

1648. The Congregational Churches in New England, numbering forty-two in the five colonies, held their second general synod at Cambridge, which assembly was composed of the ministers and messengers of the churches. At this synod what is called the "Cambridge Platform" was adopted as the form of church discipline.

1653. Oliver Cromwell, a member of the persecuted Congregational denomination, having overcome all armed opposition to the freedom of the State, and having dissolved the Long Parliament, became Chief Magistrate of the Commonwealth, and at Westminster Hall was invested with the office of supreme governor under the title of "Lord Protector," which position he held until his death.

1655. The Duke of Savoy began his horrid persecutions of the descendants of the Waldensians, those great evangelists of the Middle Ages, which caused Milton to write those lines beginning with: "Avenge, O Lord thy slaughtered saints," and evoked a message from Cromwell which saved them from further destruction; and to this day the Waldensian ministers are supported in part by money that he raised for them and put to interest.

1656. The doctrine of the complete separation of Church and State, was propounded by Milton and other leading Congregationalists.

1658. At the request of the Congregationalists of the Commonwealth, Oliver Cromwell convened a synod at London, at the Savoy, which was composed of representatives of 120 churches. This assembly adopted "A Declaration of Faith and Order owned and practised in the Congregational Churches in England." This is called the "Savoy Declaration." Previous to the assembly the Lord Protector died, namely, on September 3rd, the anniversary of his famous battles of Dunbar and Worcester.

1660. Charles II. returned to England, and was crowned King. On the evening of his arrival in London, while thanksgivings were being offered up for the safety of the Church and State, and "groups of Royalists gathered around buckets of wine in the streets, and drank the King's health on their knees," he took advantage of the enthusiasm of the evening to "debauch a beautiful woman of nineteen, the wife of one of his subjects."

1661. The Proclamation against Conventicles was issued, prohibiting Dissenters from meeting together in private assemblies for religious worship. The remains of Cromwell, Ireton and Bradshaw were dug up, and hanged at Tyburn.

1662. The Act of Uniformity was passed, enjoining uniformity in all matters of religion, and obliging all ministers to subscribe to the Thirty-nine Articles, use the same Forms of Worship, and the same Book of Common Prayer. It was enforced on the 24th day of August, called "Black Bartholomew," when 2,000 ministers, who for conscience sake could not subscribe, were ejected from the Church of England, and thus the term "Nonconformist" arose. Sir Henry Vane, a Congregationalist who had been the first to proclaim the principles of Civil and Religious Liberty on the floor of the British House of Commons, was executed at Tower Hill, London. There were at this time 66 Congregational churches in New England, 50 of them being in Massachusetts. Besides there were only four other churches, three Baptists and one Quaker.

1664. The Conventicle Act was passed, which had the effect of crowding the gaols of the kingdom. It provided that if more than five persons assembled for prayer or worship in private assemblies, they were to be fined and imprisoned.

1665. The Five-Mile Act was passed, prohibiting Nonconformist ministers or teachers from coming within five miles of any Corporation where they had preached at any time during the previous five years, under a penalty of forty pounds.

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