

# THE GENESIS OF CHRIST CHURCH, STRATFORD, CONNECTICUT

BACKGROUND AND EARLIEST ANNALS

COMMEMORATION OF THE TWO HUNDRED FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY

1707-1957

By

**KENNETH WALTER CAMERON**

ARCHIVIST AND HISTORIOGRAPHER

DIOCESE OF CONNECTICUT

WITH AN APPENDIX BY CAROLYN HUTCHENS

CHRIST CHURCH  
STRATFORD, CONNECTICUT

1957

IN MEMORY OF THE FAITHFUL UNDERGROUND MOVEMENT  
OF LOYAL ANGLICANS IN STRATFORD  
THIS LITTLE HISTORY IS

DEDICATED

TO  
THE LONELY CATHOLIC  
WHO  
AMIDST UNCONGENIAL SURROUNDINGS  
MISUNDERSTOOD,  
CRITICIZED, AND EMOTIONALLY STARVED  
STILL, BY HIS ACTIONS, BOLDLY PROCLAIMS  
HIS UNSWERVING FAITH  
AND WHO  
IN A DARK PLACE  
KEEPS THE LIGHT OF HIS DEVOTION  
BURNING BRIGHTLY BEFORE  
HIS SAVIOUR'S  
EARTHLY THRONE

"But are you a Catholic?" said Cotgrave.

"Yes; I am a member of the persecuted Anglican Church."

(*The House of Souls. The White People*, by Arthur Machen.)

---

"As for my religion I was brought up in the Church of England as it is established by Law and have ever professed it; though I confess I have been an unworthy member of it in not living up to the strict and excellent rules thereof for which I take shame to myself and humbly ask forgiveness of God. My religion taught me my loyalty which I bless God is untainted."

(From the dying speech of Sir John Fenwick, Baronet, given in *The Tryal, Attainder, or Condemnation of Sir John Fenwick, Baronet*. Printed at the Hague, 1697. From a copy in the author's historical collection.)

---

"I profess myself and I thank God I am a member of the Church of England though, God knows, a most unworthy and unprofitable part of it; of that Church which suffers so much at present for a strict adherence to loyalty and Christian principles."

(From the dying speech of Joseph Frind, executed April 3, 1696, for high treason. Taken from a contemporary manuscript, written at the time of the execution.)



viz., Ripton, within 14 miles of my former people, who are addressing the Honourable Society for its favours, where I would gladly be ordered, (at least for the present,) if their request should be granted.

If this be not practicable, I should be thankful if the Honourable Society would permit me to succeed Mr. Dean, Catechist, at New-York; and finally, if nothing can be done whereby I might be enabled to serve the designs of the Hon-

ourable Society in or near my own country, though I must confess it would be with the greatest reluctance that I should leave it, yet such is my affection to the Church of England, and especially to the glorious designs of that venerable body, that I hope I shall be contented, (if it should admit me into its service, which is what I humbly desire,) wheresoever it shall be pleased to send me.

SAMUEL JOHNSON.

1723, March 22: From Samuel Johnson's Diary:<sup>114</sup> "This day in the morning, 10 of the clock, we waited on the Right Rev<sup>d</sup> Thomas [Green], Lord Bishop of Norwich, and at the parish church of St Martin-in-the-Fields, after morning Prayer, we were first confirmed and then ordained Deacons."

1723, March 31: From the same source:<sup>115</sup> "This day at 6 in the morning, Sunday, at the church of St Martin-in-the-Fields, at the continued appointment and desire of William, Lord Abp. of Canterbury, and John, Lord Bishop of London, we were ordained Priests most gravely by the Right Rev<sup>d</sup> Thomas [Green], Lord Bp. of Norwich, who afterwards preached an excellent sermon from Rom. 11. 4."

1723, September 22: The Yale men reached America from England.<sup>116</sup>

1723, November 4: Samuel Johnson arrived in Stratford,<sup>117</sup> relieving George Pigot of responsibilities so that he might hasten to his labors in Providence, Rhode Island. With Johnson's eventful ministry here I am not concerned this morning, except to state that he began it under the heavy restraints of Connecticut law.

1727: The Assembly passed the Act of Toleration, exempting Anglicans from contributing to the support of the ministers of the Congregational and Presbyterian persuasion and from sharing the cost of erecting Protestant meeting-houses. Even so, inequalities continued to exist, as may be seen in the document of 1738 (below), which among other matters includes a reference to the Parish School in Stratford which Dr. Johnson founded soon after his arrival.

1729: An Abstract of the Proceedings of the S.P.G. (1728-1729), pp. 46-47, will indicate that Johnson's reports to the Society were regularly received:<sup>118</sup>

From the Reverend Mr. Johnson, Minister at Stratford in Connecticut, That he has baptized Mr. Mordecai Marks, a Jew, (who is a very worthy Profelyte, and a steady Communicant) as also two native Indians, both Adult, two Adult Negroes, and two Negro Children, and several other Children the last half year; And that the number of actual Communicants in Stratford and Places adjacent (exclusive of Fairfield Parish) is 86, six of which were admitted the last half year.

From the Reverend Dr. Cutler, Minister at Christ Church in Boston, That he has baptized near 30 Infants and two Adults, and has received 8 Persons to the Communion, of Sobriety and unspotted Character; and that his People generally attend the publick Worship every Sunday with good Order and Devotion.

From the Reverend Mr. Honeyman, Minister at Newport in Rhode Island, That his Church is in a flourishing Condition, and that within the last two Years he hath baptized Eighty Eight, fourteen of which were Adults.

From the Reverend Mr. Pigot, Minister at Marblehead in New England, That his Church both there and at Salem increases very much, having since his last baptized forty five Persons, four whereof were Adults, Three White People, and One Negro; received eleven to the Communion, and prepared several others against his next administering.

From the Reverend Mr. Miller, Minister at Braintree in New England, That since he hath been there he hath baptized Eleven Children, and the number of his Communicants is Seventeen . . . .

1738, May: From many parts of Connecticut, Church of England people sent to the General Assembly lists of petitioners for equal benefits in the returns and profits from the sale of lands in the Western Townships. The important appeal accompanying their signatures is edited here for the first time:<sup>119</sup>

To the Hon<sup>ble</sup> The Governour Council & Representatives of his Majesties English Colony of Connecticut in General Court to be Assembled at Hartford in the Said Colony, on the Secund thursday of May Next, being in the year of our Lord 1738.-- The Humble Address of the Members & professors of that part of Christs Church called the Church of England Living in And under the Government of the Said Colony—  
May it please your Honour, and the Hon<sup>ble</sup> General Court,



We the Subscribers Members & Professors of the Church of England, living in this His Majesty's Colony of Connecticut, being his Majesties most Dutyfull & Loyal Subjects & Sincerely well attached to the Constitution of this Government, do humbly beg Leave To lay an Address before y<sup>r</sup> Honour & this Assembly, relating to An Affair which as we apprehend does very nearly concern us.

And that this our Address may meet with the more favourable Reception, we would in the Entrance thereof, assure your Honour and this Assembly, that (however we may be misrepresented) we are in no wise disaffected to this Corporation as it is incorporated by Royal Charter, but Do bear an hearty Affection To its Constitution and the Priviledges thereof: and Do therefore beg y<sup>t</sup> nothing we have To offer may be interpreted as Savouring of Any Dissatisfaction or any Aim at undermining it, or interrupting the peace of it, in the peace whereof we Seek our Peace.

In this Good Opinion, & cordial Affection to the Constitution and Government of this Corporation, we have been much confirm'd from the Consideration of that Impartial Justice observable from time To time in the members of this Assembly, Constituting the Legislative Power of this Colony: A perticular Instance wherof we have Experienced in that generous & Just Act of Assembly passed in May in the year 1727, wherby the Professors of y<sup>o</sup> Church of England are Exempted from contributing To the Support of the Ministers of the Congregational or Presbyterian persuasion, which are those that are perticularly countenanced by the Laws of this Government, & from paying towards building Meeting Houses, where Such professors of the Church of England have the Advantage of Attending Divine Service according to the Rules and Methods of publick Worship established in England: And the same Act provides for the Support of their own Ministers and their own method of worshiping God.

From whence we conclude that it is the Opinion of the Legislature of this Government, that it is not only, not Right To compel People To the Support of that Worship & Ministry which they Soberly differ from; but also that it is Just and Right for every one to have the benefit of his own Way of Worship & of his own labour & estate, to Support y<sup>t</sup> way of worship which he sincerely believes to be right: And therefore we persuade our Selves that it is in consistant with the received & allowed Principles of this Legislature To oblige us by any Ways or Means, To contribute to the Support of the Churches or Ministry perticularly countenanced by the Laws of this Government.

That therefore which gives Occasion To this Address is, that we have been informed that an act was passed in the last Assembly, held att New-Haven Respecting the Seven Townships laid out in the western Lands belonging to this Corporation of which we Are Members, whereby the Moneys arising from the Sale of those Lands, was appropriated Either to the Use of the Schools, or to the Support of the Ministers of the Presbyterian or Congregational persuasion, (being those perticularly countenanced by the Laws of this Government) to be Divided to the several parishes in proportion To their several Lists, & this in such a Manner that we of the Church of England, cannot according to the Tenor of the S<sup>d</sup> Act, claim any Share of them, for the Support of our ministers or Schools: And that there was a bill prepared And passed in the lower House which we are Told may probably pass thro the whole Legislature at this Assembly, whereby the publick Monies Arising from the Loan of the Last Emission were also To be appropriated to the Support of the Ministers aforesaid peculiarly Countenanced by the Laws of this Government in a manner that would exclude us from having any Share in the Same for the Support of the Ministers of the Church of England---

Now these proceedings of the Last General Assembly are what we humbly beg Leave with all due Deference to your Honour & this Assembly to object to. Not that we are in the least invidious towards our brethren of the congregational persuasion, or would aim at hindring the passing of the Bill last mentioned into An Act, so far from this that we do heartily applaud so Good and generous a Disposition in that Assembly in being concern'd to provide a certain & sufficient Support for the Ministers of Religion in this Colony; But because it appears to us that it would be A Manifest Injustice for us to be Denied our Share in those publick Monies, for the Support of our Ministers, and that therefore according to the known And received Principles of this Legislature (as appears by the Act above mentioned) the sd act & Bill ought To have been formed in Such A manner as to secure to us our Proportion of the Said publick Monies, as well as to our Brethren of any other Denomination. And that for these Reasons

1. Because the Doctrines and Principles of the Church of England do professedly & most certainly tend (at least equally with those of any other Persuasion) not only to fit & prepare men for eternal Happyness in the Life To come, but also to promote the publick Good of Society in this World, by teaching them to be sober virtuous & industrious in their Callings, Serious & Devout towards God, & Just & Charitable towards men, & in every respect to be good Christians, kind Neighbours Upright Majestrates dutyfull Subjects, and faithfull & conscientious in every Relation & Condition of Life: & consequently her Professors ought to have the like Equitable & favourable Treatment, with those of any other Denomination of Christians.

2. Because the Church of England is that Profession & Persuasion which is established in our Mother Country at home, and which his most sacred Majesty professeth, & has bound himself by Oath to Maintaine, from whom we receive & under whom we hold our Charter Priviledges, & who therefore, with those in the Government & Administration under him, will be apt to resent any unequal Treatment which the members of that Church may receive from the Provinces Abroad, under his Majesties Government and Protection: and we Should be very Sorry To have any thing done among us that may tend to bring his Majesties Displeasure upon this Corporation.

3. Because the Wellfare and Happyness of this as well as all other Governments depends upon the Union &



Joint Endeavours of all the Members of it in Promoting one & the same common Good & General Interest: whereas an unequal Treatment of different Denominations of Christians is apt to breed Envy Animosities, & Contentions, which necessarily Tend to weaken the Hands of Government, destroy the publick Tranquillity and procure a great many Disadvantages to the general Weel & Prosperity of the Government.

4 Because it has been once and again delivered as the Judgment of the Attorney & Solicitor General at home, & by the Lords Justices (During the Kings Absence in the Year 1725) in their Letter to the Lieutenant Governour of Boston (all which we are ready to produce) that there is not, & cannot be any Such thing as a regular Establishment of any one Denomination of Christians in these Colonies to the Exclusion of the rest, without an explicit Consent of his most Sacred Majesty: (the Same also appears from the late Letters of the Bishop of London and Society to the Ministers of Hampshire) And consequently we standing at least upon an equal Foot with our Brethren of any other Denomination, have an equal Right with them in any common Interest, & particularly To have our proportionable Share in any publick Monies that have or may be granted for the Support of the Ministry or Schools.

5. Because (as we humbly presume) we have equally a Right in Equity to our proportion in those unoccupied Lands with our Brethren of any other Denomination, forasmuch as all the Lands with in the Bound of this Government, being purchased or conquered by our Common Progenitors or Ancestors, were by the Royal Charter alike granted & confirmed according To their Several proportions of the Rights, To the whole Corporation consisting of the Body of the People, that is To all that are free of this Government, with their Successors & assigns, To be held for their common use and Benefit, and this without limiting them to those of any particular Sentiments in Matters of Religion: & consequently those Unoccupied Lands are their common Estate & Interest: so that none of their Descendants or Assigns can be Equitably excluded from the Benefit of any Sale or Disposition to be made of them, whatever Denomination they are of in Matters of Religion.

6 Because we bear an equal Proportion in the publick Taxes for supporting the Government, and for paying the Members of the Assembly who are our common Representitives, & that while they are consulting & passing acts for the Publick weel, yea even while they are consulting Measures for the Disposing of this very Money, As also for defraying the Cost of all the Emissions of the publick Bill of Credit, & for Supporting the Credit of them (which Taxes we have always been cheerfully willing To pay) and consequently the Loan of any Emissions of them being a Common Interest, we presume we have a Right to an Equally proportionable Share in the Benefit accruing therefrom with those of any other Denomination, according to that Just Maxim in the Law (Qui sentit onus, sentire debet et commodum i e: he that feels a Share in the burthen, ought also to Enjoy his Share in the Advantage.

7<sup>thly</sup> And Lastly, That which gives us the greater Reason to insist upon this, is that the Said Act & Bill appear to us to have a manifest Inconsistency with the intent of the Act first Above-Mentioned, passed in the last Year of his late Majesties Reign, whereby the Members of the Church of England were exempted from paying to the Support of the Ministers of the Congregational Persuasion, & Provision was made that their Proportion of the Ministers Rate, Should go to the Support of their own Ministers: Whereas according to the Tenor of the Act and Bill above mentioned we Should be obliged to contribute our Proportion towards the Support of the Congregational Ministry, from which by this Act we had been Exempted, — And by the way we would take this Occasion to observe, that the Like inconsistency we humbly apprehend there is between the Intent of the Said Act, and the grants that have been made by some late Acts of Assembly of certain Sums of Money out of the Treasury of this Colony to the Parishes of west-Haven & North-Groton of which we are laid under a Necessity of paying our Proportion by paying our Country Rates: (Not To Mention the Contrivance that has been made use of in Some Places to elude the intent of this Act by comprehending the Ministers Support in the Town Rate, and thereby obliging us To contribute to the Support of y<sup>e</sup> Congregational Minister by paying our town Rate.)

Upon the whole therefore, what we humbly intreat, and for these Reasons beg leave to expect from your Honour and this General Assembly, is, that Some Alteration may be made in our Favour of the Act Above-mentioned, & that Some Amendment may be made of the Bill proposed by the late House of Representatives if it Should again come under Consideration: so that we may be Secured of our Proportion of those publick Monies Towards the Support of our Ministers, and that our Schools also where we have any peculiar To ourselves, May have their proportional Benefit of the Said Act, as also of the 40 Shillings upon the 1000 which has hitherto been denied to the School of the Church of England at Stratford. ←

And To Conclude, as we Should be verry sorry to be laid under any Temptation to complain of any unequal Treatment from the Government under whose Protection we live; so we do most humbly intreat that, Not only on this, but all other Occasions that may at any time occur, Your Honours would be pleased to consider us as a part of your selves, and that we may have equal Justice done us, & the like Favours shewed us with the rest of our Brethren, with whom we desire to live in peace and Charity, & to joyn Heart & Hand in promoting the publick Weel of this Government, (on which that of our Selves & Posterity does also depend) as being Fellow Members of this Corporation, & Fellow Subjects of his Majesty Under the Jurisdiction of this Colony. In hopes of which (as in Duty bound) we Shall ever pray for the Health and Happyness of your Honours & all the Members of this Assembly, And for the Peace & Prosperity of this Colony.

[One hundred and two Stratford Churchmen signed as being "Under the pastoral Care of the Rev<sup>d</sup> M<sup>r</sup> Johnson of Stratford"—first the "Church Wardens;" then "Vestry;" and finally "The other people."



Under the pastoral care  
of the Rev. Mr. Johnson  
of Stratford to the number  
of 102

Church Wardens

Samuel Fairchild

James Laborie

Charles Lee

Vestry 330b

William Beach

Gershon Edwards

Miller Frost

Thomas Lett

John Benjamin

Abraham Beardley

John Lee

Samuel Blegge

Israel French

Will. Wilcockson

Joseph Moore

William Smith

Eliphalet Curtis

Francis Parlow

Zechariah Clarke

Other people

James Wakeley

Gulien Wilcockson

Daniel Wakeley

Ebenzer Wakeley

Israel Beardley

Edmund Booth

James Fairchild

Samuel Fairchild

Ephraim Fairchild

George Tyley

Paul Maverie

Samuel Hawley

Edward Hinman

Thos. Hill

Richard Burton

Zechariah Burtin

Andrew Beardley

John Lane

Jacob Lane

Timothy Tittaxton

Timothy Tittaxton

Jehiel Beardley

Joseph Wilcockson

Charles Curtis

Benjamin Blackman

Timothy Blackman

John Hawley

Thomas Stratton

En Tree

D. Loring



Benjamin Pearce  
 Thomas Silby  
 Francis Barlow  
 William Smith  
 William Smith junr  
 William Beardley  
 William Beardley jun  
 Ebenezer Beardley  
 Samuel Beardley  
 Ezer Beardley  
 John Wheeler  
 Ebenezer Hubbel  
 David Peat  
 Joseph Peat  
 Samuel French junr  
 Jeremiah French  
 Thomas Salmon  
 Thomas Scudamore  
 Will. Scudamore  
 John French  
 Jonathan French  
 Isaac Clarke  
 John Clarke  
 Samuel Preston  
 Stephen Frost  
 Matthew Horn  
 Richard Hubbel  
 Richard Blackleach  
 Robert Wheeler  
 John Mallit junr

George Wydaman  
 Joseph Shilton  
 Daniel Shilton  
 Thaddeus Shilton  
 Samuel Shilton  
 James Shilton  
 Josiah Shilton  
 Shabod Clarke  
 Ebenezer Sherman  
 Caleb Beardley  
 John Beardley  
 Francis Hawley  
 Jonathan Hawley  
 Jacob Baldwin  
 Benjamin Cogswell  
 Abraham Pulling  
 Elisha Blagge  
 Joseph Collins  
 W. Nicoll  
 Don<sup>am</sup> Edwards  
 Ben Nicoll  
 George Clarke  
 Nathaniel Lewis  
 Joseph Nichols  
 Hugh Curvey