

staves, who pulled Friends out of the house, beat and abused them, and broke the windows in the presence of the constable."

So with more or less friction, with undoubted damage to the interests of true religion, went matters on until the Revolution of 1688. Then only on the accession of William did Nonconformists become free to conduct public worship in accordance with the dictates of their consciences and judgment.

The Act of Toleration was passed, and between 1689 and 1696 over 1,000 congregations or societies were formed, and by many of them were places for worship erected. These societies for the most part favored a Presbyterian polity or method of government; a minority of them were Independents and Baptists.

As to the Presbyterians, they were frequently, indeed mostly, Presbyterians only in name, or at any rate they had no more of Presbyterianism in them than to shut out the suffrages of the congregations, and rule church affairs by trustees or elders.

No presbyteries were formed or church courts set up beyond the circle of each congregation. In some cases the divergence was so small between some congregations of Presbyterians and Independents as to form no insurmountable obstacle to a coalition.

At this period—and it is worthy of note, as different meanings now attach to early designations—the terms High Church and Low Church were applied to sections of the Episcopal Establishment, a definition that arose out of another but unsuccessful attempt to revise the Book of Common Prayer. The High Church Party regarded Nonconformists as enemies—to be oppressed and vanquished or to be despised and insulted—the Low Church Party regarded Nonconformists with peaceable temper and moderation. The rancour of the High Church Party found expression in the "Occasional Conformity Act," which professed satisfaction if Nonconformists would worship and communicate in the parish church thrice in each year. Otherwise no person could be permitted to hold any office of trust.

The next Act was entitled "An Act to Prevent the Growth of Schism, and for the Security of England and Ireland." By its provisions it forbade, under severe pains and penalties, any schoolmaster, public or private, to teach any religious catechism other than the catechism of the Church of England—the only concession that Dissenters obtained was that they might have schoolmistresses and even masters to teach reading, writing and arithmetic. This Act was carried by the House of Lords.

Queen Anne died the day this statute passed into law. From her death dates a more tolerant period. Gradually all these oppressive statutes were repealed. The last dying kick of tyranny was over an attempt to impose a legal qualification on the work of teaching or preaching the gospel. In this case the more recently established Society of Methodists made common cause with Nonconformists and united action prevailed.

John Angel James, the notable minister of Carr's Lane, from whose writings on English Nonconformity the foregoing summary is largely extracted, thus sums up when writing of the status of religious freedom in or about 1833:

"The vine and the fig tree under which we repose in tranquil security and unmolested enjoyment were planted amidst the tears, and sprinkled with the blood of other generations—the storms of persecution rolled over them, the lightnings of which often scattered them, but an invisible but omnipotent power afforded them protection, and now in their ample shadow we are feasting on their precious fruit. If any man finds now more cause for discontent than gratitude, let him contrast his liberty with the prison, the scaffold, the stake of his martyred ancestors—and if