and political reaction, and which has already been seen as a marked feature of the writings of Howard and Howsegoe. The address is aimed at the inhabitants of Lydd, and takes the form of a series of dire warnings;

Fear, and the Pit, and the Snare are upon you all, ye Inhabitants of the Earth, and it shall come to pass that he that fleeth from the noise of the fear, shall fall into the Pit, and he that comes up out of the Pit shall be taken in the Snare; for the Day of the Lord draweth nigh, yea, it is very near and hasteth greatly.²

and he concludes this short piece with a whole-hearted attack on a variety of targets;

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1. Fisher, The Testimony of Truth....., Sig.b2; KAO N/FQZ2 f9.
 2. S. Fisher, The Burden of the Word of the Lord, London, 1656, p21.

Wo to all Hirelings and False Shepherds,
that cloke themselves with the wool, and
eat the fat, but feed not the flock.

Wo to the thief, that cometh not but to
steal, and to kill, and to Destroy.

Wo to the Idol Shepheard, that leaveth the
Flock for a little more outward endowment
or enjoyment, that takes not so much paines
in telling the truth, as in getting his
Tyths; the Swords shall be upon his Arm,
and upon his right Eye, his Arm shalbe
clean dryed up, and his right Eye utterly
darkened.

Wo to all the Hypocrites and Painted Sepulchres,
yet a little while and all the Paint will wear
off, and things will appears truly as they are.

Wo to all the daughters of Sion, of the Church
(so called) whether of England, Independants,
or any other.¹

As has been seen, by 1657 Fisher was entertaining feelings of spreading the word of the Truth beyond the seas, and in particular amongst the Jews, although it was not until 1660 that he finally went abroad and then only as far as Rome. In March 1657, he accompanied Richard Hubberthorne to a 'generall meting of the baptists near Rye' to preach to them there.² The next reference concerns a dispute which he, George Whitehead, and Richard Hubberthorne engaged in with the minister Thomas Danson of Sandwich in April 1659. The affair was dominated by the familiar process of textual reference and interpretation, and it would appear that the whole dispute was founded on the question

Whether every man that cometh into the
world be enlightened by Christ.

It was a variation on a familiar theme for Fisher for he had, as a Baptist, disputed

1. ibid., p22.

2. LSF Swarthmore MS4 f14.

in Ashford church on the whole concept of paedobaptism, rejecting the argument of his opponents that a child dying unbaptised was condemned and thus defending implicitly the concept of salvation for all. By this time, his attitudes are more dominated by the question of the light within man, and it is significant that Danson accused his opponents of making excursions into 'Arminian points.' The deep theological divide between the two parties was typified by an exchange between Danson and Hubberthorne;

RH : Then it seems thou deniest that Christ
died for all.

TD : Yes that I do, and 'tis more than you can
prove.

a refinement on the earlier confrontation between the two men over the question of the light of the spirit of God, Hubberthorne stating that there is only one light ergo it is within all men, and Danson responding

The light mentioned viz. natural and super-
natural are two, and though all have the one,
yet few have the other.

Fisher remained active in Kent up until 1660, chiefly, it would seem, in the coastal areas in which he had spent much of his life in the county - Luke Howard mentions that he was present at a general meeting in the house of Elizabeth Loper, who was to become Howard's second wife, in Hythe. After 1660, he was imprisoned upon his return to the country and died five years later of the plague.¹

If Luke Howard, Thomas Howsegoe, and Samuel Fisher take pride of place in the early days of Kentish Quakerism, then equally there were dozens of lesser lights whose contributions were no less vital in the establishment of the movement in the county. An analysis of the sources available for students of the Friends in this area - the MSS held in the Library of the Society of Friends, the Sufferings

1. T. Danson, The Quakers Folly, London, 1659, Sig.A3, pp1, 6; LSF Swarthmore MS4 f256.

Books and other early Quaker documents held at the County Archives in Maidstone, and a variety of printed works - indicate that, by 1660 there were Quaker meetings at the parishes indicated on Map 5 at the end of this chapter.

The meetings that date directly from the first missions to Kent in 1655 were at Dover, Staplehurst, Lydd/Romney, Canterbury, Ashford, Waltham, and Cranbrook. The first of these, as has been seen, revolved around the figure of Luke Howard, whilst those at Staplehurst and Romney came under the direction of Thomas Howsegoe and Samuel Fisher respectively. That at Canterbury can be traced to the mission of William Caton, who visited the city lodging at the inn belonging to a local Baptist, although names of its members do not emerge until 1658. The year before, John Stubbs visited the city, preaching to the Huguenot congregation, presumably assembled in the Cathedral crypt, and in 1658 Henry Rogers was imprisoned by the mayor for refusing to pay the clerk's wages of 6d., whilst Thomas Pollard and he were also cited for holding conventicles. Pollard had earlier gained notoriety for going

into the great massehouse wher John Durant
was preaching and was moved to speake sum
thing to the people but was sone pulled away.

for which offence he was duly imprisoned at Canterbury and Maidstone for further nine months.¹ In the same year, Edward Noakes was noted in a survey of 'Prisoners now in England for conscience sake' as the only prisoner in Kent so detained, evidently for non payment of tithes since an additional note states that £99 worth of his goods were distrained as a result.² Stephen Hobday's house was used for meetings in 1659. A list of names gives some idea of the size of the meeting by 1661, John Perrot, Luke Howard, Robert Letch, Thomas Everden, Henry Rogers, Robert Tritten, Thomas Nobbs, Thomas Pollard and his wife Elizabeth

1. LSF Caton MSS 3/7 f19, 3/94 f281, Swarthmore MS3 f152; KAO N/FQZ2 f17, N/FQZ1 ff5, 26, 169.

2. PRO SP18/182/137.

Being publicly and peaceably mett together
with other Friends in Canterbury to wait upon
the Lord on the 8th of the 6th month 1661
were by the Sherife of the Citty, Taken out
of their meeting, and had before Francis Love-
lace the Recorder and by him were committed to
Prison.¹

The Ashford meeting probably dates from the mission there of Thomas Laycock and Alexander Parker in June 1655, where they reported that they stayed at the house of a widow who had received Caton and Stubbs whilst on their way to Dover. Laycock stayed on in Ashford for a while after Parker had departed for Cranbrook. The widow in question was Mary Jacob, 'the first that received Friends into her house', and she was possibly a woman of some substance since the Hearth Tax returns for 1664 indicated four hearths. The only other information concerning early Quakers at Ashford reveals the name of one townsman imprisoned for his beliefs by Justice Knatchbull, one William Gibson. By 1662 there was evidently a regular meeting there, for George Fox visited the town 'where we had a quiet and very blessed meeting', and the indications are that, unlike in other towns in this area, the Ashford Friends were very much left to their own devices.²

The Waltham Quakers likewise owed their inception to the visit of Alexander Parker in June 1655 whilst on his way from Canterbury to Ashford, but the only other pre-Restoration reference to them is to be found in a letter from Luke Howard to William Caton, dated January 22nd, 1660, in which he wrote,

I hear now som letel hath bein with two or
three unsatble spirits roeving out as John
Edwarde s of Hed and William Smith of Walton
and John Donck a shomacker wich deed warck
with Henery rogare of Cantarbury but troweth
is now over them all.

1. LSF Swarthmore MS4 f266; KAO N/FQZ1 f27, N/FQZ2 f25.

2. Penney, op.cit., pp145-146; Watson, op.cit., p26; Fox, Journal, Vol.2, pp1-2.

Cranbrook had been visited by Caton and Stubbs in 1655, where they had been subsequently joined by Fox

where there was a great meeting; several soldiers were at it and many were turned to the Lord that day. After the meeting some of the soldiers were somewhat rude but the Lord's power came over them

The central figure in the early Cranbrook meeting was a Captain Dunk, whose house became the centre of the Friends there over the next few years. Henry Clarke of Cranbrook became one of the first entries in the Sufferings Book when he was arrested for entering the church there and interrupting the minister's sermon by asking the question

what is the word of the lord that thou bids people to hearken unto?¹

The following day, there was a large meeting where, according to Alexander Parker,

there was many people of all sorts, the priest came A company with him And the Baptists and the Independents and all was silent untill I had ended, and the Lord carried mee in his power And after all was done the priest came and did falsely accuse mee and oppose the Truth, hee had nothing to say against what had been declared but brought a booke soe I bad him if hee had anything to object lett him doe it in writing soe after a little Contention the priest and his company went away And the Baptists were pritty silent and the Independents but all one against the life of Truth.

By the end of the decade, one of the leading figures in Cranbrook was William Wacher, who also appears to have proclaimed the 'Truth' at Tenterden in 1658. Two years

1. Fox, Journal, Vol.1, p198; Penney, op.cit., p135; KAO N/FQZ1 f4.

later, Wachter, a tailor by profession, pinned

a few loyns one the steple housdore

and the content of this 'bill-posting', a not unusual form of religious protest, was sufficient to result in his imprisonment;

you that are called presbiteans if you joyne
with to reade or heare read the comon praier
book in way of worship: then you will be
found hipocrits and dissemblers as well as the
episcopall men and weomen wear in joyning to
you in your worship soe that if you turne as
they did then wee conclude that all that goe
in at this mashouse to worshipp to be hippocrits
or no thing.¹

a familiar argument which has already been seen in the writings of Thomas Howsegoe. In the same year, sixteen Cranbrook parishioners were reported to the authorities for attending a Quaker conventicle, but it is likely that the Cranbrook meeting was, in fact, much larger than this. Information from the hostile pen of William Kilburn in 1662 indicated that there was well over one hundred Quakers in Cranbrook and he describes their meeting, where they

stood silent, quaking and trembling two hours,
till two letters were delivered to John Bennett,
the master of the house, said to be from
beyond sea, which he and others read privatly.²

and the Episcopal Returns of 1669 speak of the Quakers there as being 'very numerous above 100'.

There is little information concerning the Brabourne Quakers, although there

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1. KAO N/FQZ1 f6; for earlier examples of this see Clark *op.cit.*, p78, Baildon *op.cit.*, p341.
 2. W. Tarbutt, *The Annals of Cranbrook Church*, Cranbrook, 1870, p42; C. C. R. Pile, *Cranbrook Notes and Records*, Cranbrook, 1953, p8; N/FQZ1 f23; Lyon Turner, *op.cit.*, p17.

was plainly a small group in existence by 1657, for it was from Brabourne that William Dewsbury wrote to Margaret Fell on July 2nd. The only name to emerge is that of William Bean, who was imprisoned for non-payment of tithes in 1657, and whom Howard mentions as experiencing severe doubts by January 1660. Equally, the Elmstone Quakers were a very small band. In 1657, Thomas Crawley

was moved to goe into a steplehouse and to
speake something amongst the people in love
to their soules.

and was subsequently assaulted, sustaining injuries from which he eventually died two years later. Robert Minster or Minter was imprisoned on an accusation of assaulting the parson, although he was in fact attempting to prevent the local priest, Alexander Bradey, from harvesting the Quaker's corn because of his refusal to pay tithes.¹ The Quaker presence at West Langdon was likewise small, but it centred around the figure of Elizabeth Adams whose behaviour raises an important point in its reflection of one of the more interesting trends of early Quaker conduct.

In 1658, Elizabeth Adams had been imprisoned for going into St. Mary's, Dover, and interrupting the service there, her husband securing her release by paying her £5 fine much against her will.² However, a letter she wrote to George Fox in May 1659 from Whitfield suggests that she may have been something of an extremist;

I hop thou need not beashamed of mee but
if I have misbehaved myselfe in any things
as consarrning the truth if thou have a
word from the lord dearre friend deale
plainely with mee for allthough the
righteus should smite mee that bee to mee
as precious balme.

An annotation on this letter in Fox's handwriting indicated what form such

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1. LSF Caton MS 3/168 ff492-493; KAO N/FQZ1 ff168, 213; LSF Swarthmore MS4 f256.
 2. KAO N/FQZ1 ff4, 213-214, N/FQZ2 ff14, 19.

misbehaviour took;

Shee brok a picher at the parlement dore
and then the presently broke up in the
comonwelthes dayes.¹

This act was probably a conscious mimicry of the kind of dramatic gesture immortalised by the Old Testament prophets. The books of Jeremiah and Isaiah, in particular, are scattered with allusions to God as the potter and Judah as the clay, and at one stage, Jeremiah was commanded to take 'a potter's earthen bottle' and

break the bottle in the sight of the men
that go with thee, And shalt say unto them
Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, Even so will
I break this people, and this city, as one
breaketh a potter's vessel, that cannot be
made again whole: and they shall bury them
in Tophet, till there be no place to bury.²

There can be little doubt that Elizabeth Adams' actions reflected a general behavioural aspect of Quakerism in its early days. Concerning this, Dr. Braithwaite has observed that

They felt themselves to be the prophets of a
new religious era. The word of the Lord burned
within them and demanded expression in speech
and action. Saturated with Bible knowledge,
they there found examples for their own conduct.
In this matter of testifying truth by signs,
Old Testament prophecy and apocalyptic imagery
were rich in fitting phrase and authoritative
precedent.³

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1. LSF Swarthmore MS3 f118.
 2. Jeremiah 19 : 10-11; see also Isaiah 29 : 16, 45 : 9, 64 : 8.
 3. Braithwaite, op. cit., pp56, 150-151.

Right from the beginning of the movement it was this that marked the Quakers out from the mainstream of radical activism, for, unlike the Ranters, they combined these extravagant actions with a lofty concept of their spiritual and ethical mission. As early as 1651, Fox had been moved by the sight of the spires of Lichfield to walk barefoot through the city pronouncing coming doom, and the history of the movement during the 1650s is full of such gestures by Friends which could easily get out of hand when undertaken by extrovert characters - such was the case with James Nayler and his disastrous entry into Bristol. The conscious identification of themselves with the Old Testament prophets is illustrative of a further fundamental difference between the Quakers and other radical groups, a difference of emphasis. In one sense, separatism and sectarianism was a negative force, involving denial of established Church order and discipline, and an aloofness in waiting for the creation of the Kingdom of Heaven on Earth. The Quakers, on the contrary, saw themselves as a positive embodiment of that process, hence concepts such as converting the Jews, as conscious forerunners of that second advent whose task it was, like the great prophets of Judah, to broadcast the message of the imminence of the millennium and to turn the people aside from wickedness before it was too late.

Thomas Howsegoe's pamphlet represents another provincial example of this, for it is couched in Old Testament phraseology and its very title invokes the concept of the travels of Amos, Hosea, and others, albeit it usually in reverse in their cases, from the simple rural areas of the North to the sophisticated cities of the South;

But for these things, as with the Nations,
so will I plead with thee oh Kent, and
except thou repent and turn unto me saith
the Lord, and forsake these thy abominable
things in my sight, ye Professors, Priests,
and people, I will come upon thee on a day
before thou art aware, and will reward thee
double for all thy iniquities, saith the Lord;
and as thou hast drunk deep at the Cup of thy
Fornication, so shalt thou drink deep of the

cup of my indignation, and if these things thou departest not from, and turn unto me with all thy heart, oh people unworthy to be beloved; if thou wast as Zion, for these things thou shouldst be plowed as a field, and as Jerusalem, thou shalt be laid in heaps; and though the Mountains of thy House be as the High Places, yet thou shalt be laid as a Forrest before me saith the Lord.¹

Apart from the reference to Kent, this passage, with its imagery of the 'day of the Lord' and its mention of the 'High Places', which would not have been lost on its listeners, could have come straight from Amos or Hosea.

Such behaviour ran the risk of obscuring the message that lay beneath it. When Quakers aped Isaiah or Micah by 'going naked for a sign', the reaction of the authorities was understandably severe and undiscerning; it was thus within this general tradition that it was hardly to be wondered at when the Canterbury authorities arrested Elizabeth Adams in 1660 when

she bought a Torch or such like thing
in Canterbury and rode up and downe the
City with it burning in her hand with a
friend befor her about the midle of the
day.

Biblical precedent for this extraordinary act has proved elusive, although Richard Sale of Derby had travelled through the centre of Chester in 1657 at midday holding a lighted candle which was for him a symbolic rejection of 'candle worship', and the incident may have been in a sense 'proto-Nietzchean' in its concept of the actual darkness in which humanity dwelt and operated, doubtless, for Elizabeth Adams, in stark contrast to the inner light of her beliefs. Equally, of course, the Bible is full light/dark imagery. Elizabeth Adams was evidently held in some esteem by Luke Howard, who at one time described her in a letter to William Caton as a

1. Howsegoe, op.cit., p10.

'lowe and meecke speret o its of grete price where it is.'¹

As might be expected, the establishment of a Quaker meeting at Maidstone proved no easy task. In a letter to Margaret Fell in April 1657, John Stubbs suggests that, in spite of opposition, a Quaker group had formed in the town;

The first meeting that I had was in Maidstone in Kent where friends have taken a convenient place of meeting, and there I stood over (in the dread of the Lord) my persecutors many wild men came but in the power I was preserved and they kept under and my mouth was opened with much boldness to declare the truth.²

Two further meetings are worthy of note, those at Sutton Valence and Deal, both established by 1660. The Sutton Valence group, as has been seen with reference to the development of nonconformity within the parish during the 1630s and 1640s, gained converts at the expense of both the Baptists and the Independents in the area, Thomas Skoonds, Thomas Turner, and James Spice being identifiable examples. It would appear that here it was amongst the Baptists that the Quakers made greatest impact for, in a letter to George Fox dated August 13th, 1660, Caton noted

some of the Baptists are come out of late about Sutton in Kent where there are soe many professours, but now they are much shaken, and the truth is over them.

The key figures in this area appears to have been James Wickens and John Barrington.³ The Wealden Quakers were amongst the most quickly and carefully organized in the county and, by 1672, the Friends at Cranbrook, Staplehurst, Sutton Valence, Tenterden, and Goudhurst joined together, 'with places adiacent' to purchase a piece of land for use as a graveyard, the plot being in the parish of Cranbrook, and

1. LSF Swarthmore MS4 ff114, 256, 272; KAO N/FQZ1 ff19-20.

2. LSF Swarthmore MS3 f160.

3. KAO N/FQZ1 ff25, 214; LSF Swarthmore MS4 f271; Lyon Turner, *op.cit.*, p18.

the trustees appointed the oversee this purchase and maintain the burial ground give some idea as to the leading lights amongst the Quakers in this area by the date concerned. They were for Cranbrook, Thomas Nash and John Bennett, clothiers; for Staplehurst, John Greensted, clothier; for Sutton Valence, James Wickens, yeoman; for Tenterden, Thomas West, blacksmith; and for Goudhurst, John Hawkings, a broadweaver.¹

The Deal meeting formed one of six subdivisions of the East Kent Division of the Quakers which was in existence by the end of 1660, and it was clearly a sizeable assembly, twenty-six of its members being arrested in that year for conventicling. Of the other subdivisions, Folkestone was probably one of the most active under the leadership of Thomas Nichols to whom Howard had sent Caton and Stubbs in 1655 on their initial journey through this part of Kent. Finally, by 1665, there appears to have been a small Quaker cell in the parish of Wittersham. In that year, Henry Peene and his wife, both identifiable as Friends from the extant Sufferings Book, were presented by the churchwardens of the parish

for holding of conventicles and private meetings at his house as allsoe for not coming to Church.²

It has already been observed that contemporary statistical surveys of non-conformity cannot be relied upon for their numerical accuracy - witness the confusion over the Compton Census or the figures given in the splendid 'Taking of Noses' preserved in the Tanner MSS in the Bodleian Library which gives the number of nonconformists in the Canterbury Diocese in 1688 as being exactly 93, 151! However, as in the preceding chapters, some attempt to illustrate the spread of Quakerism is made at the end of this section in Map 5, which is based on the sources employed in this chapter combined with the information given in the survey of 1662 and the Episcopal Returns of 1669.³ In this context it must be admitted that the Map probably

1. Pile, *op.cit.*, p7.

2. KAO N/FQZ1 ff24, 27, N/FQZ2 ff8, 21; CCL z-4-7 f476.

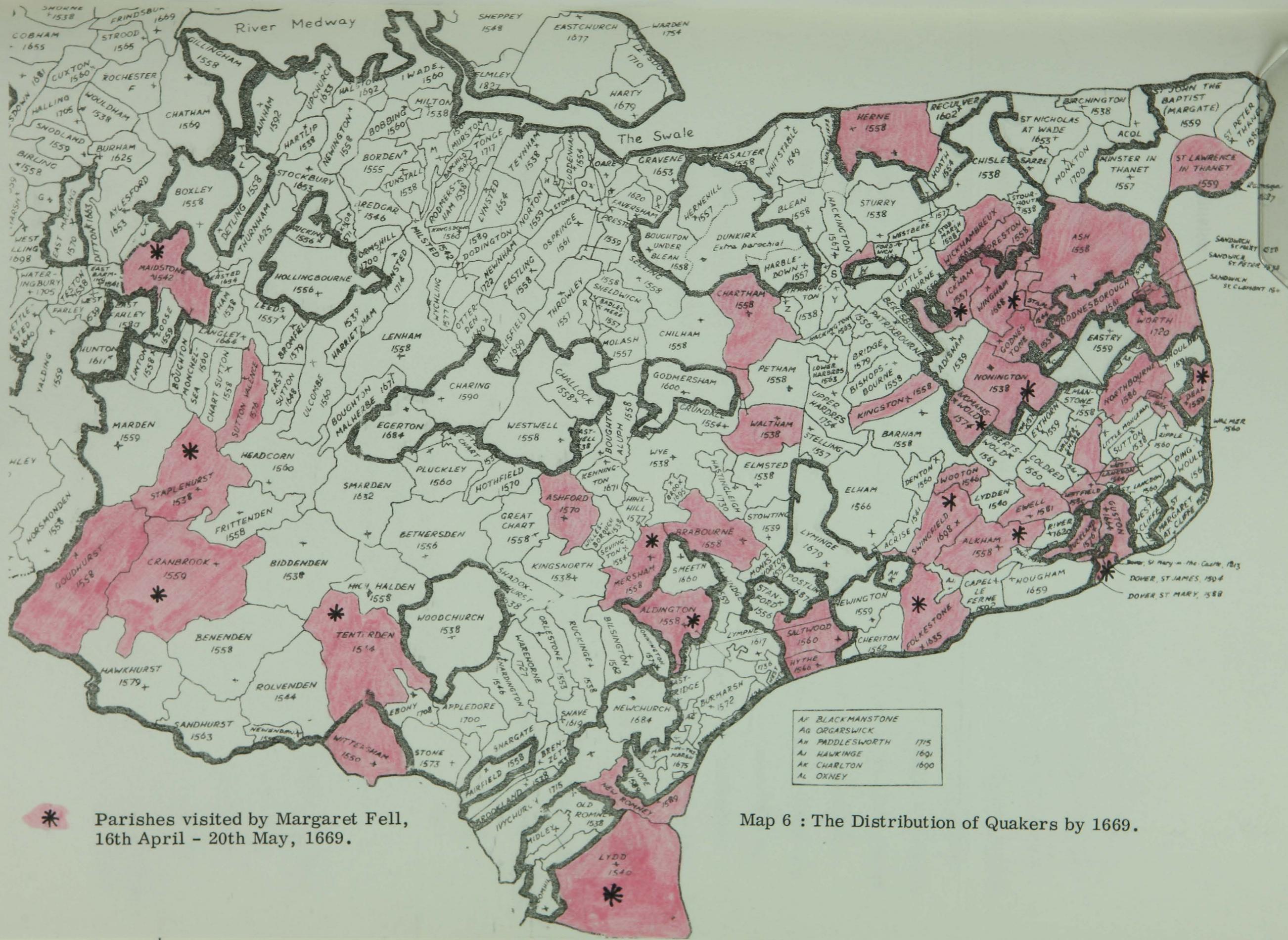
3. Bodl.Lib., Tanner MS 28 f5, 104 ff108-109.

records where Quakers lived rather than where they met for it is clear from surviving Quaker records that they quickly organised themselves into Divisions for the purpose of meeting.

In conclusion, it remains to examine briefly the nature of the Quaker conventicles and to attempt to explain their connection with the development of dissent during the 1640s and 1650s. It is, for example, fairly certain that some Quaker practices were derived from non-denominational behaviour visible before the outbreak of the Civil War, hat-wearing being a probable example. Very few contemporary accounts of the actual conventicles taking place in this part of Kent appear to have survived, although at Cranbrook in June 1662 a hostile source describes the Friends there as standing 'silent, quaking and trembling two hours'. Accounts of the meetings attended by the Quaker missionaries again tend to stress the contemplative, silent approach characteristic of such assemblies today - Alexander Parker writes of meetings at Staplehurst and Cranbrook in 1655 in such terms as 'all was silent' - and in this sense these assemblies were very different from the proto-Baptist/Congregational conventicles of the 1630s and 1640s, and the Puritan exercises in repetition of catechizing of the 1590s.¹

It has been noted that Christopher Hill suggests that it was amongst the looser associations of Seekers and Ranters that the Quakers found strongest appeal, and the conversion of Thomas Howsegoe in this area would certainly support such a view. However, it is equally clear that the Baptists in particular felt the impact of the Friends, as the examples of Luke Howard and at least half a dozen of the original covenanters of Kingsnorth's church bears out. It has to be admitted, of course, that such examples are but a handful and it may be wiser to see the appeal of Quakerism as a very individual affair for which there is just not enough evidence at this provincial level upon which to base any firm interpretation.

1. LSF Caton MS 3/93 f276.



* Parishes visited by Margaret Fell, 16th April - 20th May, 1669.

Map 6 : The Distribution of Quakers by 1669.

A	BLACKMANSTONE	
AG	ORGARSWICK	
AN	PADDLESWORTH	1715
AJ	HAWKINGE	1691
AK	CHARLTON	1690
AL	OXNEY	

Conclusion

Since the seventeenth century can hardly be termed 'unresearched', it is perhaps not surprising that this study has, in the last resort, succeeded perhaps in merely confirming aspects that have already been suspected as being true on a national scale, or views that have been published within this field by major scholars in this particular field. Hence, for example, Professor Collinson's conclusions concerning the development of separatism based on his Cranbrook dissection would, with one or two variations, broadly seem to be justified, and much the same can be said for Peter Clark's view of Sandwich as a nursery for East Kent radicalism. Geographically, the suggestions of Professor Everitt with regard to the Weald are likewise unimpeachable. Lack of will-evidence of detail makes it impossible to comment decisively on the social or economic status of separatists during this period, although there is little to suggest that the views of Peter Clark or of Dr. Manning on the 'middle sort of people' require revision - the details concerning John Turner and John Fenner being cases in point.¹

What does emerge from this study, perhaps, is the shape of the process of separation and religious radicalism both before the 1640s and during the Interregnum, and, in this sense, Peter Clark's assertion that

By the end of the century (ie 1600) separatist
or semi-separatist meetings had spread across
much of the Kentish countryside²

may need to be approached with some caution. Even given the inconsistency of the system for reporting ecclesiastical offences, a glance at the Map on page 12 is sufficient to show that there were very many parishes, especially in the Sittingbourne and Ospringe Deaneries, that appear to have been relatively untouched by

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1. Collinson, "Cranbrook and the Fletchers....."; Clark, E.P.S.; Everitt, loc.cit.; B. Manning, "Religion and Politics: The Godly People" in Politics, Religion and the English Civil War, ed. B. Manning, London, 1973, pp83-123.
 2. Clark, E.P.S., p177.

nonconformity, let alone conventicling.

From conforming Puritan/Presbyterian to proto-separatist, separatist to 'denominationalist', or Dissenter to Quaker, was in each case a serpentine progress and not necessarily an inevitable route, and the question as to whether or not a linear development from 1590 to 1660 can be envisaged remains, in the absence of conclusive evidence, unanswered. There were connections between early seventeenth century separatism and later radicalism; the evidence concerning figures such as John Turner and Thomas Howsegoe make that clear. In this context, the presentment by the Marden churchwardens in 1640 of John Merriam

for not agreing and consenting to the orders
of this Church of England and many other points¹

is of some interest since, in October 1661, Sir Edward Hales was to write to Chief Secretary Nicholas,

According to my duty and the comands I received
by you Sir of the Councell I did send Meriam
for those seditious and traiterous words to the
Goale where hee now is: The Justice of Peace at
the Sessions did not thinke fitt to bayle him,
although he had a frend that profer'd 500011
bond: so that hee is considerable in the opinion
of the world, though otherwayes, A meane fellow.²

One further development may, perhaps, be seen as a result of this study - it is within the context of this that the evidence concerning John Turner becomes so important - and that is in the progression from the innocent conventicles of the 1590s and earlier through to the meetings of the various separated denominations of the 1650s. It is not an artificial perspective to envisage this progression in terms of the types of conventicles and assemblies looked at in this study; from the activities of Robert Jessup in the early 1590s or the Ashford conventicle of 1599 where the

1. CCL x-6-11 (ii) f116.

2. PRO SP 29/43/13.

minister was present, to the Goudhurst and Cranbrook assemblies of 1602 and 1604 respectively where, in the absence of clergy, the lay individual takes it upon himself to preach and expound thereby coming perilously close to separatism; and then to the Ashford conventicle of 1612 and the development of separatism in the Weald in the 1620s at both of which administration of the sacraments was undertaken; and finally to the development of denominationally recognisable churches following the collapse of prelatical authority, there is an identifiable process at work. This process was inextricably bound up with the breaking of the shackles of clerical monopoly, particularly over the question of scriptural authority and, like most revolutions, once started such a process was difficult to control or stop; hence the doctrinal divisions within the Interregnum churches and the development of Quakerism with its intrinsic appeal to the Scriptures not as an infallible historical guide to be consulted in time of doubt, but as a living word to be fulfilled by, and within, the individual concerned.

If, as Professor Everitt stresses, the basic stability of the county community of Kent was not shattered by the destructiveness of the Civil War, if the radicals and scruplers analysed in this study did not, within their own environment, turn the world upside down, they did actively defend ideas and principles which, in the long term, were to ensure that their world would never be the same again.

Appendix I ; Hat-wearing in church as an expression of religious dissent.

Taken over, like most of the Quaker beliefs, and practices, from the Anabaptist tradition, it was an affirmation of human equality, a revolt against class.

Even what seems to us the innocent eccentricity of refusing to remove the hat in the presence of social superiors, or to use the second person plural to them, confirmed conservative contemporaries in their suspicions. The former was a long-standing gesture of popular social protest...¹

Apart from the deliberate use of 'thee' and 'thou', refusal to pay hat-honour is probably the most known fact concerning Quaker behaviour. The purpose of this Appendix is to examine briefly the nature of this phenomenon and to attempt to assess its significance.

A study of the Act Books and Visitation Records for the Diocese of Canterbury soon makes it clear that refusal to remove the hat in church was a presentable offence, and Table 6 below gives an indication of the frequency and location of such presentments.

Christopher Hill may well be right in his assertion that the refusal to pay hat-honour had been a traditional method of displaying religious nonconformity. Certainly it would seem that the activities of Henry Hart and his followers included this form of behaviour; the examination of one of the Essex conventiclers revealed that, amongst other things,

thei fell in argument of thinges of the
Scripture, specialle wheather it were
necessarie to stande or kneele, barehedde
or covered in prayer, whiche at lengthe
was concluded in ceremonie not to be

1. Brailsford, *op.cit.*, p45; Hill, *W. T. U. D.*, pp246-247.

Table 5
Presentments for hat-wearing in the Canterbury Diocese
1580-1640

Date	Parish	Date	Parish
1582	Lydd	1620	Kingsnorth
1595	Rolvenden		Shadoxhurst
	Otham	1622	St. Mary's, Dover
1601	Smarden	1624	Hythe
1603	Staplehurst	1627	Ashford
	Whitstable	1629	Elmstead
1604	Waltham		Shadoxhurst
1608	Walmer	1636	Smarden
	Biddenden	1637	Marden
1609	Reculver		Ashford
1613	Murston		Boughton-under-Blean
1614	Detling		

materiall, but the hartes before God was
it that imported and no thing els.¹

However, a study of the cases as they emerge in the Act Books reveals that behind this gesture may lie several shades of differing motivation.

Of the thirty presentments for this offence between 1580 and 1640, three can perhaps be categorised as responses to the harsh environment of the church as a building. In his account of his conflict with his father, Thomas Ellwood later ascribed a perpetual headcold to this father's refusal to permit him to wear a hat, from which it may be assumed that the covering of the head was seen then, and doubtless before, to be an indispensable part of the armoury of the individual in his fight against illness caused through inhospitable living conditions. In this sense, the presentment of John Young of Crundale in 1604

1. Burrage, *op.cit.*, Vol.2, pp5-6; one of the articles objected against the extremists Hackett, Coppinger, and Arthington in 1591 was that "They would not pull off their hats before the magistrates", see J.Strype, Annals of the Reformation, Oxford, 1824, Vol.4, p97.

for that he also on the xviii day of this
november being sabaothe daye satte in the
saide churche at waltham in the time of
divine service with his hatt on his head in
contempte of the lawes established as I beleeve

may be explained, given the time of year, by his defence that

for his weakness and infirmity he sate
with his hat on his head

and the same sort of excuse was given by Robert Simmes of Ashford in 1637, who asserted that he put his hat on because of the cold weather, Robert Philpott of Elmsted in 1624, who claimed toothache, and Richard Woodland of Shadoxhurst in 1629, who stated that he did so to combat the draughts in the church. Whilst any student of these records should rightly approach such justifications with caution, in the absence of supportive evidence, it may be that these statements have to be taken at face value. On the other hand, not only might one expect such behaviour to be more frequently reported, given the nature of churches in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but, in one case, it may be possible to infer an additional reason for such a gesture. Richard Woodland of Shadoxhurst was presented for sitting

with his hatt on his head on Easter Tuesday
when the xx chapter of Exodus was read

and this may suggest that his behaviour reflected some kind of liturgical scruple.¹

Of the remaining presentments, at least four can be fairly ascribed to irreverence towards, or contempt for, the local minister on the part of the individuals concerned. Whilst nonconformity might have lurked behind some of these, equally such an attitude was not necessarily motivated by anything other than personal feelings, as the case of Richard Thunder of Shadoxhurst in 1620 would seem to suggest, combining hat-wearing with being

1. CCL x-9-4 f31, x-6-8 f344, x-6-2 f141, x-6-1 f309.

unreverent and rude in his speches to
the minister.

The same would appear to be the case with Thomas Baker of Otham in 1595;

Baker being admonished by the minister to
amend the same answered him frowardly and
unreverently with his hatt on that he had
nothing to do with his comeinge or tareinge
a waye.¹

Once more, however, it may be suspected that such behaviour could be reflective
of a more profound nonconformity. In 1601, William Traye of Smarden was
presented for non-reception, and

for his unreverent behaviour in the churche
in the time of divine servyce viz for that
in the time of prayers and reading and singing
of psalmes and other holy exercises very seldom
or never he uncovereth his heade to the greate
offence of almightie god and dislike of the
congregation.

In April of the same year, he was presented along with his nephew for laughing
and jeering at the minister during the sermon, and the following month for making
a disturbance whilst another parishioner, Elizeus Pell, was performing public
penance.² Likewise, the same objection to the minister's conformity probably lay
behind the behaviour of Isaac Jeames, the parish clerk of Kingsnorth, who was
cited in 1620 for remaining covered in the presence of the minister, chiding the
curate for reading Psalms, keeping the key of the church and thereby inconveniencing
the minister and the curate, and absenteeism.³

Concerning a further six presentments, lack of information makes it impossible

1. CCL z-4-1 f90, x-3-10 f125.

2. CCL x-4-5 ff59-60.

3. CCL z-4-1 f89.

to ascribe any particular motivation. The Whitstable parishioner of 1603, one Lang, is a case in point. The presentment states that he kept his hat on during 'the publike prayer for the Kinge', but in the absence of additional information it would certainly be rash to interpret such an act as being quasi-republican! The Murston parson of a 1613 presentment is rather easier to categorize. The churchwardens complained that he

weareth his hatt on his heade all the
tyme he readeth service and prayers on
Sundayes in our churche.

but this was only one of a series of complaints concerning his failure to serve his parish efficiently, and in this case it would seem reasonable to assume that his hat-wearing can be ascribed to negligence or eccentricity rather than to any form of overt nonconformity.¹

Similar misbehaviour may be detectable in the presentment of Ezekiel Parker of Walmer in 1608;

for that in time of divine service and the
sermon he hath many Sundayes gathered the
briefes which are sent out for the relief of
the poor and other godlie uses most unreverentlie
in the church of walmer to the offence of
many well disposed people with his hatt upon
his head and having been admonished by
me the minister to refrayne the same for
that it was offensive to other persons there.

although it is possible that his action represents objection to the task, or its nature, that he was carrying out.² The cases of remaining covered that occurred in Smarden in 1636, Marden in 1637, and Biddenden in 1638 are difficult to comment on since all that transpires from the record is the name and the offence, but the earlier case

1. CCL x-4-6 f61, x-4-10 (ii) ff19, 33.

2. CCL x-2-5 f137.

at Rolvenden in 1595, when added to the analysis of the remaining cases below, may give grounds for accepting that it was nonconformist in intent. The Rolvenden presentment of 1595 concerned James Harris of Hawkhurst, who combined hat-wearing with walking out of the church during the service. When taken with an additional presentment of another parishioner, John Galloway, for misbehaving during the reading of the Litany, this could thus be suggestive of scruples touching the Liturgy.¹

At least one third of all these presentments can positively be identified as relating to nonconformity and it is this which is of some importance in connection with the future Quaker gesture. This is particularly so in the earliest of these incidents, which took place at Lydd in 1582. Thomas Heasle was presented

for kneeling at the communion keeping his
hatt upon his head saving only at the
receiving of the bread and wine at the ministers
hand whereat offense is given amongst the
people.²

Since he was also cited for refusing to have his children baptised with godfathers or godmothers, and for writing 'with his pen and ynke at the sermon tyme' - shades of the 'pens walking at sermons' complaint made during the Fletcher/Strowde controversy at Cranbrook -, as well as being cited for constant absenteeism five years later, it would be fair to assume that the basis of Heasle's behaviour was religious nonconformity. What is, perhaps, of greater interest is that his action whilst receiving communion prefigures by many years the Quaker doctrine of remaining covered in the presence of all save the Almighty.³

Objections to the established order of service can almost certainly be detected behind the presentment of the Waltham parishioner by his minister in 1604;

1. CCL x-3-8 f143.

2. CCL x-8-12 f25.

3. ibid., f26, x-8-1 f69; Collinson, "Cranbrook and the Fletchers", p192.

I present Matthew Cooke of Waltham aforesaid
for that one Whitsundaye last past after same
service ended I being ready to minister the
holy communion in the churche there the said
Matthew Cooke stayed in the body of the churche
talkeng with others with his hatt on his head.

Such a report at first reading would seem to suggest social preoccupation rather than any formal objections to church processes, but the minister proceeded to state further on that Cooke had kept his hat on on two previous occasions during the service, was prone to non-attendance, and that, in spite of being warned, he continued to loiter in the church 'in most abusyve manner' using

lowde speches in so much that I was
disturbed in proceedinge to the
administracion of the holy communion.

Further presentments throughout the year show that Cooke, his family, and his servants were constant absentees.¹

Much the same sort of obstinacy can be seen in the presentment of Henry Cobb of Reculver in 1609. His father, William Cobb, had been the object of a curious presentment five years earlier when, as one of the churchwardens, he had been accused of wilfully defacing the statue of King Ethelbert which stood in Reculver Church, and he had subsequently refused to pay for its repair and restoration. Henry Cobb was presented in 1609 for making crude remarks about the minister during the service and for

that in service time he doth not uncover his
head nor stand up at the reading of the creed
nor bowe at the name of Jesus.

It is this combination of attitudes taken in conjunction with what appears to have been the iconoclasm of his father that permits him to be seen reasonably as a nonconformist. He was cited throughout 1609 and 1610 for non-attendance, and in

1. CCL x-9-4 ff32, 33, 56.

1611 proceedings were instituted against his servant, Henry Avery,

whoe did most impudentlye laughe and deride
the worde of god as yt was preached the 22
day of September and withall departeth owte
of the churche.¹

The kind of tension that could arise if the minister was a conformist and the church officers less so is demonstrated in 1614 in the parish of Detling. John Rich, churchwarden, was presented for railing against the minister, refusing to cite parishioners who had gathered in the churchyard rather than enter the church, and for

not uncovering his head in tyme of divine
service and not kneeling when the general
confession and other prayers are made.²

Such evidence would be sufficient to imply a degree of dissent on the part of Rich, a view which is reinforced by additional presentments from the parish for the same year. The other churchwarden, Edmund Polhill, was presented for non-attendance and for being in the alehouse during the service, an accusation which he countered by stating that the minister was not unknown to frequent such a place,

The parishioners say they must goe to the
alehouse for their service if they shall
have any.

One of the sidesmen was also cited by the minister

for having his child baptised at Bredhurst
when I myeselfe preached the self-same daie
at Deptling

and for

1. CCL x-9-4 ff59, 84, x-9-8 f79, x-9-10 ff2, 120, x-9-11 f73.

2. CCL x-9-12 f168.

having his wife churched in his own house
by the scholemaster of Stockbury which is
uncerten whether hee bee in holy orders.

The sideman's name was Robert Heneker, a surname suggestive of Dutch origins.¹
The affair is of interest not only within the context of this Appendix but in the fact
that it may help to throw light on the kind of process which could drive apparently
upright members of the ecclesiastical establishment at parish level into opposition
to their minister, and may serve to explain the apparent volte-face of men like John
Turner, for example.

A slightly earlier case of hat-wearing as nonconformity can be seen in the
Wealden parish of Staplehurst in 1604. Proceedings were instituted in that year
against

Robert Williams de Staplehurst sometye
scholemaster there for that he sayth that
he is a deacon and hath confessed and
avouched it before Mr Mosse curate of
Staplehurst and Mr Boxer of Marden, he useth
to sitt in the churche in the time of divine
service with his hatt upon his head. He useth
to checke the curate there after his sermon
in open sorte.

That Williams was a nonconformist of some years standing is shown by a present-
ment of 1594 in which it was stated that

he being licensed to t each at Leeds being
for some misdemeanours dismissed from there
went to Milton and there did teach without
licence and from thence went to Staplehurst
and there has taught without licence and
that hath beyn and is a censurer and an evill
speaker of the book of common prayer.

1. ibid., ff171-172.

an accusation confirmed by the churchwardens of Milton Regis in 1593 who, referring to him as 'late scholemaster of Leeds', presented him for 'finding falt with the booke of comon praier.'¹

Only one of these presentments carries any suggestion of social motivation and that is the case of Peter Knight of Hythe in 1624, where his behaviour was said to have been 'a great scandall to the maior, jurats and whole congregation'. Further details, however, make it equally clear that this gesture was linked to a more general disapproval of established church ceremonies, since he was also accused of refusing to stand during the Creed and 'the reading of the Gospell.'²

Only one case of hat-wearing can be ascribed to any of the radical families discussed in this study. In 1627, Thomas Starr of Ashford was cited to appear to answer the charge

that hee did behave himself very irreverently
at the time of the reading of the tenne command-
ments in the parish of Ashford

and he freely admitted

that it is true his hatt was on his head when
Mr Hayes the Minister of Ashford began to
read the Ten Commandments.

Thomas Starr was probably involved in conventicling prior to his departure for the New World in the 1630s, and one of his sons eventually returned to succeed John Durant as pastor to the Independent Congregation in Canterbury.³

It would thus seem that the act of remaining covered in church or during a religious service in defiance of accepted ecclesiastical or social convention was not an uncommon phenomenon well before the Quakers made it one of the great hallmarks

1. CCL x-9-4 f30, x-8-8 f103, x-3-6 f130.

2. CCL z-4-3 f160.

3. CCL x-6-7 f261; see also B. P. Starr, A History of the Starr Family of New England, Connecticut, 1879, passim.

and characteristics of their beliefs and code of behaviour. Indeed, even the subtler definition of that act as expressed by the Friends - uncovering only in the presence of God as a sign of humility and spiritual egalitarianism - appears to have been anticipated, as the cases of Thomas Heasle and Peter Knight would suggest. However, the nonconformists discussed above may well have taken this gesture themselves from a standard method of displaying general disapproval. In 1622, as has been seen, the radical curate of St. Mary's, Dover, was faced with a section of his congregation who registered their opposition to his reformist ways by sitting, 'both men and very boyes', with their hats on their heads. The act of remaining covered would thus seem to be not quite as straightforward an affair as has hitherto been suggested, although it is equally clear that it was certainly, although not always, part of the resources at the disposal of those who wished to register their disapproval of established church practices during this period.

Appendix II : Women and Religious Radicalism in the Diocese of Canterbury,
1590-1660.

The influence and the role of women in the development and organisation of religious radicalism during the Elizabethan and early Stuart periods have already been discussed by several prominent writers on this period, both in general and in particular.¹ Certainly women played an important part in the growth and dissemination of nonconformist ideas in the Canterbury Diocese during the years covered by this study, although there is little in terms of statistical evidence which can be applied in order to make any accurate statement. It has already been seen in Table 5 that the membership of Durant's Congregational Church comprised of nearly twice as many women as men. Of the nonconformists reported in the 1662 survey, however, the figures of men and women swing slightly in favour of the former; out of a total of 400, the number of women was recorded as being 183, or just over 45%. However, this total obscures certain interesting parochial variations, such as the figures given for the parish of Ash, where it was reported that there existed 39 nonconformists (21 Independents, 8 Anabaptists, 10 Quakers) of which 23 were women, and of the 20 nonconformists at Great Mongeham, only 40% were men.² A closer analysis of the actual conventicles themselves, and in particular of the extremer assemblies of seventeenth century Kent is more illuminating, however, concerning the part played by women, and this is particularly true of the Turner/Fenner assembly.

By 1634, the Sutton Valence conventicle consisted of six men (including the imprisoned John Turner) and nine women, five of the latter being related to the former by marriage or kinship, the outstanding example of this being Jane Tippet,

1. See especially P. Collinson, "The Rule of Women in the English Reformation" in Studies in Church History, ed. G. Cuming, London, 1965, pp258-273; C. Cross, "He-goats before the Flocks" in Studies in Church History, ed. G. Cuming, Cambridge, 1972, pp195-203; K. V. Thomas, "Women and the Civil War Sects" in Crisis in Europe, ed. T. Aston, London, 1965, pp317-341.

2. See above p 146; Bodl. Lib. Tanner MS 124 ff108-109.

maidservant to Henry Elmstone whose daughter, Anne, married the separatist Thomas Moreland taking Jane with her when she moved in with her husband. Anne Bishop was continually presented, but not so her husband, even though at one stage their child remained unbaptised. The family tensions that such a situation must have aroused can only be guessed at, and was to be the source of confirmatory evidence for those who opposed the phenomenon of sexual equality during the Civil War and Interregnum years. Moreover, by 1634, one of the women of this group was a widow, Joan Pratt; was this the same 'widdow Pratt' who caused the churchwardens of St. Peter's in Sandwich such consternation in 1638 and 1639? If the two were one and the same person then this, taken with the evidence connecting the Deal conventicle possibly with John Bax of Ash, adds much to the view of the relatively far-reaching influence of the Turner church. As far as female participation is concerned, much the same can be seen in John Fenner's conventicle at Egerton which by 1637 comprised seven men and ten women, including Margery Adams who was responsible for carrying Turner's papers and sermon notes.¹

Perhaps one of the most illustrative examples of the appeal to women of the radical preacher prior to the collapse of episcopal authority comes in the series of presentments concerning the rector of Little Chart, Samuel Keame, in the late 1630s. Part of the charges laid against him was that

he is by many grave and religious persons
(offended at these his courses) much suspected
to be dishonest of his body with some women
or woman because between them there is publikely
reported to be such familiarity and mutuall
entertainment as in the opinion of many godly
persons is not seemely or decent.

an interesting and relatively early example of the association of religious radicalism with sexual licence which was to form one of the main platforms of 'official' dissenting disapproval of the Sects during the Cromwellian period. The women in

1. Thomas, loc.cit., p333; LPL VG 4/20 f21; CCL x-5-7 (ii) ff247, p268.

question appear to have been the somewhat unfortunately named Marian Paramour of St. Martin's, Canterbury, who was charged with

That the same encouraged and cherished
Mr Keame in conventicling

and Alice Weekes of St. Andrew's, Canterbury, who, as has already been noted, referred to Keame as 'her Father' and was 'frequent and familiar' with him.¹

Further individual examples serve to confirm the importance of the contribution of women as a social group. Dissent visible in the parish of Kingsnorth in the 1630s appears to have been dominated by female parishioners. In 1635, the sole presentment relating to nonconformity concerned Mary Cloake who

doth afferme against the first and second articles that the forme of God's worship used in the Church of England and contained in the common prayer book is superstitious and unlawful worship; against the third likewise that the rights and ceremonies of the Church of England by law established are wicked, anti-Christian and superstitious.²

The following year, Elizabeth Philpott, Bridget Allen, and Sara Wilcocke were cited for

afferming the church of England not to be apostollicall and that they doe not allow of the forme of worshipp prescribed in the book of common prayer.

In 1637, these three were presented at the Archdiaconal Visitation for being 'schismaticall', and Bridget Allen was constantly cited over the next two years for absenteeism.³

1. LPL VG 4/13 ff95, 97-98; 4/14 ff95-96.

2. CCL x-6-9 f58.

3. ibid., ff79, 87, 113, 120, 148; z-3-16 ff114-115, x-5-3 f174.

Evidence of more extreme female behaviour is preserved in the shape of an anonymous pamphlet printed in London in 1641 on the subject of women preachers;

Now give me leave to take water and goe to Gravesend, and so further into Kent, where I shall tell you of one Joan Banford in the town of Feversham, who taught at Feversham that husbands being such as crossed their wives wils might lawfully be forsaken. Then there was one Susan May of Ashford in the county of Kent also which preached in a Barne there that the Devil was the Father of the Pope, the Pope the father of those which did weare surplices, wherefore consequently the Devil was the father of all those which did not love Puritans.

and the author concluded pessimistically

At this time I have described but six of them, ere long I feare I shall relate more.

There is further evidence in the pages of Gangraena of women preaching in Kent at Brasted and Westerham in the Rochester Diocese, possibly encouraged by John Saltmarsh.¹ Given the teaching of St. Paul concerning the necessity for women to remain silent, such reactions are perhaps understandable especially since even a radical such as Thomas Brewer was categorical in his view of the role of women within a gathered church, stating that they ought not to meddle

with any kind of authority, order, or power, their inferiority of sex dis-inabling them therein.²

and it is certainly apparent that this view operated within the Canterbury

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1. Anon., A Discoverie of Six Women Preachers, London, 1641, pp4-5; Edwards, op.cit., pt.1, pp88-89, pt.2, p106.
 2. Brewer, op.cit., p137.

Congregational Church, for although women were an important and numerically dominant part of the congregation, the Church Book minutes leave little doubt as to the executive dominance of the males.

There is insufficient evidence to permit an analysis of the role of women within the Quaker movement in Kent, although it has already been noted that Elizabeth Adams of Whitfield and East Langdon was an active, and respected, member of the East Kent Friends. Hence, there is little in the way of concrete information to permit any comment to be made as far as this area is concerned on Keith Thomas' view that it was in the sects and then in the Quaker movement that women were permitted an active role in worship, although the experience of the Canterbury Congregational Church and the attitude of radicals such as Thomas Brewer would seem to confirm his view that although they may have formed the backbone of Dissenting congregations, their actual position was only marginally different from that which women had previously enjoyed within the parish congregation of the established church.¹

1. Thomas, loc.cit.

Appendix III : The Stranger Congregations and their relationship to Religious
Nonconformity in the Diocese of Canterbury, 1590-1662.

It has already been seen that over the question of the threat posed to ecclesiastical uniformity by the Stranger Churches, Archbishop Laud had few doubts, and in 1634 he launched a campaign to bring the foreign churches within his own jurisdiction into line with the established church by making them adhere to the English liturgy and by insisting that attendance at the local parish church was to be mandatory. The pastor of the Canterbury Church, which held its services, and still does, in the crypt of the Cathedral, Jean Bulteel, was nominated to speak for all the Stranger churches, and he duly experienced a series of unpleasant interviews with the Archbishop as he attempted to win a modification of the prelate's ordinances concerning their form of worship.

Laud's invective at these meetings leave little room for doubt as to the basis of his fears regarding these churches which were in his diocese but 'not of his diocese'. At one session with Bulteel, the Primate interrupted him shouting

I know your doctrine, parity of ministers,
hail fellowe well met.¹

itself a revealing statement as to the nature of Laud's interpretation of the foreign church discipline, and Bulteel recorded that at a further conference, Laud

spake often very harshly and bitterly unto the Deputies, and in a jeering and scoffing way spake very basely of their communion; said that their Churches used irreverence at their communion, sate together as if it were a Taverne or Ale-House, where one drank to another, the Minister beginning and the people following him

1. J. Bulteel, A Relation of the Troubles of the three Forraigne Churches in Kent, London, 1634, p7.

and he went on to affirm

that their churches were nests and occasions of scisme, that his intention was to hinder the scisme in Kent, where there are so many factions who, though they were not guilty of death, yet were worthy to be punished, that it were better there were no forraigne churches nor strangers in England then to have them thereby to give occasion or prejudice to the Church government of England.

He was to repeat this assertion at his trial, defending his attempts to bring these churches to heel by stating

That their living as they did, and standing so strictly to their own discipline, wrought upon the party in England which were addicted to them, and made them more averse, than otherwise would have been, to the present government of the Church of England.

and he cited in addition a letter from 'Queen Elizabeth of happy memory' to her Lord Treasurer, William Pawlett, in which she advocated worthy ministers to be appointed to ensure that

no rite nor use be therein observed contrary or derogatory to our laws.¹

That the Archbishop was preoccupied with the problem of nonconformity within his own diocese has already been demonstrated, and Stephen Foster has amply shown how inaccurate the Archbishop's conception of the extent and nature of this phenomenon may have been, but the phraseology that Laud applies to these churches is illuminating, raising the question as to whether the Strangers did play a part in the development

1. ibid., p9; Laud, Works, Vol.5 pt.2, p347, Vol.4, p422.

of radical ideas in this area.¹

Writing of Kent during the Elizabethan period, Peter Clark has observed that

The Stranger congregations also contributed to the progress of Kentish radicalism in other ways: they provided detailed information (through their foreign contacts) on the Catholic advance in Europe and at the same time through their very presence served as a constant reminder of the terrible malevolence of Popery.²

Such an assessment, particularly in the case of Dover, clearly requires examination, although at this distance in time it is somewhat difficult to appreciate just how aware the inhabitants of Canterbury, Maidstone, Sandwich, and Dover were of the foreigners in their midst.

The dating of the various Stranger congregations is, in part, elusive. The oldest of them was clearly that established in Canterbury upon the invitation of Thomas Cranmer during the reign of Edward VI - indeed, a petition from the Dover Strangers to the House of Lords in 1646 for permission to found a new church in the town consciously looked back to the 'discipline and immunities' that Edward had granted 'unto the several foreign congregations' which had settled in England at that time. The Canterbury Church dispersed with rapidity following the accession of Mary, but following her sister's accession and the renewal of persecution abroad, particularly in the Low Countries following Philip II's promulgation of 1565 that the measures against heresy should be followed to the letter, there was a further influx of foreign Protestants into England. In 1567, the Mayor and Jurats of Maidstone petitioned the Queen to allow refugees to settle in their town and, given the activities of the Marian curate John Day and the fundamentally anti-Catholic

1. Foster, op.cit., p13.

2. Clark, E.P.S., pp150-151.

3. F.W. Cross, "History of the Walloon and Huguenot Church at Canterbury" in Publications of the Huguenot Society, London, 1898, Vol.15, pp3-4, 16.

standpoint that the town had adopted during Mary's reign, such a settlement was perhaps not inappropriate.¹

The Dover congregation would seem to have had different origins. There were at least four Stranger Churches in Dover between 1560 and 1690. Whilst it is impossible to date precisely the first of these, there is little doubt that it was in part related to the privateering activities in the Channel which received unofficial approval from the Elizabethan Council during the 1560s and 1570s. However, following the discovery of the Ridolfi Plot, the Council felt it expedient to determine just how many aliens had taken up residence in places of obvious strategic value such as Dover, and followed this up with an Order asking for information concerning

in what sort they do resort orderly to any churches and places of prayer to hear and use divine services and sacrament, as by the ecclesiastical laws of this realm they ought to do, or otherwise where any strangers are tolerated withal by the Bishop of that Diocese to use divine services in their own mother tongue.

the returns revealing a total community of 277 persons.² This church appears to have ceased shortly after 1589 and the next reference to a congregation at Dover emerges during the 1620s. In 1621, French Protestants under the leadership of the Duc de Rohan rose in revolt against their monarch with disastrous results, which soon meant the arrival of more refugees in England. That they were received favourably in Dover was possibly as much due to a general reaction against James I's conciliatory foreign policy towards the Catholic states of Europe as to the efforts made on their behalf by the minister of St. Mary's in Dover, John Reading. On

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1. V. Morant, 'The Settlement of Protestant Refugees in Maidstone during the Sixteenth Century' in Economic History Review, 2nd Series, 1951-1952, Vol. 4, p210; J. M. Russell, The History of Maidstone, Maidstone, 1881, p185.
 2. G. H. Overend, 'Strangers at Dover' in Proceedings of the Huguenot Society, London, 1889-1890, Vol. 3, pp91, 98, 115, 159-162.

June 4th, Reading wrote to his former patron, Lord Zouche,

Be pleased to understand that, by reason of the many troubles in France (which like a black storm have long threatened the Protestant Churches) many and sundry sorts of people thence escaping have arrived here for succour.

and nine days later he had formulated a practical solution to the religious needs of the newcomers, asking the Lord Warden for permission to lend out St. Mary's to the ministers of the French congregation. That this was granted is evident from a letter to Lord Zouche from the Lieutenant of Dover Castle, Sir Henry Mainwaring;

This morning I arrived at Dover where I find omnia et omnes bene. Here are some 100 French or thereabouts in all. They have here two ministers, which preach twice on Sundays in St. Mary's, before and after Mr Reading, and once on Thursdays.¹

Similar arrangements appear to have been instituted in Sandwich, since the Puritan malcontent, William Ellwood, requested that he be permitted to receive the sacrament at St. Mary's, Sandwich, since

his owne parisshe church of St Peters hath been of late and is in the hands of the congregation of strangers there.

although, as has been shown, his real reason was his desire to attend services taken by Stephen Huffam,²

It was at this time that John Reading was beginning to face the growth of opposition within his parish which was to reoccur for the next twenty years. However, there is no evidence to suggest that the presence of French Protestants in the parish

1. ibid., pp130-133.

2. CCL x-5-7 (ii) f75.

can be directly linked to his problems. None of the names of the Stranger community can be seen involved with the explicit incidents of nonconformity at this time, although it would, of course, be interesting to know in whose houses the emigres resided; unlike the returns of 1571, however, this information has not survived. In 1622, de Rohan made a hasty submission to the French King and it is likely that many of the Dover refugees returned to France shortly after. Certainly there is no mention of a Dover Church in the Minute Book of the Colloquies held by the French Churches in England at this time, although it is possible that the Dover Church fell in terms of time between the twenty-second and twenty-third of these Colloquies.¹ However, there is no mention of a Dover Church in Laud's campaign against the foreign congregations which he mounted in 1634.

Bearing this in mind, there are scraps of evidence which, taken together, at least oblige the student of this phenomenon to keep an open mind about the relationship between aliens and the development of dissent. The list of emigres compiled in June 1622 details twelve foreigners who were resident in the port of Dover before the majority of the contingent arrived. One of them, Peter Hughessen, was the subject of a presentment from the Deal Churchwardens in 1613 which is suggestive of a certain nonconformity. Apart from his constant refusal to receive the sacrament and his regular absenteeism, he was also cited for

that he hath very bitterly rayled on and
reviled Mr Thomas Constant owre minister
and preacher

calling him publicly

a knave prest, a rogue and a rascall prest
and wisht that the divill might carry him
away and all such prests.

Five years earlier, his father, James Hughessen, had been accused along with his fellow churchwarden John Fines, whose family were to become members of the

1. Overend, loc.cit., p139.

Baptist Church there in the 1660s, for permitting a

minister to preache in their parisshe church
he not being a licensed preacher.¹

Moreover, a member of one of the Stranger families which settled in Dover in 1622, Peeter Nepeue or Nepven, signed the petition of 1641 from the town of Dover pleading with the House of Commons to abolish episcopacy. The attitudes of the Detling sidesman, Robert Henneker, whose surname betrays a Stranger past at the very least, have already been discussed, but it is worth noting that at about the same time, the wife of Richard Henneker of Newchurch was being presented for

contemptuously refusing to stand up at the
rehersall of the articles of faith being
admonished soe to do.

whilst the name of John Henneker appears on the petition of 1648 demanding the trial of Charles I.²

Alongside these fragments there are further aspects to be taken into consideration. It cannot be denied that, thanks to the efforts of John Reading, the religious discipline of the Dover Huguenots was publicly visible to the resident parishioners, two sermons on a Sunday and one during the weekday - a practice condemned by the Arminian minister of Maidstone, Robert Barrell, as 'prating and babling' - standing in stark contrast to the official attitude towards preaching in the Diocese.³ Moreover, from the very first, the organisation of these foreign churches was far more in keeping with the aspirations of active reformists than with the structure of the established church in the country of their adoption. Whilst it is not clear exactly how much influence the congregations of these churches had in the choice of their

1. ibid., p165; CCL x-9-11 f213, x-9-8 f39; DWL DBChB f98.

2. L. B. Larking, 'Proceedings Principally in the County of Kent' Camden Society 1st Series, London, 1862, Vol. 80, pp60-62; CCL x-9-20 f127; Bodl. Lib. Tanner MS57 f479.

pastor, the foreign assemblies were individually governed by a Consistory which was composed of the minister and elders. This vestry, virtually indistinguishable from the concept of the Presbytery, was both an executive force and a spiritual court exercising jurisdiction over the morals of the Church members. Above the Consistory stood the Class, a meeting of the Consistories of two or three churches, the Colloquy, and lastly the Synod. If the church was Presbyterian in structure, its individual organisation anticipated in many details the fabric of later Dissenting Churches in England, particularly the Congregationalists. The duties of the elders were defined as

to watch over the whole church and each individual;
to govern the church in common with the minister,
without either usurping authority over the others;
to maintain good order in the holy assemblies; and
to make ecclesiastical admonition and correction
both in private and in the Consistory, as the case
may require.¹

whilst the Deacons were responsible for the care of the sick and for the collection and distribution of alms. The church was free of tithes and therefore, it must be said, continually short of funds for the maintenance of its ministers, and in the exercise of discipline, the Consistory's attitude had much in common with later Independency. The offender was to be admonished privately by an Elder and, only if this failed, was he to be summoned for formal censure. If he persisted in his error, he was then to be suspended in the face of the congregation and, ultimately, excommunicated.²

Other aspects of the Strangers' discipline were likewise close to the attitudes of Dissenting Churches in England after the fall of Laud. Evidence concerning the formation of a Huguenot Church in Dover in 1646 shows that it possessed the tradition of 'main d'association', very close in both wording and concept to the

1. Cross, loc.cit., pp46-58.

2. ibid.

extending the 'hand of fellowship' which was a regular part of Congregationalism's vocabulary. Moreover, it had always been the tradition of the French Church to insist on admitting new members only following some sort of test - 'par examen' - or upon receipt of a 'tesmoignage' from another church, much akin to the 'letter of dismissal' demanded by the Independent and Baptist Churches alike from their earliest days. Finally, the Genevan custom of the foreign churches of administering the sacrament to the congregation seated, rather than kneeling, had attracted the ire of the Bishop of Norwich long before the ascendancy of Laud, and doubtless this gained the approval of the more radical elements in the parishes in which these Stranger Churches were situated.¹

Nearly twenty years ago, Professor Collinson published an article in which he examined the nature of the relationship between Elizabethan Puritanism in London and the Foreign Churches there, referring to the latter as playing

the part of the Trojan horse, bringing Reformed worship and discipline fully armed into the midst of the Anglican camp.²

The article firmly established that there was a dialogue taking place in London in the mid-Elizabethan period between the Foreign Reformed Churches and those Londoners, and others, of Presbyterian inclinations, both groups benefiting from the latitudinarianism of Grindal, and that the Puritan could not help but look at the Reformed Church discipline wistfully. In a telling paragraph, Professor Collinson wrote;

One London incumbent who was suspended from his ministry in 1565 for refusing to wear the prescribed vestments wrote at the end of his life:
'Yt semethe ryghtfull that subiects naturall

1. Overend, loc.cit., pp294, 299, 307; Cross, loc.cit., p87.

2. P. Collinson, "The Elizabethan Puritans and the Foreign Reformed Churches in London", Proceedings of the Huguenot Society, Vol.20, No.5, London, 1964, p531.

receve soe much favoure as the churches of natyonall
straungers have here with us. But we can not once
be harde soe to obtayne. Thys with them: they an
eldershippe; we none. They frely electe the
doctor and pastor; we maye not. They their deacons
and churche servautes with dyscyplyn and wee notte'..
.....In 1573 many were attributing the troubles
in the Church to the influence of the 'strange
Churches, as well beyond the seas as here among
us remaining', thereby, as the puritans thought,
'to provoke the displeasures of the Magistrates
against them.'¹

How far the same process can be envisaged as operating within the Diocese of Canterbury throughout this period is, at present, difficult to assess, but it is clear that Laud felt that these churches were directly instrumental in the development of schism, and the coincidence of Stranger discipline with that of emerging Independency is noteworthy, although Leyden's influence must have been equally, if not more so, potent.

In conclusion, it is worth noting that there is a suggestion that the opposite process might have been the case in terms of the relationship between the Stranger Churches and English nonconformists, at least in Canterbury. On September 3rd, 1662, Edward Nicholas, writing on behalf of Charles II to the Mayor and Justices of Canterbury, remarked

that for above this twenty yeres last past there
have been great and scandalous divisions amongst
those of the Walloones Nation that live in and
about the citty of Canterbury they having separated
themselves each from other, and made two severall
congregations of their own accord without any
lawfull authority, and that their animosities did
grow to such an height that the peace of the
towne did often runne much hazard thereby.²

1. *ibid.*, pp539-540.

2. PRO SP 29/59/13.

The implication of a schism within the Canterbury Church going back to the 1640s is of interest. The whole affair centred around the contrasting ecclesiological and political views of Pierre Jannon and Philippe Le Keux, rival pastors. Le Keux appears to have been drawn towards Congregationalism - in 1661, a series of reasons were put before the Council as to why he should not be permitted to organise a church in Canterbury, and he was described as

a professed enemy to the Church of England and of all good order in what church soever, having heretofore separated himselfe with his congregation from those very churches whose discipline he sheweth now a desire to maintaine, and having declared for Independencie.¹

Letters from Jannon to the Council indicate that Le Keux's views were indeed radical;

lors que le Rump commanda de declarer Sr George Booth Traitre pour avoir voulu appelle un franc parlement et appelle Le Roy a ses Royaumes, que Mr Le Keux appella tout particulierement le Roy nostre Soverain Seigneur Le Grand Traitre Stuart et cela avec tant de violence et d'animosite contre le Roy qu'il semblait qu'il voulait estre Roy luyesme.²

Not only did republicanism feature in his sermons, but bitter attacks on the Liturgy of the restored Church. In an unsigned and undated report to the Council, possibly from Jannon, Le Keux appears to have preached publicly against Prayer Book usage. Addressing his followers on September 15th, 1661, he stated

Qu'a cause que l'Eglise Estrangere se soumettoit au Gouvernement de l'Eglise Anglicane, elle s'en alloit estre privee de l'Evangile, et que par ce

1. PRO SP 29/40/4.

2. ibid.

moyen le Parole de Dieu s'en alloit luy estre
ostee. Ce qu'il repeta iusques a trois fois dans
son sermon.

and the following Sunday he preached that

L'Evangile nous sera ostee par ses meschans la
ouy il s'en va estre esteint par des nouvelles
superstitions qu'ils vont introduire en l'Eglise
par des nouveaux livres qu'ils vont prendre.

On Thursday, September 26th,

il dit en chaire Plusieurs Estrangers sont sorties
du bourbier et de l'idolatrie, et sont venus en ce
pays pensans y avoir prescher la Parole de Dieu;
Mais voicy pour la derniere fois que l'Evangile sera
preche icy un purete; Car voila des pasteurs qui
sont sans foy et sans Dieu au monde, qui vont
prendre des livres de fables et d'histoires dans
lesquels il n'y a que condamnation, afin de prescher
des heresies.¹

In the light of these reports it is hardly surprising that the Council found in favour
of Jannon, especially since Le Keux, deprived of the use of the Cathedral Crypt,

boldly and unwarrantably presumed without any
lawfull authority to meet like Phanaticks in
a private house to the disturbance of the
publique peace.

The whole matter was eventually settled following a Royal Court Order issued on
November 14th, 1662, which instructed both parties to unite, hold elections for an
overall minister, whose judgement was to be final, and that they should

not permitt or suffer the Minister or any other
member of the Congregation to do or speake any-

1. PRO SP 29/43/73.

thing tending to the reproach or contempte of
the Lyturgie, or any other part of the Doctrine
or Discipline established in the Church of England.¹

The influence of the Stranger Churches on the development of dissent or separatism remains, thus, unproven at present, although there is sufficient in terms of intriguing hints to suggest that this area may prove a profitable field for future research, and the Registers of the Canterbury Church may prove an interesting starting point. The question must hinge largely on the degree of contact between the inhabitants of towns such as Canterbury, Sandwich, and Dover, with the aliens living amongst them, contacts that the barriers of language and petty nationalism must have restricted to a degree. Yet, when the Puritan Admonition to the Parliament of 1572 could ask 'Is a Reformation good for France? and can it be evyl for England?', even taking into account the cosmopolitanism of London in contrast to provincial urban centres, it is hard to accept that the presence and discipline of the Strangers could have gone totally ignored.²

1. PRO SP 29/40/4, 29/62/118.

2. Collinson, "The Elizabethan Puritans....etc", p531.

Appendix IV : The full text of Henry Chantler's letter to Dr. Featly, dated
June 4th, 1623. [CCL z-4-3 f14]

I have spoken before of the place both of publike and privat prayer: that as there is a distinction of prayer both publike and privat so also there is of the places where these are to be made: publike prayer must be in a publike place and privat prayer in a privat place: wherein (it seemes) I have been mistaken by some, who have conceived that I utterly condemned all manner of privat prayer, whatsoever in a privat place: whereas I intended only to reprove the abuse of it and namely, in the time of the publike duties of the worship and service of god: as appeareth by the reason which I then brought to confirme it, namely this because it brought a confusion into the church, when some are praying some are reading some talking and some are sleeping, when they should all together give attention unto that part of the worship of god then in hand. I spake nothing against privat prayer, reading and meditation before the publike duties of gods worship begin the better to fit and prepare ourselves for the quiet and profitable attention to them when they are begun. But when once the publike service of god is begun, we ought then (laying aside all privat meditations) to give all due reverence and diligent attention thereunto, to heare, marke and understand, that which is read preached or ministered because the whole congregation is one body and ought all to joyne together with one heart and one accord in the worship of god, to heare him speaking unto us in the publike ministrie. And this is agreeable both to the generall rules and canon of the Scriptures, which teach that all thinges in the church should be don to edifying I Cor. 14. 5 and decently and according to order verse 40 for god is the authour not of ~~confusion~~(sic) but of order: now to pray to ourselves or to exercise the tongue when we should use the eare, or to speake to god when we should heere him speaking unto us, cannot stand with these generall rules, appointed to direct us in our publike assemblies: and also this is agreeable to the doctrine and the canons of the Church of England (as I understand them) agreed upon by the convocation holden Anno Domini 1603 as ye may see in the 18 canon, enjoying all due reverence and attention to be used in the

church in time of divine service. The wordes are these In time of divine service and everie part thereof all due reverence is to be used for it is according to the Apostles rule: Let all thinges be don decently and according to order Answerable to which decencie and order we judge these our directions following one of which directions for attention is this None either man woman or child of what calling soever shall be otherwise at such times busied in the church then in quiet attendance (which in the title of the canon is attention) to heare marke and understand that which is read preached or ministred. This being then the doctrine of our Church, confirmed by publike authority, and by the Apostles rule before mentioned, which is there taken up for the ground of the canon, I dare not denie it. Neverthlesse I denie not but that this generall rule may admitt some limitation in case of absolute necessitie for I make no question but that in the time of publike worship of god a man may use secret ejaculations or short darting prayers (so called by the ancients) sending up groanes and sighs to god in our hearts for his grace and assistance of his spirit according as our urgent necessities and speciall occasions shall require which secret and inward requests of the heart are verie forcible and crie mightily in the eares of the Lord (as we may see in moses example Exod. 14. 15) though no voice be uttered. So likewise in the case of a verie strong and violent temptation, when Satan doeth so buffet us and grievously vexe and molest us, as that we are not able by any meanes to hold out any longer nor to continue ioyning with the congregation in the dueties of gods service I see not but that we may then pray unto god, to bende downe Satan and to drive him from us, and to strengthen us against him, and make us able to ioyne with the congregation in the dueties of gods worship. And here also I would desire all men to understand that I speake nothing against the most reverend and humble gesture of kneeling in prayer: that being the most fitt and seemly gesture to be used in prayer as best expressing the humilitie of our hearts, and our reverence and submission unto god; but I would it were more used and duely observed of all in the congregation then it is if with any conveniencie it may be don neither doe I goe aboute to cool or abate any mans zeale in prayer, which ought to

be fervent, if he will obtaine anything at the hand of god; nor yet doe I speake any thing, to this end, to breed dissension or contentions in the church of god, but rather to preserve that unanimitie and uniformitie which ought to be in the church in ioyning together with one heart and one accord, in the publike dueties of the worship of god according to the rule of gods word and the canon of our church; let all things be don decently and according to order.

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The first two chapters of this study are heavily based on the ecclesiastical records held at the Canterbury Cathedral Archives and Library. For the period 1573-1643, Call Books or Libri Cleri cover the whole of the Diocese, whilst the Comperta and Detecta material resulting from Visitations, along with action taken following such presentments, are recorded in several Act Books.

Of these records at Canterbury, 133 volumes have been examined, but only those with their appropriate designation that have been mentioned in the text of this thesis have been included below.

a) Canterbury Cathedral Archives and Library.

Woodruff Catalogue:

x-1-2	Comperta et Detecta	Westbere, Charing, and Canterbury Deaneries,	1560-1584.
x-1-11	Comperta et Detecta	Miscellaneous	1571-1572
x-1-15	Comperta et Detecta	Miscellaneous	1577-1588
x-1-16	Comperta et Detecta	Sandwich and Westbere Deaneries,	1577-1584.
x-1-17	Comperta et Detecta	Lympne Deanery	1577-1584
x-2-2	Comperta et Detecta	Charing Deanery	1578-1582
x-2-4	Comperta et Detecta	Miscellaneous	1582-1585
x-2-5	Comperta et Detecta	Sandwich Deanery	1585-1610
x-2-7	Comperta et Detecta	Ospringe Deanery	1584-1591
x-2-8	Comperta et Detecta	Canterbury Deanery	1584-1593
x-2-9	Comperta et Detecta	Sutton Deanery	1584-1593
x-3-4	Comperta et Detecta	Bridge Deanery	1589-1592
x-3-5	Comperta et Detecta	Charing Deanery	1590-1592
x-3-6	Comperta et Detecta	Sittingbourne Deanery	1591-1605
x-3-8	Comperta et Detecta	Charing Deanery	1593-1596

x-3-10	Comperta et Detecta	Sutton Deanery	1593-1604
x-4-1	Comperta et Detecta	Bridge Deanery	1596-1612
x-4-3	Comperta et Detecta	Charing Deanery	1596-1600
x-4-5	Comperta et Detecta	Charing Deanery	1600-1603
x-4-6	Comperta et Detecta	Ospringe and Westbere Deaneries,	1601-1610
x-4-8	Comperta et Detecta	Charing Deanery	1603-1606
x-4-9	Comperta et Detecta	Sutton Deanery	1604-1608
x-4-10	Comperta et Detecta	Sittingbourne Deanery	1605-1620
x-5-3	Comperta et Detecta	Lympne Deanery	1609-1615
x-5-5	Comperta et Detecta	Charing Deanery	1610-1615
x-5-6	Comperta et Detecta	Ospringe and Westbere Deaneries,	1610-1627
x-5-7	Comperta et Detecta	Sandwich Deanery	1610-1639
x-5-8	Comperta et Detecta	Bridge Deanery	1612-1624
x-5-9	Comperta et Detecta	Charing Deanery	1615-1620
x-6-1	Comperta et Detecta	Lympne Deanery	1615-1629
x-6-2	Comperta et Detecta	Dover and Elham Deaneries,	1619-1632
x-6-3	Comperta et Detecta	Sittingbourne Deanery	1620-1636
x-6-4	Comperta et Detecta	Sutton Deanery	1620-1635
x-6-5	Comperta et Detecta	Canterbury Deanery	1624-1632
x-6-6	Comperta et Detecta	Bridge Deanery	1624-1639
x-6-7	Comperta et Detecta	Charing Deanery	1620-1627
x-6-8	Comperta et Detecta	Charing Deanery	1627-1637
x-6-9	Comperta et Detecta	Lympne and Charing Deaneries,	1631-1667
x-6-10	Comperta et Detecta	Canterbury Deanery	1632-1639
x-6-11	Comperta et Detecta	Sutton and Sittingbourne Deaneries,	1636-1670
x-7-2	Comperta et Detecta	Canterbury Deanery	1639-1674
x-7-10	Consistory Court	Miscellaneous	1666-1668
x-8-2	Archbishop Laud's Visitation		1637
x-8-4	'Presentments of divers jurisdictions for matters of Religion before Rob. Colens, Com. Gen.'		No date, but Marian.

x-8-8	Archbishop Whitgift's Visitation		1593-1596 1569-1570
x-8-10	Comperta et Detecta	Exempt parishes	1577-1581
x-8-11	Comperta et Detecta	Exempt parishes	1587-1589
x-8-12	Comperta et Detecta	Exempt parishes	1581-1586
x-8-13	Comperta et Detecta	Exempt parishes	1589-1591
x-8-14	Comperta et Detecta	Exempt parishes	1591-1593
x-9-1	Comperta et Detecta	Exempt parishes	1598-1600
x-9-3	Comperta et Detecta	Exempt parishes	1602-1604
x-9-4	Comperta et Detecta	Exempt parishes	1604-1605
x-9-6	Comperta et Detecta	Exempt parishes	1607
x-9-10	Comperta et Detecta	Exempt parishes	1610-1611
x-9-11	Comperta et Detecta	Exempt parishes	1611-1613
x-9-12	Comperta et Detecta	Exempt parishes	1613-1616
x-9-11	Comperta et Detecta	Exempt parishes	1616-1618
x-9-14	Comperta et Detecta	Exempt parishes	1617-1619
x-9-15	Comperta et Detecta	Exempt parishes	1663-1668
z-1-9	Acta ad Instantium partium		1624-1626
z-3-16	Archdiaconal Visitation		1637
z-4-2	Comperta et Detecta	Exempt parishes	1621-1622
z-4-3	Comperta et Detecta	Exempt parishes	1622-1625
z-4-4	Comperta et Detecta	Exempt parishes	1625-1627
z-4-6	Comperta et Detecta	Exempt parishes	1636-1639
z-4-7	Comperta et Detecta	Exempt parishes	1639-1641, 1661-1666

U37 First Church Book of the Canterbury Congregational Church.

409/AC Archdeacons Transcripts

b) Kent County Archives Office, Maidstone.

P360/1/1	Parish Registers
PRC 17/74	Wills
PRC 32/54	Wills
Sa/AC 7	Sandwich Town Year Book
U350/C2/54	Dering Papers
N/FQZ1	Quaker Sufferings Book
N/FQZ2	Quaker Sufferings Book
23/SMA	Smarden Baptist Church Book

c) Bodleian Library, Oxford.

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	SP 14/103/79
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	SP 16/343/17
	SP 16/381/9
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	SP 16/424/48
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SP 19/119/21

SP 29/43/13

SP 29/62/110

SP 29/129/14

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f) The British Library, London.

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MS43

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h) Worcester College Library, Oxford.

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