

and representations of it that their teachers had given them. Mr. Muirson baptized about twenty-five, most grown people at Stradford." This was the first step that was made towards introducing the Church worship into this Colony. Mr. Muirson gave the same account of his journey, adding, that the people invited him to come again to them. Accordingly, in April, 1707, he visited them, and Colonel Heathcote was pleased to go again with him. They now found the people much more earnest to have the Church worship settled, and the Independents more incensed; the Ministers and magistrates were remarkably industrious, going from house to house, busying themselves, and persuading the people from hearing Mr. Muirson, and threatening those with punishment and imprisonment who would go to hear him preach. Mr. Muirson describes their opposition in these words. "One of their magistrates, with some other officers, came to my lodgings, and in the hearing of Colonel Heathcote and a great many people, read a paper; the meaning of it was, to let me know, that I had done an illegal thing, in coming among them to establish a new way of worship, and to forewarn me from preaching any more. And this he did by virtue of one of their laws, the words of which, as he expressed them, were these. Be it enacted, &c. *'That there shall be no Ministry or Church Administration entertained or attended by the inhabitants of any town or plantation in this Colony, distinct and separate from, and in opposition to, that which is openly and publicly observed and dispensed by the approved Minister of the place.'* Now, whatever interpretation the words of the said law may admit of, yet we are to regard the sense and force they put upon them; which is plainly this, to exclude the Church their Government, as appears by their proceedings with me. So that hereby they deny a liberty of conscience to the Church of England people, as well as to all others that are not of their opinion; which being repugnant to the laws of England, is contrary to the grant of their charter.

But these methods which the Independents used, were so far from hindering the people from resorting to the Church service, that still greater numbers came; and other towns sent and invited Mr. Muirson to visit them. Particularly the people of Fairfield requested him to come, and he went to them. The Independents refused him and the people the use of the meeting-house, though on a week day. But a gentleman, the chief person in the town, invited them to his house, a great congregation met there, and he baptized a large number. Mr. Muirson made several journies up and down this Colony and was a kind of itinerant missionary. The Independents used all means to obstruct him; Mr. Muirson wrote to the Society, with much concern, an account of the methods taken to hinder the people from hearing him. "The people were likewise threatened with imprisonment, and a forfeiture of five pound for coming to hear me. It would require more time than you would willingly bestow on these lines, to express how rigidly and severely they treat our people, by taking their estates by distress when they do not willingly pay to support their Ministers;