

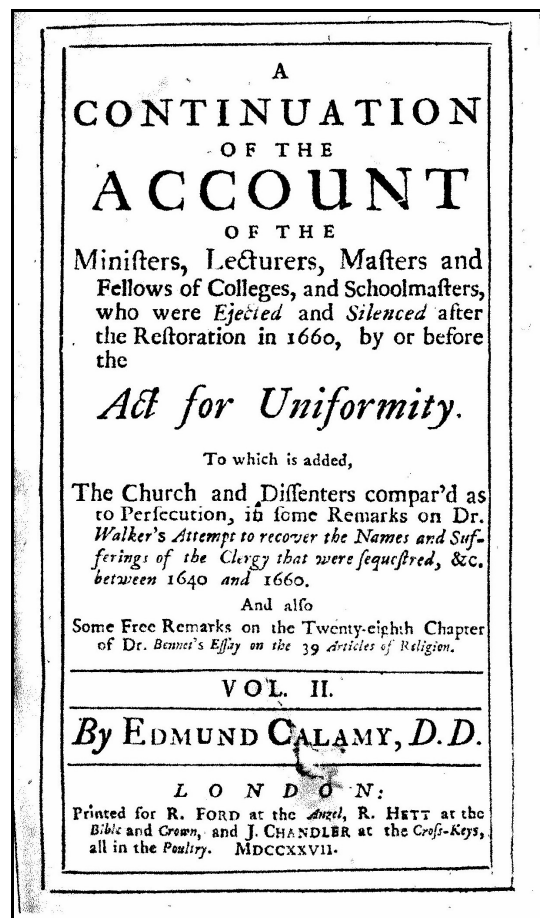
PURITANS' PROGRESS

(9)

A 350th Anniversary Commemoration of the Norwich & Norfolk Ministers Ejected from their Churches by the Act of Uniformity, 1662.

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Remember those ... who have spoken the Word of God to you,
whose faith follow,
considering the outcome of their conduct -
Jesus Christ the same yesterday, today and for ever.
(Hebrews 13: 7-8)



Introduction

Having considered the pre-1662 period (featuring **John More**, 'the Apostle of Norwich', **Robert Peck** and the 'Hingham Pilgrims', and **Jeremiah Burroughs** 'the Tivetshall Refugee'), we commenced a survey of the ejected Puritans of Norwich and Norfolk.

We recalled the powerful city ministry of local Presbyterian leader **Dr John Collinges** (St Stephen's, Norwich), followed by the ministries and sufferings of **Thomas Allen** (Norwich) and—looking westwards—of **John Horne** (King's Lynn). These men tended to be remembered because their sermons and treatises were published. Looking eastwards from Norwich to Great Yarmouth, we discovered the faithful labours of **Benjamin Snowden** and **Job Tookie**. As far as we know, none of their works were published.

Remembering the national context of the Great Ejection ('Black Bartholomew'—24 August), we 'listened' (on 23 August) to the moving 'farewell sermon' of **Edmund Calamy I** (1600-66) preached in London on 17 August 1662.

Returning to Norfolk, we again looked eastwards to learn of the effective and harmonious Great Yarmouth ministries of **John Brinsley** and **William Bridge**. Several of their works were also published. Proceeding to the north and south of Norwich, we heard about the courageous suffering of **Richard Worts** (Guestwick) and the notable labours of **John Mony** (Wymondham).

Lessons learned from these Puritans

1. The value and importance of a sanctified education.
2. The blessing of faithful service to Christ and His people.
3. The avoidance of ecclesiastical honours.
4. Perseverance in sufferings.
5. The priority of the Gospel before politics.
6. The combination of firm convictions with kindness.
7. Faithfulness in persecution, however severe.
8. Exact exegesis combined with fervency in preaching.

A Roll Call of Christ's Servants

Completing the list of Norwich & Norfolk Puritan heroes (mostly Presbyterians, others Congregational and a few who became Baptists), we should—where possible—recall the human experiences of these men and their families, as well as their staunch theological convictions.

John Butler was ejected from Feltwell. He was 'a man of sound judgement, an unblameable life, and most healthful constitution' (John Browne, *Congregationalism in Norfolk & Suffolk*, p. 367). He made a journey to Smyrna, later preaching at Harwich.

Nathaniel Mitchel was ejected from North Walsham. Married to the sister of **Dr Collinges** of Norwich, this godly pastor suffered from acute depression (or 'melancholy'), often to the point of suicide. 'Many prayers were put up to

God for him, and many made to God with him, and he himself was almost always alone upon his knees'. The LORD graciously granted relief as the years passed. 'At last he died the ordinary death of men, and quietly in his bed surrendered up his soul to God: and for some years before he died, he did little else but read and pray' (Calamy, p. 622).

Edmund Brome was ejected from Southrepps near Cromer. 'He was much esteemed for his learning, gravity, piety and moderation, and accounted an excellent preacher', says Dr Calamy, adding that 'so much was he addicted to his studies, that he left the management of all his temporal concerns to his wife' (Calamy, p. 623). This good man doubtless made time for fellowship with an ejected brother pastor **Edward Corbet** from nearby Northrepps, about whom little is known.

Ejected from Hardingham near Hingham, **Nathaniel Jocelyn** had—in 1656—preached at the funeral of **Robert Peck** who spent his last years back in Norfolk after returning from Massachusetts. **John Reynolds** of Roughton near Cromer survived his ejection by thirty years, dying on 25 December 1692. He is described as 'a humble Christian, a profitable preacher, an able catechist, and a faithful friend' (Calamy, p. 623). Another godly Presbyterian was **Elias Crabtree**, ejected from Dickleburgh near Diss.

John Lougher of Alby Hill (between Cromer and Aylsham) became pastor of a Congregational church at Southrepps after his ejection. He was a gracious, faithful and compassionate man, 'much beloved and respected by sober persons of all denominations' (Calamy, p. 624). Along with others, he was arrested and imprisoned during the Duke of Monmouth's rebellion (1685).

Remarkable for his longevity, **John Green** of Tunstead near Coltishall commenced his ministry in 1657. Being 'moderately Congregational in his judgement', he founded a church after his ejection, serving his flock for more than fifty years. When persecution threatened, he did not desert them. He 'visited them frequently, and preached to them privately, and was sometimes forced to do it in disguise, to avoid being apprehended' (Calamy, p. 624). Such was the bond of love and fellowship between John Green and one **Mr Jeffery** of North Walsham, he desired to be buried alongside his friend. Suffering severe gout and asthma in his last years, John Green died comfortably on 17 February 1709, his wish being complied with.

An example of faith in hard times is **Miles Burket** of Neatishead (with Irstead) near Wroxham. An Oxford graduate and ejected from his ministry (commenced only three months before the Act of Uniformity), this man was involved in a problematic land deal. His debts were such that he threw himself, his wife and their eight children on the King's mercy, but to no avail. While his religious enemies rejoiced, 'He would often say to those he was free with, "Tho' I have lost a great many scores of pounds by my nonconformity, yet blessed be God I never wanted." Some people upon his being turned out, would scoffingly say, "Now we shall see Burket and his family starve." But he lived to relieve some of those families that had said it, at his own door' (Calamy, p. 627).

Richard Lawrence of Trunch near Mundesley had studied at both Oxford and Cambridge. 'When he was cast out of his living, he had a wife and six

children. He afterwards crossed the seas, and was pastor of a church at Amsterdam' (Calamy, p. 627). In later years he was an assistant to Matthew Mead at Stepney and—in 1683—'upon Dr [John] Owen's death, he was solicited to supply his place' but he remained in Stepney. Constantly harassed by persecuting informers and officers, continued ministry became difficult. Wearing with constant unwelcome attention, he often longed for heaven. On the day Richard Lawrence died (17 November 1702), 'he said to his daughter, "Now child, flesh and heart fail, but (raising his voice considerably) God is the strength of my heart, and my portion forever"' (Calamy, p. 628).

John Cory was ejected from Walcott (where Dr Collinges of Norwich is buried). Despite being a brilliant Latin and Greek scholar, weak lungs and a soft voice prevented him from preaching regularly. He later taught at a private school in Norwich, dying in 1698 at the age of fifty seven.

Another university man, **William Bidbank** was pastor of the influential Congregational church at Denton near Bungay. A greatly loved pastor and preacher, he had a way with children, publishing *A Present for Children* in 1685. 'He died much lamented, about 1693' (Calamy, p. 628). **Thomas Lawson**, a graduate of St Catharine's Hall, Cambridge, also ministered at Denton. 'He was a man of parts, but had no good utterance' (Calamy, p. 629). In June 1741, Dr Philip Doddridge of Northampton was to preach at Denton during a remarkable association meeting of East Anglian Dissenters.

Another puritan refugee who went to the Netherlands was **John Reyner**. Ejected from Rollesby near Acle, he and his family lived in Rotterdam. Engaged in commerce on behalf of an English associate, John Reyner lived out his puritan principles with integrity. 'He once declared to the Lords of the Admiralty, with a great deal of solemnity, that he could appeal to the Judge of all the world, that he had never defrauded the country of one penny' (Calamy, p. 629).

William Sheldrake was ejected from Reepham. Finding the church doors shut against him after the Act of Uniformity, he turned his hand to weaving to support his family. On the death of William Bridge at Yarmouth, he served as pastor until his death in 1690.

Other heroes to be mentioned are **Richard Moore** of Diss and **Thomas Worts** of Barningham (?) (brother of courageous **Richard Worts** of Guestwick), not to forget **Robert Watson** of Bodham near Sheringham and **Samuel Alexander** of Stanfield near Gressenhall.

Two other names immediately arouse one's interest. **Christopher Amyraut** ejected from New Buckenham near Attleborough and **Paul Amyraut** ejected from Mundesley do not seem to be immediately related. The latter spent his last years as pastor of the Congregational church at Southrepps near Cromer. Neither is any connection claimed with the famous French Reformed theologian Moïse Amyraut of Saumur, France. The two Norfolk Amyrauts both published works, Paul being especially associated with a translation from Dutch of some of Martin Luther's posthumous works. Of German descent, and having been requested by a Parliamentary Committee to check an earlier translation of Luther's work with the original, there is an extant certificate which states:

According to the Direction given unto me, by this Honourable Assembly, I have with diligence compared the original printed book in Dutch,...*Luther's Divine Discourses*, with Capt. Henry Bells's translation, etc. I find the same doth agree with the original, etc. Paul Amyraut (Calamy, p. 631).

Doubtless Paul Amyraut would have enjoyed fellowship with his puritan brother **Nicolas Pitt** of Bunwell near Attleborough, about whom Calamy is able to report little. On the other hand, the ejected **Sampson Townsend** of Hackford near Wymondham was the author of a devotional work entitled *The Christian's Daily Practice; or a practical Discourse of Prayer*.

Little is said of **Robert Purt** of Barford or of a **Mr Pew** of Garveston, who, besides preaching in local churches, taught 'a flourishing school near Beccles' (Calamy, p. 631).

Others names not to be omitted are **Francis English** of St Lawrence's, Norwich, **Enoch Woodward** of St George's, Norwich, **John Hasbart** of Norwich ('a very rousing and awakening preacher'), **Mr Sheffield** of Intwood, **Samuel Maltby** of Blofield, **Charles Sumpter** of Barton (Turf?), **John Smith** of Aylmerton, **John Levinton** of Neatishead, **Nathaniel Northcross** of Walsingham, **Thomas Benton** of Pulham, **Thomas Benton**, jnr of Stratton St Michael, **John Daliel** of Swanton Morley, **John Durrant** of Stibbard, **James Gedney** of Carlton (Rode?), **John Hooker** of Greatwitch(ingham?), **Esdras Shipdam** of Oxwick, **Richard Vynne** of Drayton, **John Greenwood** of Brampton, **William Hinton** of Fornsett, **Edward Voice** of Fundenhall, **Thomas Ellis** of Lopham, **Mr Windress** of Newton St Faith's, **John Lucas** of Stalham, **John Burrough** of Blickling, **James Tailor** of Buxton, **Francis Wells** of Colby, **William Jacob** of Dunham Parva (?), **Thomas Bayes** of Earsham, **John Collins** of Haddiscoe, **Rad. Knyvet** of Lyng, **John Dominick** and **Mr Fenwick**, both of All Saints Lynn South and **John Baker** of Walsham St Lawrence.

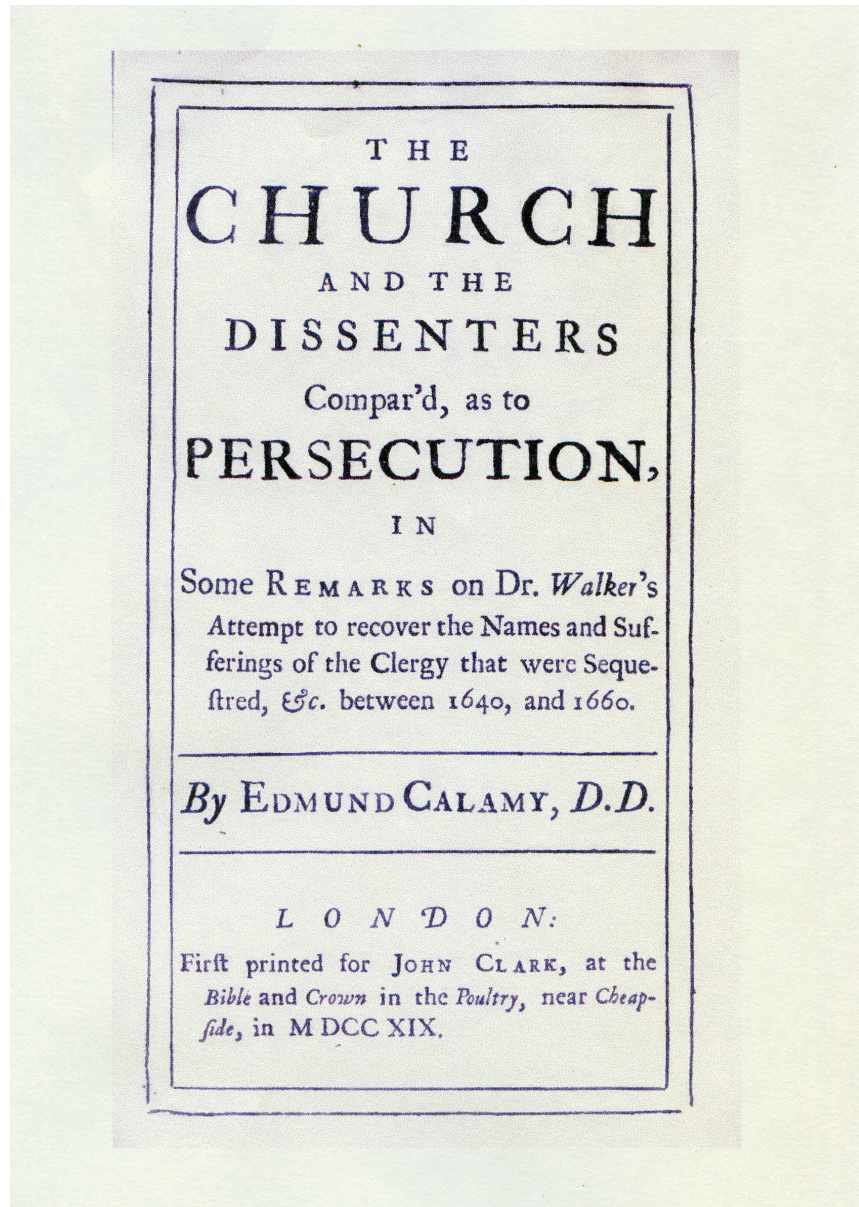
A final name of note is another university man **Richard Breviter**, who ministered at Walcott. Dr Collinges held his presbyterian (?) brother in high regard as 'a good scholar, a person of a sober life and conscientious to his principles' (Calamy, p. 632). Around the time of the ejection, Richard Breviter published a book based on a series of sermons preached at North Walsham on Psalm 89: 19. Doubtless *The Mighty Christ, the Saints Help* proved a blessing to many in those troubled times.

Typical of Dr Calamy's magnanimity is his conclusion to the section covering the ejected ministers of Norfolk., where he states (p. 632):

The collectors and compilers of a late great work, *Magna Britannia*, etc, when they come to this county of Norfolk, take particular notice of *ten sufferers for their loyalty, in the late rebellious times*, and then add, that *these are a few instances of the sufferings of the clergy of the Church of England, who suffered in this county*. And I can with a great deal of truth and safety say, that I am heartily sorry for their having been so exposed and treated, and have nothing to offer in justification of those under whom they suffered.

This raises issues to be considered in our final lecture on the Norwich and Norfolk Puritans, with reference to an important work advertised on the title

page of Dr Calamy's work on the ejected ministers. In short, truth and justice demand an investigation into the charge that five times as many Anglican clergy were cruelly mistreated by the puritan Parliamentary authorities during the years 1640-1660 compared to around 2,000 Puritans ejected by the Restoration government.



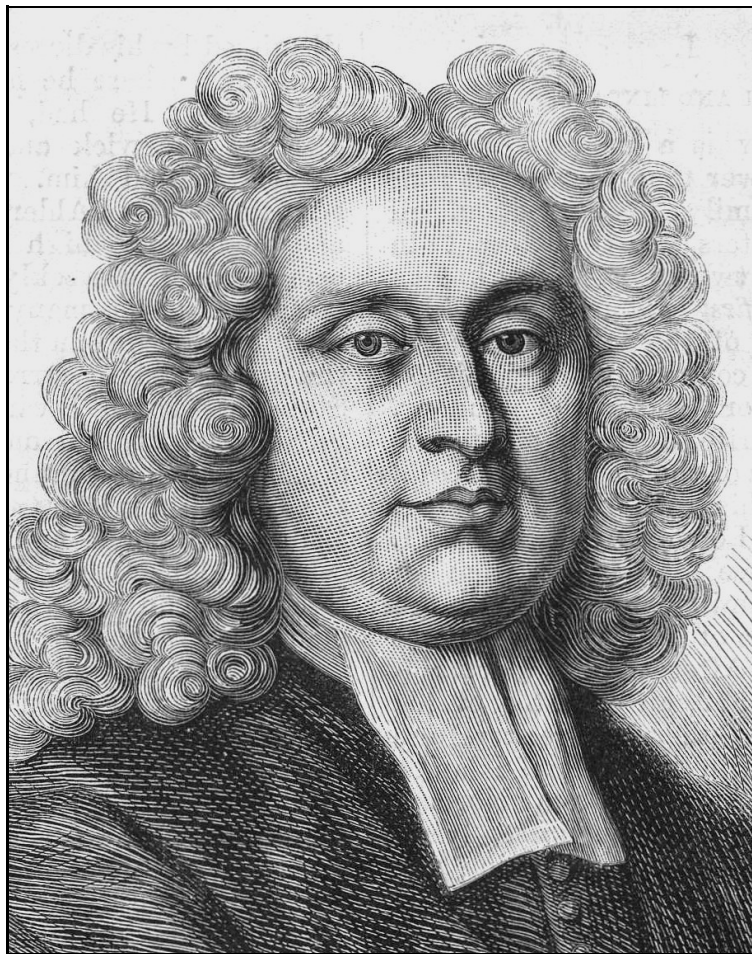
For now, we finish with J. C. Ryle's verdict on the Great Ejection of 1662:

The crowning piece of folly which the majority in the Church of England committed under the Stuarts, was procuring the Act of Uniformity to be enacted in the year 1662... This famous act imposed terms and conditions of holding office on all ministers of the Church of England which had never been

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imposed before, from the time of the

Reformation. It was notoriously so framed as to be offensive to the consciences of the Puritans, and to drive them out of the Church...Within a year no less than 2,000 clergymen resigned their livings rather than accept its terms. Many of these 2,000 were the best, the ablest, and the holiest ministers of the day... Taking all things into consideration, a more impolitic and disgraceful deed never disfigured the annals of a Protestant Church (*Light from Old Times*).



Dr Edmund Calamy
(1671-1732)