

J.R.Broome
A Bruised Reed

The Life and Times
of
Anne Steele



A BRUISED REED

Anne Steele:
Her Life and Times

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**ANNE STEELE:
Her Life and Times**

by

J. R. Broome

Together with Anne Steele's Hymns, Psalms and a Selection of
her Prose Works

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Cover Picture: Broughton House,
Her brother's house,
the home of Anne Steele
from 1769 to 1778.

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Contents

PART I

	Page
Acknowledgements.....	6
List of Illustrations.....	8
Preface.....	9
1. An Age of Intolerance [1645-1688].....	13
2. A Child of Dissenters [1688-1720].....	43
3. A Daughter of Broughton [1720-32].....	61
4. In the Spring of Life [1733-48].....	84
5. In the Prime of Life [1749-60].....	119
6. A Natural Talent [1743-60].....	151
7. A Father's Need [1760-69].....	177
8. Sorrow and Suffering [1769-78].....	203
9. A Brother Beloved [1778-85].....	223
Index.....	244
Bibliography.....	253

PART II

Hymns of Anne Steele.....	257
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PART III

Psalms attempted in Verse.....	313
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PART IV

Prose Works of Anne Steele.....	333
---------------------------------	-----

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Extract from Mrs. Steele's Diary.....	347
Appendix II – A Sermon of William Steele.....	357
Appendix III – A Hymn by James Fanch and Daniel Turner.....	383

Acknowledgements

Having come to Trowbridge in September 1959, to take up a teaching post at the Trowbridge Boys' High School, I attended the Strict Baptist chapel in The Halve. Among the people there was an old couple whose names were Arthur and Bessie Townsend. Arthur had been to a sale at the Auctioneers, Quartley Son & White, in Trowbridge and purchased a sack of books for a few shillings. Among these books was a first edition of Anne Steele's Hymns, in two volumes, published in 1760. When I visited his home in 1964, Arthur gave me the two volumes.

This occurrence led to an interest in Anne Steele. I took the two volumes to Baynton's, the Antique Bookseller, in Manvers Street, Bath, and they rebound them in leather, keeping the original maroon titles from the spine, milling the edges of the new leather cover and replacing the flyleaves with handmade paper. Now they were usable and I set about researching the life of Anne Steele and her family. I discovered that her grandfather [on her mother's side] was buried in the main nave of Edington Priory, that her stepmother, Anne Steele [née Cator], had grown up on Trowle Common, near Trowbridge and that Anne herself had been at school in Trowbridge in 1729.

In 1967 I reprinted, in paperback, Anne Steele's hymns as published in the 1863 Edition of Daniel Sedgwick together with a brief memoir of her life and family history, as I then knew it. There followed many visits to Broughton, Anne Steele's home village in Hampshire, where I met Ethel Davis, a member of the Particular Baptist Church of which Anne Steele had formerly been a member, and the local historian of the village, who lived to be well over ninety and died in 1999. I also visited *Grandfathers*, Anne Steele's old home and met Nita Bompas, a direct descendant, and Rev. Langdon, another relative living in the village. I was shown the original Church Books, dating back to 1655, by Miss Ayles, treasurer of the Baptist chapel. [These church books are now housed in the Angus Library of Regent's Park Baptist College, Oxford.] I remember finding the date of Anne Steele's baptising recorded in the Church Book as 9th July 1732, and being allowed to examine and copy extracts from these old records.

At the same time I visited the Wiltshire Record Office at Trowbridge and with the help of the County Archivist, Ken Rogers, and his staff, researched the seventeenth and eighteenth-century history of the Particular Baptists in Wiltshire from Sedgehill in the south to Erlestoke and Devizes in the east. In this I was greatly indebted to the late Dr Marjorie Reeves and her research in the chapter on *Protestant Nonconformity in Wiltshire* in Volume III of the Victoria County History. In March 1979 I came into

contact, through the publication of my paperback, with the owner of the Steele family archive, Hugh Steele-Smith of Ilkley in Yorkshire. He had inherited a large collection of family records, diaries, wills, letters, manuscript poetry and oil paintings and had researched them extensively. I am indebted to him for his work and generosity in sharing it with me, constantly sending me photocopies of his material. He died on 29th December 1999 and was buried at Bolton Abbey. He bequeathed the larger part of the Steele archive to the Angus Library at Regent's Park Baptist College, Oxford. Other relevant material he deposited with the Hampshire Record Office and the Bristol Record Office. A copy of a selection of the Steele archive at the Angus Library is held on microfilm at the Bodleian Library and also in the Wiltshire Record Office.

About 1975 an archive containing Steele material was discovered at *Yew Trees*, Bratton, Wiltshire, the home of the Whitaker family, connected to the Steeles through Anne Steele's stepmother, Anne Steele [née Cator]. This archive came into the possession of the late Dr Marjorie Reeves, whose mother was a Whitaker. She allowed me to view the material soon after she took possession of it and gave me photocopies of it. Since then she has published her own research in a book entitled *Pursuing the Muses* [Leicester University Press 1997], which deals, among other things, with the poetry and letters of the literary circle of which Anne Steele was the central figure.

I have been grateful for the help of Stephen Pickles of Oxford, who has researched the Steele archive at the Angus Library and spent his dinner hours for many years in copying sermons, diaries etc. for my use. His work has been invaluable. I am grateful also to Mrs S. Mills, Librarian of the Angus Library, for helping him in his researches and granting permission to publish William Steele III's sermons and to quote at length from the Steele archive.

I am indebted to the Steele family descendants, who wish to remain anonymous, for allowing me to photograph and publish five oil paintings in their possession, being those of Anne Steele's brother, William Steele IV; Mary Steele (Polly), daughter of his first wife, Mary Steele (née Bullock); William Steele IV's second wife, Martha Steele, and their two daughters, Anne and Martha. Photography of these was by Neil J. Broome. I am also similarly indebted to the owner of the oil paintings of William Steele IV in his youth, and of *Broughton House and Farm* circa 1820 for permission to reproduce them. Photography was by Sebastiaan Hartman. Finally I acknowledge my gratitude to Caleb Pearce and John Kingham for their work with the illustrations and the text, in preparing the book for publication.

J.R.B.

List of Illustrations

Figure 1: The Froude Family Tree.....	12
Figure 2: Sweetwell Farm (now demolished).....	14
Figure 3: Edington Priory.....	21
Figure 4: The Froude Graves at Edington Priory.....	22
Figure 5: The Steele Family Tree.....	42
Figure 6: ‘Grandfathers’ (Frontispiece of Daniel Sedgwick’s 1863 Edition of Anne Steele’s Hymns).....	56
Figure 7: The Gravestone of William Steele’s Two Wives.....	57
Figure 8: The Cator Family Tree.....	60
Figure 9: The Salisbury Coach Road at Tinhead.....	63
Figure 10: Conigre Parsonage in Trowbridge.....	67
Figure 11: St John’s Church, Devizes.....	69
Figure 12: Sermon Notes of Richard Gay.....	71
Figure 13: Inscription in a Book of Bunyan’s Works, presented to Richard Gay.....	72
Figure 14: Haycombe from Englishcombe Churchyard.....	73
Figure 15: ‘Grandfathers’.....	75
Figure 16: Map of the Hampshire/Wiltshire Area.....	83
Figure 17: The Attwaters’ House at Bodenham.....	93
Figure 18: Bratton Particular Baptist Chapel 1734.....	94
Figure 19: Benjamin Beddome’s Manse at Bourton-on-the-Water (now a hotel).....	113
Figure 20: The George Inn, Tinhead.....	122
Figure 21: North Parade, Bath.....	123
Figure 22: George Whitefield.....	127
Figure 23: James Hervey.....	140
Figure 24: Title Page of ‘Theron and Aspasio’.....	142
Figure 25: Title Page of the First Edition of Anne Steele’s Hymns.....	154
Figure 26: Isaac Watts.....	159
Figure 27: Facsimile of the Hymn ‘Father of Mercies...’.....	164
Figure 28: Facsimile of the Hymn ‘When sins and fears...’.....	171
Figure 29: Facsimile of the Hymn ‘Dear Lord, and shall...’.....	174
Figure 30: Facsimile of a Page from Mrs Steele’s Diary.....	176
Figure 31: Title Page of ‘Verses for Children’.....	181
Figure 32: Gibbs Family Memorial Stone, Englishcombe.....	184
Figure 33: ‘Yew Trees’, Bratton.....	187
Figure 34: Old Baptist Chapel, Broughton, 1813.....	192
Figure 35: Ben Street and Cottage.....	198
Figure 36: Facsimile of a Page from Jane Attwater’s Diary.....	202
Figure 37: Title Page of ‘Miscellaneous Pieces’, published 1780.....	210
Figure 38: Anne Steele’s Gravestone.....	215
Colour Plates: William Steele in his youth, Polly Steele.....	225
William Steele in later life, Martha Steele 1734-1791.....	226
Anne Steele 1769-1859, Martha Steele 1771-1834.....	227
Broughton House and Farm, Broughton Village as seen from the Downs.....	228
Figure 39: Dutch Barn beside ‘Broughton House’.....	233
Figure 40: Anne Tomkins in her Old Age.....	242
Figure 41: The Bompas Family Tree.....	243

Preface

An extract from the preface to the three-volume edition of Anne Steele's Works, published in Bristol in 1780, written by Dr. Caleb Evans, President of the Bristol Baptist Academy.

As the life of Theodosia [Anne Steele] was for the most part a life of retirement in the peaceful village [Broughton, Hants] where she began and ended her days, it cannot be expected to furnish such a variety of incidents as arise in the history of those who have moved in circles of greater activity. The duties of friendship and religion occupied her time, and the pleasures of both constituted her delight. Her heart was 'apt to feel' too often to a degree too painful for her own felicity [happiness], but always with the most tender and generous sympathies for her friends. Yet united with this exquisite sensibility, she possessed a native cheerfulness of disposition, of which not even the uncommon and agonising pains she endured in the latter part of her life could deprive her. In every short interval of abated suffering, she would in a variety of ways, as well as by her enlivening conversation, give pleasure to all around her. Her life was a life of unaffected humility, warm benevolence, sincere friendship and genuine devotion. A life, which it is not easy truly to describe, or faithfully to imitate.

Bristol, May 12, 1780.

The Advertisement of the American Publishers to the Edition of Anne Steele's Works published in Boston, Massachusetts, U.S.A., in 1808.

The Works of Anne Steele were published in England at different times. Two volumes under the title of *Poems on Subjects Chiefly Devotional*, by Theodosia, appeared in the year 1760, during the life of the author; a third volume, entitled *Miscellaneous Pieces in Prose and Verse* was published in 1780, after her decease, by Rev. Caleb Evans of Bristol, accompanied with a new impression of the preceding volumes. The editor of the posthumous pieces has prefixed to his volume a notice of the life of the author which in this edition precedes the whole work.

Boston, December 1, 1808.

Extract from the Memoir of John Sheppard, which formed the Preface to the single volume Edition of Anne Steele's Works, published in London by Daniel Sedgwick in 1863.

Unlike some other sacred lyricists, Anne Steele has found no biographers. Perhaps the current of her life flowed too smoothly to invite anyone to follow it. She founded no church, built no chapels, went on no foreign mission. She only wrote a few of the sweetest hymns; but in thus using the poetical talent, which she recognised as divine, she did that which exceeds in importance and value the works of many who have filled more conspicuous places in the history of the church and of the world. Her usefulness has far distanced her fame: she exerts an influence where her history is unknown; she ministers by many a sick bed; she furnishes the song in many a night of affliction. Every Sunday hears her hymns in many churches.... Men use her hymns who never heard her name, and many a one has uttered his penitence and desires, in language whose author he never knew, until he joined with her in higher and holier songs before the Throne of God.

The Cottage, Frome, Somerset,
February, 1863.

Postscript

It had been hoped that Hugh Steele-Smith of Ilkley, Yorkshire, the owner of the Steele family archive and a direct descendant of Anne Steele would write this preface. However he died suddenly in December 1999 at the age of seventy-nine. He was a son of Dr. William Steele-Smith whose mother was Sophia Steele-Smith [née Sophia Bompas]. Sophia was a daughter of Charles and Mary Bompas. Mary Bompas [née Mary Tomkins] was a daughter of Anne and Joseph Tomkins. Anne Tomkins, who died in 1859, at the age of ninety, was the eldest daughter of William Steele [Anne Steele's brother] and his second wife Martha [née Goddard].

Abbreviations

ASD	Mrs Steele's Diaries 1730-1736, 1749-1760 (STE 2/1)
BBCB	Broughton Baptist Church Books
BPR	Broughton Parish Registers
EHB	The Early Hampshire Baptists, G. Lyon Turner [1911]
HBBCW	History of Bratton Baptist Church by Dr M.E. Reeves
HBBCB	History of Broughton Baptist Church by E. Compton
HRO	Hampshire Record Office, Winchester, Hants

OBC The Old Baptist Church, Devizes by R. Cawley
 PRO Public Record Office
 ALRPC Angus Library, Regent's Park College, Oxford (STE 1-14)
 TGC Twenty Golden Candlesticks by W. Doel
 VCH Victoria County History, Wiltshire
 WRS Wiltshire Record Society
 WSRO Wilts & Swindon Record Office, Trowbridge, Wilts
 WSRO[BL] Wilts & Swindon Record Office – Copy of a microfilm of the
 Bodleian Library, Oxford. WSRO Ref: 4-137039-000

Pen names used by Anne Steele's circle of friends

Caroline Attwater [Whitaker]	Dorinda
Gay Thomas Attwater	Florio
Jane Attwater [Blatch]	Myrtilla
Marianne Attwater [Head]	Maria
Mary Froude	Amanda
Sarah Froude	Sarrissa
Philip Furneaux	Lucius
John Lavington	Lysander
Mary Scott	Myra
Anne Steele	Theodosia, Sylvania
Mary Steele [Bullock]	Delia
Mary Steele [Dunscombe]	Silvia
Mary Steele [Wakeford]	Amira
William Steele	Philander
Joseph Wakeford	Portius

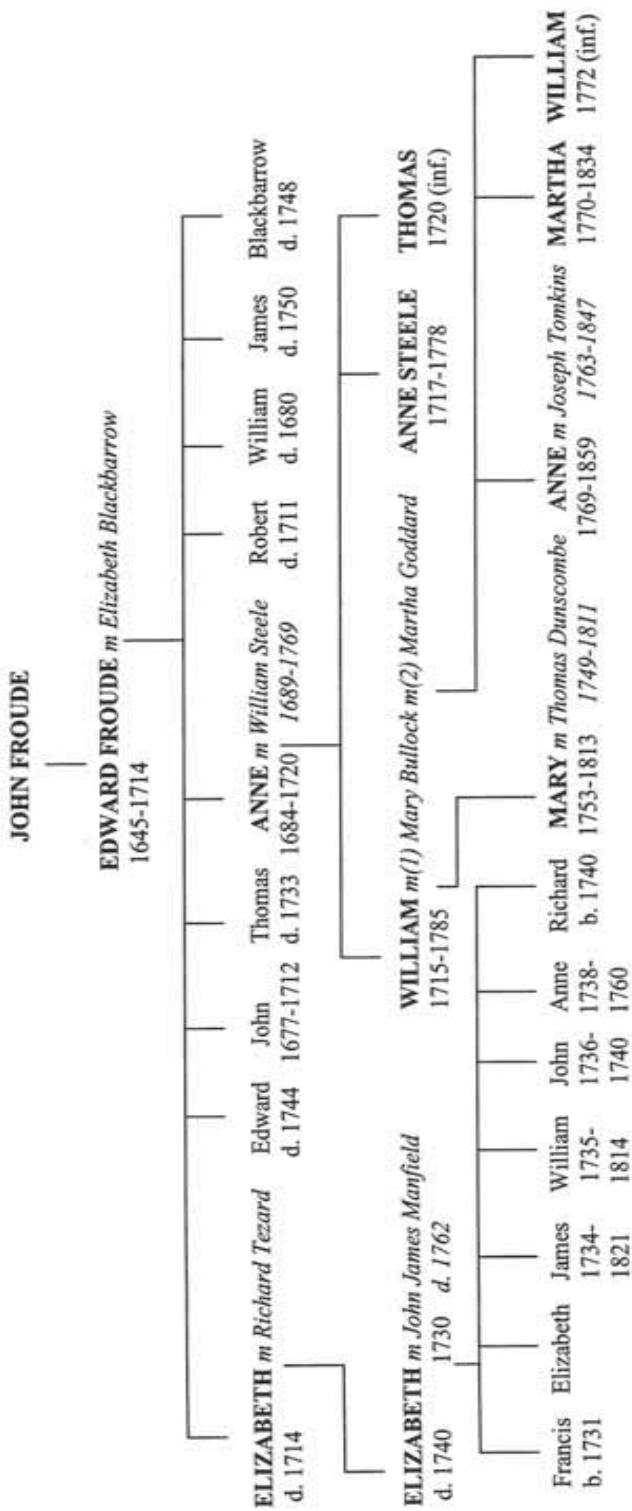


Figure 1: The Froude Family Tree

Chapter 1

An Age of Intolerance [1645-1688]

Anne Steele, the eighteenth-century poet and hymnwriter, was born at Broughton in Hampshire in 1717. Her father, William Steele, was a Particular Baptist minister and her mother, Anne Steele [née Froude], was the daughter of a Particular Baptist minister, Edward Froude. Both her parents had been born into the homes of a persecuted group of Christians, persecuted because they refused to conform to the Anglican Church in a day when the norm was ‘one state, one religion’ [una civitas, una religio]. The Anabaptists, as the authorities termed them, were a group of Dissenters that believed in freedom of conscience and freedom of worship. They did not agree with the traditions of the Church of England and, like the Brownists at the end of the 16th century in the reign of Elizabeth, they suffered gross intolerance from Church and Government for their views, views which we now accept as normal, but which in their day were regarded as revolutionary. As is well known, many of the Brownists separated from the Church of England, left this country at the beginning of the 17th century and went to the Netherlands, seeking freedom of speech and worship. Many eventually in 1620 crossed the Atlantic to set up the New England Colonies, founding the United States of America as a bastion of liberty.

The Baptists had supported the Cromwellian side in the Great Civil War, when Cromwell’s government allowed a greater amount of religious freedom than had ever been known in this country before, though not complete freedom to all religious groups. [Roman Catholics were excluded because of the political involvement of the Roman Catholic Church in the reign of Queen Mary in the burning of the martyrs, in the Armada and the Gunpowder Plot.] This allegiance brought the Baptists no favours when the Stuarts were restored in 1660. As they were a close community and mostly meeting in their own homes [cottage meetings] for worship, the authorities were thoroughly suspicious of them, and regarded them as potential material for conspiracy against the Stuart monarchy and the Anglican Church. Hated by bishops and magistrates, their ministers were regularly imprisoned for preaching and like their well-known minister, John Bunyan, spent long years mercilessly incarcerated in damp jails where some ended their days. The aftermath of the great Civil War

A BRUISED REED

had understandably left the Royalist Government in a state of neurotic tension, believing that the country was riddled with groups of revolutionaries just waiting to remove them from power. Revenge was also in the air for the beheading of Charles I. Feelings naturally ran high between the protagonists, and when the defeated Royalist party led by their King, Charles II, regained control in 1660, they did not feel too generous towards the former victors. So in the years from 1660 until 1688 the country witnessed considerable religious persecution, and Anne Steele's ancestors, coming from Particular Baptist stock, found themselves in the midst of it.

The Froude Family

Edward Froude, her maternal grandfather, was born in 1645, during the Civil War, a year after Cromwell's victory at the battle of Marston Moor and the same year as the battle of Naseby. Where he spent his youth is not known, but on 20th March 1673 his father, John Froude, purchased



Figure 2: Sweetwell Farm (now demolished)

Sweetwell Farm [about 102 acres] in Sedgehill, a village between Shaftesbury and East Knoyle in the county of Wiltshire and on his death it passed to his son.¹ It is of interest that Sir Christopher Wren, the architect of St Paul's Cathedral [built between 1675-1710] and founder and President of the Royal Society [1680-82], was born in 1632 at East Knoyle, two miles from Sedgehill, and it seems highly likely that the Froudes and the Wrens must have known each other. It is also of interest

¹ Will of Edward Froude Jnr. 1744 – WSRO.

that in Edward Froude's will of 1714² a gift of £20 is left to mistress Anne Clifford, the wife of Samuel Clifford of East Knoyle. Samuel Clifford was the vicar of East Knoyle ejected at the time of the Great Ejection in 1662, when over 2,000 clergymen were forced out of the Church at the time of the Act of Uniformity. It is interesting that a Particular Baptist minister should be helping his widow in her old age.

In 1674 Edward and his wife Elizabeth were named in the Edington presentment at the Quarter Sessions for non-attendance at the Priory Church. He was by now married to Elizabeth Blackborrow whose family lived in Tinhead a hamlet beside the parish of Edington, with its Priory Church, beneath the Westbury White Horse Hill and it would seem that he had left Sedgehill in the charge of one of his brothers [his father John Froude had died in 1674]³ and was living in Tinhead. John Blackborrow [brother of Elizabeth] and his wife Anne were also presented at the same time. In 1683 Edward Froude was presented in the parish of Edington for non-attendance at the Priory and was designated 'Anabaptist preacher'. His wife Elizabeth and Anne Blackborrow were presented at the same time. By this time John Blackborrow was dead and in his will [proved in June 1682] had left his farm at Tinhead to his brother-in-law, including over an hundred sheep, four oxen and fourteen cows. At the age of thirty-eight Edward was a minister among the Particular Baptists and was in possession of two farms, one in Sedgehill and the other in Tinhead. He had come from Sedgehill to join, and later pastor, a group of persecuted Particular Baptists. These presentments usually resulted in heavy fines or imprisonments. Here was a man willing in this era [1662-1688] to suffer for his faith.

Persecution was particularly strong in the Diocese of Salisbury, instigated by Bishop Seth Ward. The 1664 Conventicle Act stated that all above the age of sixteen attending a meeting where there were five present more than the household were subject to a five pound fine or three months' imprisonment for the first offence, ten pounds or six months' imprisonment for the second offence and one hundred pounds or seven years' transportation [in case of escape or return, death] for the third offence. These punishments took effect on conviction before a single JP and without trial by jury. Soldiers were stationed in some areas to enforce these draconian measures and informers were freely used.

The congregation Froude had joined was a group that originally met in the village of Erlestoke, a few miles to the east of Tinhead. It did not have

² Will of Edward Froude Snr. 1714 – WSRO.

³ Will of John Froude 1674 – WSRO.

A BRUISED REED

a church building but met in cottages. The Erlestoke presentment on 3rd November 1662 listed its congregation, two preachers and nine other people, accusing them of non-attendance at the parish church, holding private conventicles in their houses, and refusing to have their children baptised. At that time their ministers were John Axford and William Aldridge.⁴ On 8th April 1671 Thomas George of Erlestoke was fined at the Quarter Sessions for having a conventicle in his house on 19th March when about twenty were assembled.. When the Declaration of Indulgence was granted in 1672 and religious freedom came for a short while, licences were granted for a conventicle in the house of Thomas George at Erlestoke and for William Aldridge and John Axford to preach. When Edward Froude and his relations were named in the Edington presentment in 1683 the congregation at Erlestoke was cited in the Erlestoke presentment. John Axford and William Aldridge were still alive and so with Edward Froude there were three Particular Baptist ministers in the area, all watched closely by the authorities in Church and State.

There was also another minister in Erlestoke at this time, a Presbyterian called William Gough. He had been born in 1626 at the rectory at Great Cheverell, the next village to the east along the Salisbury Plain escarpment. He was educated at Queen's College, Cambridge and Christchurch College, Oxford. Cambridge was a great Puritan stronghold and Oliver Cromwell had been elected its MP in 1640 just prior to the time when Gough would have come up as a student. He was educated in Latin, Greek and Hebrew and as his father had been an Anglican minister he was undoubtedly destined for the ministry in the Anglican Church. There seems no question having regard to his future life that he was greatly influenced by the Puritans at Cambridge. After leaving Oxford in 1650, at the age of twenty-four he returned to Wiltshire and taught in a school and preached in his own house at Warminster. In 1655 under Cromwell's government he was appointed rector of Inkpen, a village near Hungerford, Wilts, where he stayed for seven years until 1662. In this year, together with men like Samuel Clifford of East Knoyle, he was ejected from his parish by the Act of Uniformity which required full agreement with the Anglican Prayer Book. He was then thirty-six and returned to his family property at Erlestoke and preached in conventicles in the area. In 1672 his house was licensed as a place for Presbyterian worship. In 1687 Gough was deputed by the local Dissenters to preach an address of thanks to King James II as he passed through Bath. He faithfully told the King that he did not approve of the recent Act of Toleration which gave religious liberty not only to Nonconformists but

⁴ HBBCW.

also to Roman Catholics. In the same year he accepted a call to be pastor of the Presbyterian Church at Devizes where he stayed for six years until he went to Marlborough in 1691 where he died in 1693. It would appear that it was his help and influence that was the means of educating a man like Edward Froude, a farmer and a preacher. It is of considerable interest that the inscription on Edward Froude's grave in the main nave of Edington Priory is in Latin, as is also that of his son John who died in 1712 two years before his father. Gough seems to have had an influence on the Particular Baptists as regards education and leadership, with whom he agreed fully in doctrine but not entirely in practice, when it came to baptism.

Five more years of persecution remained in 1683. In 1685 the West Country witnessed the Monmouth Rebellion, when the Duke of Monmouth landed at Lyme Regis from the Netherlands and gathered together a large group of followers from among the local Dissenters, moving as far as Bristol but eventually being defeated at the Battle of Sedgemoor. This was followed by the Bloody Assize of Judge Jeffreys which resulted in the death of three hundred and thirty Nonconformists, being hung, drawn and quartered, and eight hundred and fifty-five being transported to Barbados. Several men were hung at Norton St Philip on the Wiltshire-Somerset border. It must have struck horror into the little congregation at Erlestoke and into the family of Edward Froude. Among those who died at Lyme Regis and Taunton were the two grandsons of a leading London Particular Baptist minister, William Kiffin. The boys' names were William Hewling, aged nineteen at the time of his death and Benjamin, aged twenty-two. But in 1688 a second attempt was made to remove the Catholic monarch, James II, when William of Orange landed with an army at Torbay in Devon and this attempt was successful.

Now religious freedom, on the same lines that Oliver Cromwell had allowed it in the days of the Protectorate Government, was restored. In 1689 the Particular Baptists ministers from all over the country gathered in London. In the days of Cromwell's Protectorate in 1655 there had been two Particular Baptist Churches in Wiltshire at Porton and Southwick. Now, in 1689, there were twelve such churches; Cleychase, Bradford, Calne, Devizes, Erlestoke, Knoyle, Malmesbury, Melksham, Porton, Southwick, Warminster and Westbury.⁵ The Erlestoke congregation was represented by Edward Froude and William Aldridge. Knoyle, near Sedgemoor, was represented by John Williams. The ministers representing about one hundred Baptist Churches in England and Wales [denying

⁵ TGC p.222.

A BRUISED REED

Arminianism] met together from 3rd - 11th July and published the 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith, as well as discussing ways of helping the poor and training the ministers. The 1689 Confession drew its inspiration from the Confession drawn up by the Westminster Assembly of Divines meeting in London from 1643-1647 but differs from it as regards baptism, the Lord's Supper and church government. It also drew some inspiration from the First London Confession of Faith of 1644, produced by seven London Particular Baptist congregations during the Civil War. It was first compiled by 'The Elders and Brethren of many congregations of Christians baptised upon profession of their faith, in London and the country' in 1677. For fear of persecution the compilers of this Confession did not subscribe their names to it. But when the ministers and messengers gathered in London in 1689 thirty-seven of the most eminent Baptist ministers of the day set their names to it, Wiltshire being represented by James Webb of Devizes. Also present at the Assembly was Joseph Houlton of Trowbridge, a wealthy clothier. Edward Froude was forty-four at the time and was undoubtedly in the company of a group of Wiltshire ministers whom he knew well. He would also have met such Particular Baptist leaders as Hanserd Knollys, William Kiffin, Andrew Gifford and Benjamin Keach.

Edward Froude returned to Erlestoke and Tinhead for another twenty-five years of preaching. Now the days of persecution were over. He was living in Tinhead, presumably in the farmhouse of his late brother-in-law John Blackborrow. John's wife Anne Blackborrow made bequests of £5 each in her will⁶ to Edward Froude's children [her nephews and nieces]. The residue of her estate she left to Edward Froude's daughter Elizabeth. This reveals that by 1689 Edward Froude had five sons and two daughters. They were in order Elizabeth, Edward, John, Thomas, Anne, Robert and William.

Elizabeth Froude inherited the residue of Anne Blackborrow's will, the family property of her mother, who was John Blackborrow's sister. She married Richard Tezard of Donhead St Andrew near Sedgemoor. A letter⁷ which William Steele senior wrote to Anne Froude, before they married in 1713, was addressed to Mrs Anne at Mr Richard Tezard's at Donhead, which shows Anne was staying at the home of her sister. Edward Froude in his will in 1714 left 'Elizabeth Tezard, his grandchild £20'. But there is no mention in his will of Elizabeth, the grandchild's mother, which suggests she may have died before her father's death.

⁶ Will of Anne Blackborrow, proved 1693. WSRO.

⁷ Letter of William Steele dated 18 May 1713 – ALRPC. STE 1/2/ii.

AN AGE OF INTOLERANCE

By 1700 Edward junior was living at Sedgehill having taken over Sweetwell Farm and the farmhouse was registered as a place of worship for Protestant Dissenters. The Agreement, accepted by the Justices in Quarter Session at Warminster on 16th July in the 12th year of the reign of William III, is signed by, among others, John Williams, who represented this Baptist congregation at the Particular Baptist Assembly in London in 1689. This Certificate⁸ is confirmation of what was standard practice, that the Particular Baptists continued to worship in their homes until they built chapels [as they did for the Erlestone congregation at Bratton in 1734] in the early eighteenth century. Edward farmed at Sweetwell until his death in 1744 at about the age of seventy.

John was born in 1677 and died on 17th November 1712. He is buried in the main nave of Edington Priory. He has a large flat Portland stone memorial and the inscription is in Latin, probably the work of his father. It reads:

Sub hoc lapide corpus Johannis, Edwardi Froud generosi et Elizabethae uxoris eius filii secundi tumulatum iacet qui obiit die Novembris 17 Anno domini 1712 aetatis suae 35.

[Under this stone lies buried the body of John, the second son of Edward Froude and his wife Elizabeth, who died on 17th November 1712 at the age of 35]

His death must have been a great sadness to his father.

Thomas died in 1733 leaving his wife Sarah his property valued at £600. He had four children, Elizabeth, Edward, Thomas and John. The last son John was born in 1711 and died in 1777. He was twice married. He and his two wives lie buried in the main nave of Edington Priory together with his grandfather and his uncle. It would appear that the family lived in the Edington area but where is not known.

Anne was born in 1684, a year before the Monmouth Rebellion. She married William Steele in 1713/1714, [just a year before her father died] when William was twenty-three and she twenty-nine. They had three children, William junior born in 1715 and Anne, the subject of this biography in 1717. She lived throughout her married life at Broughton in Hampshire where her husband was a Baptist minister and had businesses in timber and farming. She died in childbirth on 22nd May 1720 at the age of thirty-six. The baby boy, Thomas, only lived for three months. His mother is buried in Broughton Parish Churchyard.

⁸ WSRO – Wilts Meeting House Certificates 1689-1852.

A BRUISED REED

Of Robert little is known except that in his father's will eighteen acres of land at Sedgehill were left in trust to Edward Grant, a clothier of Trowbridge, and William Aldridge of Erlestoke for the use of Robert during his lifetime, then to go to his brother Edward. This would suggest that possibly Robert was either mentally or physically disabled and needed financial support. But the help was not needed for long as he died in 1714 shortly after his father. Of William nothing is known except that his name is mentioned in Anne Blackborrow's will.

Two more sons were born after 1689. James, who lived in Tinhead, was a yeoman farmer. The Steele family often stayed with James. He died in 1750. It would appear from his will⁹ that he had one daughter, Mrs Pinock, though she would seem to have been dead at the time he made the will in 1749. A large part of his money was left to his two nephews and a niece, the children of his brother Thomas. The youngest son of Edward Froude was called Blackborrow, after his mother's maiden name. He lived at Steeple Ashton and died in 1748.

So Edward Froude had a large family, seven sons and two daughters, though his two daughters and two of his sons died young. From his will it is clear that one boy and one girl had predeceased him. He himself died on 20th November 1714. In the oldest Minute Book of the Bratton Baptist Church [1737]¹⁰ [the church which had originally met at Erlestoke now had two centres, one of which was at Bratton], they looked back over the past to their former minister, speaking of him as 'Edward Froude of Tinhead, a man eminent for piety and preaching'. They recorded that he was a good leader, telling how after his death in 1714 trouble arose in the Erlestoke Church and how they were pastorless until the Lord raised up John Watts, a member of the Westbury Leigh Particular Baptist Church, who though called to the pastorate of the Bratton/Erlestoke Church did not feel able to accept it until 1731. Then in 1734 they built themselves a commodious little Chapel in Bratton, Edward Froude junior of Sedgehill together with others helping toward the financing of the project.

Edward Froude senior was buried in the Priory Church at Edington on 26th November 1714. The Church Burial Register records that he was 'buried without Christian burial'. What lay behind this written record of the vicar is not clear. The animosity between Anglican and Dissenter was still rife twenty-five years after the Glorious Revolution of 1688. No doubt the Dissenters did not wish the vicar to have any part in the burial service of their minister which would have meant use of the Book of

⁹ Will of James Froude 1749 – WSRO.

¹⁰ HBBCW.

AN AGE OF INTOLERANCE

Common Prayer, which had resulted in the Great Ejection of clergy from the Anglican Church in 1662. How Edward Froude and his family came to have a right to burial in the main nave of the Priory is not altogether clear. His son John had been buried there before him in 1712 and others of his family were to be buried there as late as 1786. It would appear that the one claim to burial within the Church would be that Edward Froude was a churchwarden, which was a type of local government appointment, dependent on income, status and property and did not necessitate that he be a regular attendant at the Priory.



Figure 3: Edington Priory

A large congregation of Dissenters, consisting of his family and all the members of the Erlestoke Church must have entered the Priory that November day, and watched his coffin lowered into the vault in complete silence. Presumably they had the funeral service at his home in Tinhead. His grave was covered with a large Portland stone slab with the inscription in Latin. This inscription is almost completely obliterated today by constant walking over it. But an English translation of it has survived among the Steele family records¹¹ made in the eighteenth century when it was in near perfect condition. This reads,

‘Stay traveller and know that what was mortal of that truly reverend man Mr Edward Froud lyes under this stone. If you ask what he was, know that he was famous for his great piety toward God, love and

¹¹ WSRO[BL].

A BRUISED REED

kindness to his wife and children, a faithful friend, kind and courteous.
Go thou and imitate his example.'

A copy was taken in 1821 of the Latin inscription and is recorded in Phillip's *Monumental Inscriptions of Wiltshire*. These two sources have made possible a complete recovery of the Latin inscription which is as follows:

'Siste, viator, et sub hoc lapide quid erat mortale habuit depositu dilectus viri, discere reverendi Eduardi Froude: Qualis fuit si quaeras eximius pietate Deum, amore in conjugem, in liberos charitate, in amicos fide, in cunctos benevolentia humanita clarum. Exito et exemplis imitare. Inter vivos esse desiit 10 Calendas Decembris A.D. 1714 aetatis suae 69.'



Figure 4: The Froude Graves at Edington Priory

These then were Anne Steele's grandparents, neither of whom she knew, and these were her mother's brothers and sister. Anne's brother William was born a year after his grandfather's death and Anne herself in

1717. As her mother died in 1720 she can have had only dim recollections of her. But she knew her Uncles Edward of Sedgell, and Thomas and James of Tinhead. Also she knew her cousin Elizabeth Tezard who married the lawyer John James Manfield of Ringwood on 12th August 1730 and in later life she often went to stay with the Manfield family at Ringwood.

The Steele Family

The earliest mention of the Steele family in Broughton is to be found in the Broughton Parish Register under baptisms dated 5th June 1641; it reads, 'Oliver, son of William and Dionisia Steele'. No more is known of Oliver but his father William is the earliest known relative of Anne Steele. He was her great-great grandfather. Steele family tradition placed his birth in 1600 at the end of the reign of Queen Elizabeth I. He was thought to have been active in the Civil War on the Parliamentary side and built the family home, *Grandfathers*, where generations of Steeles, including Anne herself, have lived. Family tradition links him with the early Baptists in the area, but his name does not appear in the earliest records of Broughton Baptist Church¹² which began in 1653. The earliest record of Baptists meeting in Broughton is at the time of the Declaration of Indulgence [1672] when a licence¹³ was granted for worship in 'the house of Henry Abbot for Anabaptists'. In 1669 a conventicle had been reported at Over Wallop with forty members. In 1672 a licence was granted for worship at Over Wallop when John Kent was recorded as the teacher and his house as the place of meeting. William Steele I died in 1663 and from his will¹⁴ we learn that he had ten children. He styles himself as a 'carpenter'. The inventory with the will gives a description of the house which fits with what is known of *Grandfathers* today. The total sum of the inventory was £27-7s.

Of the ten children of William Steele I, the eldest was named after his father and through him descended the Steele family line. William Steele II was a carpenter like his father. He had two sons and two daughters who survived infancy. Ellen married James Haytor and had six children one of whom, Charity, born in 1676, was baptised at Broughton in 1701 and died three years later at the age of twenty-eight. Nothing is known about Mary who was born in 1653. Of the two surviving sons little is known about Thomas while Henry was minister at the Broughton Baptist Church for forty years. Henry was baptised on 10th October 1680¹⁵ and Thomas was

¹² ALRPC.

¹³ EHB.

¹⁴ HRO.

¹⁵ HBBCH.

A BRUISED REED

baptised on 28th August 1684.¹⁶ Almost certainly these baptisings would have been in the open river. Henry persuaded his brother Thomas to accompany him to his baptism and it was the means of the conversion of Thomas. In a document regarding the lease of a piece of land, on which the Broughton Baptist Chapel later stood, the two brothers are referred to as ‘House Carpenters’ which suggest they were working together building timber cottages.

Thomas married twice. This is revealed by his will.¹⁷ His first wife was the Mary Steele ‘Anabaptist’ who died in 1692 and his second wife was Mary Knight. He had three sons and three daughters, one of whom died in infancy. It would seem from his will dated 25th May 1708 [four days before his burial] that he died very suddenly. His daughter Mary and her two brothers Thomas and William were the children of his first marriage and his son Henry and his sister Elizabeth were the children of his second marriage. From the legacies in his will it is possible to estimate the value of his estate at death, which was about £1000, a considerable sum in 1708. No longer did he style himself ‘Carpenter’ and from the existence of freehold estate bequeathed to his two boys Thomas and William it would seem his estate included land and property. Sadly in just over a year Thomas, the older of the two boys, died and was buried on 9th July 1709. In his will¹⁸ dated 10th June, he styled himself ‘Carpenter’ and left £100 to his sister Mary, small bequests to his half-sister Elizabeth and half-brother Henry and fifty pounds to a Trust set up by Mr Rede of Devizes, a Colonel in the Parliamentary Army and for many years minister of the Porton/Broughton Baptist Church. The residue of his estate was left to his brother William, who was only twenty at the time.

This William, William Steele III, was Anne Steele’s father. He was baptised by his uncle, Henry Steele, on 22nd June 1708, together with his sister Mary, just a few weeks after their father died. He had been born in 1689, the year of the Particular Baptist Assembly in London following the Glorious Revolution of 1688. He started preaching as soon as he was baptised, assisting his uncle Henry Steele in preaching and becoming pastor on his uncle’s death on 16th June 1739¹⁹. He married Anne Froude of Tinhead late 1713 or early 1714. It seems quite probable that he met her in the early days of his ministry when he travelled round the Wiltshire Baptist Churches. He had already been preaching for six years when they married. He had two children, William born in 1715 and Anne in 1717.

¹⁶ BBCB.

¹⁷ HRO.

¹⁸ HRO.

¹⁹ HBBCH.

Sadly his wife died in 1720 in childbirth and the little boy, Thomas, named after his deceased grandfather and his deceased uncle, only lived three months.

The Porton/Broughton Church

The Baptist Church over which Henry Steele had been pastor for forty years [1699-1739] and of which he had been a member for sixty years [1680-1739], traced its beginnings back to 1653, to the days before the Cromwellian Protectorate. It was originally centred at Porton. It is possible that the influence of the ministry of Richard Hooker, writer of the *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, who was vicar at Boscombe just up the road from Porton from 1591-1595, had first brought the Gospel to the area. Remarkably three volumes [Vol. 1 1653-84; Vol. 2 1710-29; Vol. 3 1730-49] of the original Church Books have survived and are now kept at the Angus Library at Regent's Park College, Oxford. The first entry in Volume 1 is dated 3rd April 1653 and contains an account of the gathering of the church, called the church at Porton and Broughton. It reads:

On the third day of the fourth month the brethren and sisters residing about Wallop, Sarum, Amesbury, Stoford, Chalk, Porton and the parts adjacent, met together as a Church of Jesus Christ, and then with one accord declared their resolution for the future [Christ strengthening them] so to walk as becometh saints, according to the Gospel, in all obedience to His commandments, in love to one another as brethren and sisters, partakers of the same grace through Jesus Christ our Lord; and for their more orderly proceeding and profit they appointed John Rede, Henry Penn and Edward Bundy, orderly and by course to administer the ordinances as often as called for, and for the provision of the Church, and taking care of the poor saints, they have appointed Robert Blake and Thomas Webbe to oversee and take care in their places as their duties in all things that necessarily belong to the care of deacons. The same day were baptised by our brother Bundy, nine disciples.

While in the church at Porton this meeting was taking place, when eighty-five members met and ministers and deacons were being appointed, in London great events were taking place in the House of Commons. On 20th April, just seventeen days after the Porton Church meeting, Oliver Cromwell was to enter the Chamber of the House with his troops, drive out the members, ending the days of the Rump Parliament, and say regarding the Mace, 'What shall we do with this bauble? Take it away.' The Parliament was refusing to sanction funds for the New Model Army and so Army and Parliament were in conflict.

A BRUISED REED

The Porton Church was not so far removed from these events as one might think. Their minister John Rede was not an insignificant figure. He had fought in the Civil War on the Parliamentary side.²⁰ He had risen to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. He had served in the regiment of Colonel [later General] Ludlow when there were twenty-five Baptist officers, he being one of them. He had joined the regiment when it was raised in 1643. When Ludlow's regiment was disbanded, Colonel John Rede joined the New Model Army formed in 1645-6. He was mentioned for distinguished service in battle in one of Oliver Cromwell's letters sent to the Speaker, William Lenthall, at the House of Commons after the battle of Preston on 20th August 1648. Cromwell writes of the 'incredible valour and resolution' of his troops and says, 'Lieutenant Colonel Rede and Colonel Ashton had the greatest work, they often coming to push of pike and close firing, and always making the enemy to recoil.' Rede had been entrusted with the sieges of Tenby and Pembroke Castle in Wales in May/June of the same year. In 1649 he became Governor of Poole and Brownsea Castle and later commanded a garrison in Scotland. He was a Member of Parliament for Wiltshire and served on committees dealing with Wiltshire from 1647-1652 and in 1657, 1659 and 1660. In 1653 he was a judge concerning prisons and prisoners. It is not clear when he came out of military service, but the Porton records show that he was preaching at Porton as early as 1651. He lived at Birdlimes Farm, Porton, just outside Salisbury. He was a landowner and a Justice of the Peace and an MP. As a JP he conducted several marriages under the Barebones Act [1653], when for a time marriage became a civil matter, conducted by JPs, and his signature appears in the Parish Register of Porton-cum-Idmiston.

Birdlimes Farm exists today, but not the same buildings in which Colonel Rede lived. The early Manor House was demolished in the 19th century. Here it was that the Porton/Broughton Church met. A sheepwash nearby in the River Bourne was probably the site of the baptisings. A burial ground still existed in 1908 with memorial stones to John Rede's wife and his young daughter. It shows that his wife Sarah died in 1708 at the age of forty-nine and that his daughter, Sarah Carteret Rede, died in 1700, a few days short of seven. According to the custom of using the maternal maiden name for children, it would suggest that the maiden name of the girl's mother was Carteret. The Advocate-General of the New Model Army was Philip Carteret, who was a Baptist lawyer. This would suggest that late in life John Rede married into the Carteret family. So here is evidence that John Rede knew leading men in the New Model Army and also knew Oliver Cromwell well and had served under

²⁰ OBC pp.46-63.

him in battle, equally knowing him on the floor of the House of Commons.

It is clear that John Rede was the founder of the Porton Baptist Church. It seems that as the Parliamentary Army moved about the country with its Baptist officers, many Particular Baptist Churches sprang up in its wake. The officers were obviously evangelists and John Rede was one of them. As with the Steele family who were firstly timber merchants buying standing timber and having contracts with the Admiralty for ship building, and secondly landowners and farmers, so John Rede was a landowner, a soldier, a JP [probably, having regard to this office and being a judge in 1653, a lawyer] and an MP, a man of considerable importance in his locality. The Porton/Broughton Church was led by a well-to-do, able man. This was not only true of Particular Baptists in the Wiltshire/Hampshire area, but also true of the City of London where their leader, William Kiffin, was a wealthy merchant and in 1687 Alderman of the City of London. He had personally met Charles I, Oliver Cromwell, Charles II, James II and William III. In 1688 the Government of James II considered that if there were an election, John Rede would stand as a candidate for the borough of Wilton and be elected a Member of Parliament. If many Particular Baptist ministers were men of the social calibre of John Bunyan, a tinker, a good number of others such as William Kiffin and John Rede were to be numbered among the upper echelons of society. The Broughton/Porton Church was composed of weavers, farmworkers, yeoman farmers, carpenters, house builders and also business and professional men, who would sign their wills as Edward Froude did at Edington, 'Gent', and have gravestones with the inscription in Latin. Knowing a little of this political and cultural background among the Particular Baptists helps us to understand the type of Particular Baptist society into which Anne Steele was born in 1717.

The Porton Church Book shows that its members and leaders in 1653 were scattered along the valleys of the Rivers Wylde, Avon, Bourne and Ebbel and came from nearly twenty different towns and villages which included, on the Avon, Salisbury [Sarum], Bodenham, Durnford, Amesbury, Bulford, Durrington, Netheravon and Enford; on the Wylde, Stoford and South Newton; on the Ebbel, Broad Chalke and Stoke; on the Bourne, Porton, Idmiston and Allington; and a further group over toward Broughton in Hampshire at Grinstead, Farley and Dean. Of their leaders John Rede lived at Porton, Henry Penn at Broad Chalke and Edward Bundy at Amesbury. This little group was centred at Porton in a circuit of about forty miles. It was about ten miles from Porton to Broad Chalke

A BRUISED REED

and the same from Porton to Enford, both villages on the outer edge of the circuit and five miles from Porton to Salisbury.

In 1655 Rede was actively involved in preaching and administering the Lord's Supper and believer's baptism.²¹ On March 15th of that year John Penruddock with two hundred cavalry entered Salisbury, arrested the High Sheriff and Assize Judges and set out into Somerset and Dorset to start a Royalist uprising. Troops from the Parliamentary garrison at Exeter confronted the rebels at South Molton in Devon and defeated them. It was in the autumn of this year that Oliver Cromwell instituted the rule of the Major Generals, having himself been appointed Lord Protector in December 1653 and having dismissed the First Protectorate Parliament in January 1655. These senior officers of his army were appointed to govern large areas of the country and watch for any further attempted insurrections by the Royalists. Major General John Desborough was appointed to govern Cornwall, Devon, Somerset, Wiltshire and Gloucestershire. It seems certain that Colonel Rede would have known him. The Porton Church in 1655 must have trembled at the possibility of further conflict on their doorstep.

The first clear record of church business occurs when the Porton church met at Salisbury [Sarum] on 17th November 1657. By this time the church numbered one hundred and six members, there having been about twenty members added to the church in the previous four years. On 27th April 1658 the Church Book records that John Rede baptised brother Plumley and William Boodle at Porton. On 3rd September 1658 Oliver Cromwell died suddenly and unexpectedly. Richard Cromwell, his son was completely unfit to take his place and eventually Charles II was invited back in April 1660 to take the throne. A delegation from England met him at Breda in Holland before he returned, when he promised that on his return he would declare a general pardon, religious toleration and satisfaction to the Army. The Porton Church met at Amesbury on 19th May that year for the last time until 1671. Almost certainly this meeting took place to discuss a plan of action for the days of persecution that inevitably lay ahead with the restoration of the Stuart monarchy. Charles II never kept the promise of toleration. Within two years the Act of Uniformity was passed, which drove over two thousand clergymen out of the Church of England on grounds of conscience. It required ministers to consent wholeheartedly to the revised Book of Common Prayer, to be ordained by a bishop and to renounce the 1643 Solemn League and Covenant. This was followed by the Conventicle Act in 1664 which

²¹ OBC p.50.

banned meetings of five or more persons 'not according to the Book of Common Prayer'. In 1665 came the Five Mile Act by which all nonconformist ministers were banned from coming within five miles of a town having a Member of Parliament, or where they had been ministers before.

Within a few years of the Restoration John Rede was arrested and imprisoned in the Tower of London.²² This was partly for political and religious reasons [he was suspected of being involved in a plot to overthrow the Government] and partly on account of his military service. It is not certain how long he was detained there but on 1st September 1665 he was brought before Lord Arlington, a Secretary of State, for questioning, a record of which survives and is kept in the Public Record Office. The questioning related not only to rebellions and plots against king and government but also contained questions regarding which church he attended, whether he abode by the rules of the Conventicle Act, with which sect he was associated. He eventually satisfied his judges and was released and returned to Porton.

Four days later on 4th September 1665 he wrote a long letter to Lord Arlington in which he pleaded fearlessly for religious toleration.²³ In it he speaks of having 'formerly met with rigidities' referring to his incarceration in the Tower, and says on this account he was surprised that he had been granted his liberty. He says that there is nothing more unwelcome than the restraining of part of that liberty 'which was once indulged to tender consciences by His Majesties Gracious Declaration.' Here he refers openly to the Declaration of Breda and how the promise of the King was being broken. He pointed out that not all conventicles [house meetings] of Nonconformists were seditious and how awful it was to suppress them with 'the terrors of transportation'. Many who worshipped thus were loyal supporters of king and government. He said that there were many 'who yet cannot understand the Lord's mind in Scriptures as to discern it to be their duty to be present at their Popish assemblies in the times of the appointed service of that Church, neither can they be persuaded thereunto, nor will they be compelled, whatsoever they suffer.' He spoke of these persecuting laws [the Conventicle Act 1664 and the Five Mile Act 1655] allowing ungodly men to become informers on the godly, saying that 'the godly render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's'. It was not fit that good men that were quiet subjects of the King should be disturbed in their devotions in their houses. Here he fearlessly pleads for conventicles to be

²² OBC p.51.

²³ P.R.O. 29/132 *State Papers Domestic*, Vol. 182, 29.

A BRUISED REED

allowed by law. Then he went on to say, 'Let this liberty be indulged at least if not proclaimed, that whilst the severe hand of God is stretched out in judgement over this nation, that no sincere persons that can pray shall be prohibited their assembling together unto that duty in their houses ... this course I am persuaded, effectually performed, will prove the best remedy to assuage the pestilence... Let the Scriptures be the rule of devotion for all Christians'. He went on to plead for Christian liberty to be combined with civil obedience saying that such a policy of the Government would bring about a situation in the country 'far more peaceable and happy than now it is'. He concluded his letter to Lord Arlington by pleading that he might have 'a private protection under His Lordship's hand, desiring all officers forbearance to molest me in my devotions, services and prayers to God, so long as he had no grounds to believe that he [Rede] had done anything to disturb the peace.'

It is a remarkable letter in that it has survived. It is remarkable in that it shows a man as fearless in religion as the Colonel who was mentioned in the House of Commons in 1648 for his bravery in battle. It is equally revealing of the man as being a very able, lucid thinker and writer, probably a lawyer by profession. What a giant he was as a leader of the humble Baptist congregation and poor unlettered members of the Porton/Broughton Church. The forebears of Anne Steele's church were certainly a hardy people made ready, as the Apostle Paul, to endure unto the death for the truth's sake. The Porton Church Book [1653-1684] is silent from 1660-1672. There is no mention of any persecution which must have inevitably taken place. Thomas Crosby in his *History of the English Baptists* [1740] Vol. III p.126 says, 'Peter Coles, a Baptist preacher at Downton in the county of Sarum, Walter Penn, pastor of the Baptist church at Sarum, and John Kingman of Burford near Sarum were all for several years prisoners in the county gaol at Sarum for nonconformity.' Walter Penn was one of the leaders of the Porton Church and later, in 1689, represented it at the Particular Baptist Assembly together with John Andrews. In 1669 Bishop Ward of Salisbury produced a survey of the Particular Baptists in his diocese. He reported groups at Broad Chalke [about 10, very mean, led by Henry Penn, a husbandman], and at Amesbury in the house of Thomas Webb about 30 inconsiderable persons; John Rede from Porton came over to hold a conventicle. The Bishop of Winchester reported an Anabaptist conventicle at Over Wallop in Hampshire numbering about 40. The Quarter Session Rolls showed other conventicles at Rolleston and Stoford in South Newton, also at Allington, Idmiston, Durrington and Farley, all places connected to the Porton Church. Bishop Ward wrote, 'The teachers of the Anabaptists....

are vagabond, run-about, unknown fellows. The authority they all pretend is His Majesty's connivance and that they have some friends that, if occasion be, will interpose between them and the punishment of the laws.' It was not entirely true to say their teachers were 'unknown' but it was true to say that 'they had some friends' who would 'interpose' for them with the authorities. It is of interest to remember that this persecution was countrywide, and that many of the Anabaptist teachers were in prison for preaching the Gospel. The most well known of these was John Bunyan who spent much of the period from 1660-1672 in prison at Bedford.

In 1672 Charles II wanted to give a measure of toleration to Roman Catholics and decided to include in the *Declaration of Indulgence* of 15th March all sects which did not conform to the Anglican Church. The requirement was that all places of worship [mainly houses] and all ministers should be registered. But the Declaration was issued by Charles II without the sanction of Parliament and therefore did not contain the force of law. Between April 1672 and February 1673 over four thousand houses were registered in England and Wales. Two entry books among the State Papers Domestic²⁴ contain the registrations. The seventy Wiltshire house registrations are printed in the Appendix to Wiltshire Meeting House Certificates (1689-1852) [WRS.40]. For the Porton Church the houses registered included that of Henry Penn at Broad Chalke, that of widow Blake at Stoford in South Newton, that of Thomas Batts in Salisbury, that of Thomas Webb (alias Long) in Amesbury and that of John Rede in Idmiston. The house of Edward Grant, a friend of Edward Froude, was registered in Trowbridge. Two Presbyterian houses registered and relating to Anne Steele's ancestors were that of Samuel Clifford at East Knoyle and that of William Gough at Erlestoke, both ejected ministers of the Church of England in 1662. In Hampshire the house of John Kent at Over Wallop, the house of Henry Abbot at Broughton and the house of John Dozell at Whitchurch were registered. Ministers registered included John Kent of Over Wallop, Richard Bunney of Whitchurch, John Rede of Birdlimes, Porton, Henry Penn of Broad Chalke, Samuel Clifford of East Knoyle and William Gough of Erlestoke. All these registrations [excepting those of Clifford and Gough] were designated Anabaptist, which was a term of abuse, much like the original use of the name 'Puritan'.

Now for a few brief months the Porton congregation had rest from persecution. But when Parliament was called in 1673 this ended as there was universal hostility to Roman Catholics and therefore to all

²⁴ PRO SP444/27. SP44(38A).

A BRUISED REED

Nonconformists from the Government and the Church of England. Charles II hated all Protestant Nonconformists because of their hatred of the Roman Catholic Church. John Bunyan, who had received a licence to preach in May 1672, had a warrant issued for his arrest on 4th March 1675, when the Test Act [Feb. 1675] was passed and the Government withdrew all the ministers' licences. Now everyone in the civil and military employment of the state was required to give oaths of allegiance and supremacy, make a declaration against the Roman Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation, and receive communion according to the rites of the Church of England. The King was pro-Catholic and the Parliament anti-Catholic. Intolerance appeared again and the Porton Church was in the midst of it. In fact the Church Book began to be used again. On 14th May there was a meeting of the church at Hoxton and John Rede was there. On 23rd April 1674 a meeting took place at Salisbury and another at Wallop on 12th September 1675.

Particular Baptist Confessions of Faith

In October 1675 a group of London ministers led by William Kiffin, Daniel Dyke and William Collins sent out a circular letter to Particular Baptists throughout the country asking them to meet in London in the following May. In the Porton Church Book is an entry dated 24th January 1676 mentioning a letter received from London and the appointment of John Rede to attend the meeting on the first Wednesday in May. Because of the times of persecution it is not certain whether the meeting ever took place but there seems to have been some sort of meeting for the *Second Particular Baptist Confession* was published in 1677, though it was without any signatories or naming of any printer on account of the dangerous times. In the minute book of the Petty France Particular Baptist Church in the City of London, the authorship of the 1677 *Confession* is ascribed to the two pastors of the Petty France Church, William Collins and Nehemiah Cox [Nehemiah being the son of Benjamin Cox], both educated and scholarly men.

There were several factors which brought the Particular Baptists to feel the need for a new Confession of Faith. The *First London Confession* had been issued in 1644 and revised in 1646 and in 1651 and reprinted in 1652. By 1677 after twelve years of intense persecution copies of it were quite rare. Also by that time the three groups of Nonconformists, the Presbyterians, the Independents and the Particular Baptists were coming much closer to each other, a situation brought about by their common sufferings. The Presbyterians had produced the *Westminster Confession of Faith* between 1644-1647. This had largely been copied by the Independents in their Articles, the *Savoy Declaration*, in 1658. When the

Particular Baptists produced their *Second Confession* in 1677, they used the *Savoy Declaration* as their model, making various additions and alterations, but keeping Article 20 on 'The Extent of the Gospel' which replaced the Article in the *Westminster Confession*, 'On Christian Liberty.' They felt it was best to follow the example of the Independents, making use of the words of the *Westminster Confession*, to show agreement in all fundamental doctrines with the Presbyterians and Independents. So by and large the 1677 *Confession* had its roots in the *Westminster Confession*. Equally it followed some of the alterations made by the Independents in the *Savoy Declaration*. The *Savoy Declaration* had been the work of John Owen, Thomas Goodwin, Joseph Caryl, William Greenhill and others.

It is not entirely clear why the *First Confession* of 1644 with its revisions of 1646 was not republished in 1677. That *Confession* had been the independent work of the Particular Baptists. They had not been allowed to take part in the Westminster Assembly which met from 1644-47 to produce the *Westminster Confession*, though they knew the Assembly was composed of godly men. It would appear that there was a doctrinal movement among the Particular Baptists between 1644 and 1677. Article 25 of the 1644 edition of the *Confession* reads, 'That the tenders of the Gospel to the conversion of sinners are absolutely free.' The 1646 revision of the same article reads, 'That the *preaching* of the Gospel to the conversion of sinners is absolutely free.' On this point of difference the 1677 *Confession* would appear to blend both the 'tender' [offer] and the 'preaching'. It reads in Article 7.2, 'Wherein He freely *offereth* unto sinners life and salvation by Jesus Christ,' while in Article 20.3 it reads, 'In all ages the *preaching* of the Gospel has been granted to all persons and nations.' The 1644 *Confession* emanated from seven London Particular Baptist Churches. They appear to have been largely influenced by two Church of England clergymen, Hanserd Knollys and Benjamin Cox, who had recently joined them. In the production of the 1644 *Confession* they used as their basis the English *Separatist Confession* of 1596 taking from it twenty-six of their fifty-three Articles. For Articles twenty-one to thirty-two there is no known source, but as they clearly contain the substance of the Articles of the Synod of Dort [1619] on the Five Points, limited atonement, unconditional election, total depravity, irresistible grace, and the final perseverance of the saints, it would seem that the London Particular Baptist Churches had come under the influence of Dutch Calvinistic orthodoxy.

Soon after the publication of the 1646 edition of the *Confession*, Benjamin Cox, who had been a signatory of it, together with such men as

A BRUISED REED

William Kiffin, Thomas Patient, John Spilsbury, Paul Hobson, Hanserd Knollys, published *An Appendix to a Confession of Faith*, ‘which was evidently intended not merely to expound his personal views but those of the whole group in answer to certain questions that had been raised by some who had read the 1646 Confession.’²⁵ In Article 4 of the *Appendix* Cox writes, ‘We teach that they only do, or can believe in Jesus Christ, to whom it is given to believe in Him by a special, gracious and powerful work of His Spirit: and that this is [and shall be] given to the elect in the time appointed of God for their effectual calling and to none but the elect. This we hold against those that do maintain a freewill and *sufficient ability in a man to believe*; and do deny election.’ In Article 5 he writes, ‘We affirm that as Jesus Christ never intended to give remission of sins and eternal life unto any but His sheep, so these sheep only have their sins washed away in the blood of Christ. The vessels of wrath, as they are none of Christ’s sheep, nor ever believe in him... have all their sins remaining upon them, and are not saved by Christ from any of them *under any consideration whatsoever*.’ And in Article 6 he writes, ‘Though some of our opponents do affirm, that by this doctrine we have no Gospel to be preached to sinners for their conversion, yet through the goodness of God we know and preach to sinners this precious Gospel, ‘God so loved the world’ Finally in Article 9 he writes, ‘Though we that believe in Christ, be not under the law, but under grace, yet we know that we are not lawless, or are left to live without a rule; not without law to God, but under law to Christ [1 Cor. 9. 21]. *The Gospel of Jesus Christ is a law, or commanding rule unto us*, whereby, and in obedience whereunto, we are taught to live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world; the directions of Christ in His evangelical word guiding us unto, and in this sober, righteous and godly walking.’ In the 1646 *Confession* and in these Articles of Cox’s *Appendix* there is no mention of ‘offers’ or ‘tenders’ of grace and there is an explicit statement of the Gospel as the believer’s rule of life, but no mention of the Law as the believer’s rule of life in the *Confession* itself, only a reference in Article 8 to the Holy Scriptures, ‘which are the only rule of holiness and obedience for all saints.’

When we look at the *Second Particular Baptist Confession* [1677], Article 7, taken word for word from the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, Section 2 states, ‘The Lord had made a covenant of grace ... wherein He freely *offereth* unto sinners life and salvation by Jesus Christ.’ In Article 19 section 6, the Law is described as ‘*a rule of life* for true believers’, though in Article 20 on the Gospel and the Extent of Grace [copied from *The Savoy Declaration*] ‘in the revelation of the Gospel to sinners the

²⁵ *English Baptists of the 17th Century*. B. R. White p.73.

words, *the preaching of the Gospel* is spoken of as the channel of salvation and no mention is made of the offer. It is of interest that William Kiffin, among others, signed the *Confessions* of 1644, 1646 and 1677 and there can be no doubt, that when the *Confessions* of 1646 and 1677 are compared, they contain good evidence to show that in the years of persecution the Particular Baptists were influenced by the *Westminster Confession of Faith*. What effect this may have had on the ministry of William Kiffin or Colonel Rede is not clear. It would seem that if Colonel Rede went to the London meeting in 1676 then these issues would have been discussed. What is clear is that in the eighteenth century, these issues which separated between the 1646 and 1677 *Confessions* came out into the open again in the writings of John Gill [1697-1771] and John Brine [1703-1795] and there was a reversion to the 1646 Articles as expressed by men like Benjamin Cox. By then the varying interpretations were labelled High Calvinism and Moderate Calvinism. It is hard to tell where the Porton Church stood on these issues. They could hardly have stood aloof from them. There are no copies of sermons preached in the Broughton/Porton Church until the time when Anne Steele's father, William Steele III, was sent out to preach by the church in 1709 and became its pastor in 1739, on the death of his uncle Henry Steele. Some sermon notes, dated as early as 1710, survive, which could be either those of Henry Steele taken down by William Steele III or could be those of William Steele III himself,²⁶ but they throw no light on the doctrinal situation at that time.

The Final Years of Persecution

After the publication of the 1677 *Confession* there remained another eleven years before the Glorious Revolution of 1688. They were to be years of further intense persecution. The Porton/Broughton Church Book makes no mention of this persecution which is understandable since much of their work had to be done in secret to escape the attention of the many paid informers that the Government was using to stop their services and hinder their activities. Two concerns appear in the Church Book. The first was that of the ministry and whether a minister should be ordained with the laying on of hands. The other concern of the church was regarding discipline.

Many cases are recorded in the Church Book of members of the church who had sinned. Of twenty-four cases, fifteen were men and nine women. Of these, fourteen were excommunicated, eight were admonished and one was restored. It would appear that there was an increase in church

²⁶ ALRPC. Broughton Church Records.

A BRUISED REED

discipline as a direct result of the persecution. The Porton Church was very conscious that, while it was being constantly watched and persecuted, informers would glory in demonstrating that it was harbouring worldly and licentious people. So for the cohesion and strength of the persecuted body, strong discipline was maintained. It was in fact a spiritual strength for the church.

The other matter that concerned the church was the correct ordination of ministers. From a Particular Baptist Association meeting at Wells, Somerset on 9th September 1653, a letter had been sent which read, 'We judge that the ordination of ministers is an ordinance of Christ in His Church now in force [Titus 1.5, Acts 14.23] and ought to be performed with fasting and prayers and the laying on of hands. [Acts 6.6, and 13.3].' A minute in the Porton Church Book, dated 2nd November 1676, records that the church elected and chose elders of the congregation to perform the work of the ministry. It lists John Rede of Porton, John Kent of Wallop, Henry Penn of Broad Chalke, Walter Penn of Salisbury [Sarum], and Thomas Long of Amesbury; also Stephen Kent of Broughton and John Andrews of Amesbury were chosen as deacons for the congregation. A minute of 1678 says, 'Agreed that assistance shall be called in that the Church may proceed in their duty touching the laying on of hands upon their ministry which they have chosen.' Then on 21st April 1679, Thomas Long and John Andrews were appointed to go as messengers of the Church to Bristol to consult with the ordained ministers there. Following this visit an entry is recorded in the Church Book, 'The 19th day of ye 4th month 1679 at ye church meeting then at Porton [according to their former conclusion and desire] did attend [by desire and advice of ye messengers at Bristol] Brother Andrew Gifford, Brother Thomas Millard ordained ministers by imposition of ye hands, when by imposition of ye hands of ye aforesaid ministers, Brother John Rede, Brother Walter Penn and Thomas Long ministers were ordained.' Andrew Gifford [1641-1721] was pastor of the Pithay Church, Bristol for forty-four years until his death and was a very influential and highly respected minister in the west of England. He had himself been imprisoned four times in the Newgate Gaol, Bristol, and once in Gloucester Gaol.

The Porton Church in the heat of persecution had returned to the scriptural practice and had seen the truth in its simplicity and followed the Apostle's example. These godly men discerned vital doctrine and practice under intense suffering, often heavy fines and imprisonment. John Rede had been imprisoned from 1661-65,²⁷ Walter Penn had spent time in

²⁷ *History of English Baptists*, A. C. Underwood p.90.

Fisherton gaol, Salisbury and William Kiffin, the London minister, had been arrested on many occasions. Final entries in the Porton Church Book include the information that on 25th October 1683 Stephen Kent came before the church to exercise his gift as a minister and be chosen an elder. Lastly it is recorded that on 28th August 1684 Walter Penn took a baptising at Porton when the candidates were Thomas Steele and John Sturges of Broughton and Martha Wheble of Horton. This Thomas Steele was Anne Steele's grandfather and a brother of Henry Steele, who himself had been baptised in 1680 and was to be pastor of the Broughton Church from 1699 to 1739.

Now, once again the Church Book is silent as it had been between 1660-1671 and the next Church Book does not commence until 1710. These were momentous years in the Porton/Broughton Church and in the nation. Thomas Long had died in 1681 and so the church carried on with its two pastors John Rede and Walter Penn. The country was in political turmoil as King Charles II ruled without a Parliament from 1681-85 since he feared it would pass an Exclusion Bill which would remove his brother, the Duke of York [a Roman Catholic] from the succession. In 1681 the King sent the Protestant Earl of Shaftesbury to the Tower and ordered the suppression of all conventicles. Heavy fines were imposed on all who did not attend the parish church, juries were packed and spies were everywhere. Daniel Neal says that, 'The liberties of England were delivered up to the Crown.'²⁸ While the bishops of the Anglican Church feared that Roman Catholicism would be restored if the Duke of York became King, at the same time they set out to destroy the Dissenters and nowhere was persecution stronger than in the Salisbury diocese under Bishop Seth Ward. Daniel Neal²⁹ says that estimates varied from 5,000-8,000 who died in prison, to over 60,000 who suffered in the reign of Charles II [1660-1685] out of a dissenting population countrywide of possibly one hundred and fifty thousand. But like all persecution this suffering only strengthened the will of the Dissenters and from the prisons came forth such masterpieces as John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*. Charles II died on 6th February 1685 at the age of fifty-four and was succeeded by his brother James II. Now Dissenters and Anglicans could see a return to Catholicism.

The ill-conceived and ill-planned rebellion, led by the Duke of Monmouth who landed at Lyme Regis on 11th June 1685, only heightened the persecution. After the landing many Baptists joined the ragged army, ill prepared with weapons. After marching round the West

²⁸ *History of the Puritans*, Daniel Neal [1732] Vol. 4, p.513.

²⁹ *History of the Puritans*, Daniel Neal [1732] Vol. 4, p.554.

A BRUISED REED

Country to Taunton, Bristol and Bath, they were eventually annihilated by the army of James II near Bridgewater at the battle of Sedgemoor on 6th July 1685, when there followed a fearful retribution at the hands of Judge Jeffreys. There is no record of how many Baptists suffered overall, but at Lyme Regis alone, on 12th September, the pastor of the Lyme Regis Particular Baptist Church, Sampson Larke, together with a leading Baptist and former officer of Cromwell, Abraham Holmes, and William Hewling, the nineteen-year-old grandson of William Kiffin, all lost their lives at the hands of the hangman. William Kiffin, the London minister and Particular Baptist leader would have been well known to John Rede, as almost certainly he would have known Abraham Holmes, since each had been officers in Cromwell's Army. Andrew Gifford, the Particular Baptist leader in the west, had been implicated in procuring weapons for the rebels but managed to avoid detection and so his life was spared.

Now the Anglican leaders and the Court turned on the Particular Baptists as complicit in the rebellion. There was also brutal persecution in Scotland after a failed attempt by the Duke of Argyll and the Campbell clan to wrest Scotland from the control of James II. Both the Earl of Argyll and the Duke of Monmouth [the illegitimate son of Charles II] were hurried to a traitor's death. In response to the persecution Dissenters and Scottish Covenanters met only in small groups, moved constantly from place to place, placed guards on their meetings to warn of danger, while their ministers went about in disguise. Beside imprisonment, many of the victims suffered huge financial losses in fines. Some fled abroad to the New England Colonies. There was great damage to trade in the country as Dissenters, being barred from university education, had turned their hand to business. In the West Country it was largely the Dissenters who owned the west of England cloth trade.

But within a year James II had other ideas. His great wish was to bring Roman Catholics back into office in the State. They had come under the same penal laws as the Dissenters. If he were to halt the persecution of Catholics he must do the same for Dissenters. His object was to reverse the changes made by the Reformation and restore the Anglican Church to the Catholic faith. To do this he would need to pack Parliament and subvert the constitution. Suddenly the Anglican bishops and clergy realised that the King was looking to ease the situation for Catholics and Dissenters and use them against the Anglicans. They had bitterly persecuted Catholics and Dissenters in the past, while trying to force the whole nation into one ecclesiastical and political mould and retain political power in the hands of the Anglican Church.

AN AGE OF INTOLERANCE

On 10th March 1686 James issued a royal decree releasing all who had been imprisoned for religious reasons. In November 1686 he set up a Licence Office which offered protection from persecution for a fifty-shilling fee. On 4th April 1687 he issued his First Royal Declaration of Indulgence for Dissenters and Catholics and hoped they would respond with Royal Addresses of support for his Government. While some of the London Particular Baptist ministers, led by Nehemiah Cox, responded positively, most were too wily and could see that once James II had got Catholics into office in the Church and State then persecution would again be their lot. Among those in London who refused to welcome the Declaration were William Kiffin and Joseph Stennett for the Baptists and Richard Baxter for the Presbyterians. The King went so far as to persuade Dissenters in London to take on the office of Alderman of the City of London and William Kiffin was eventually forced to become Alderman, which office he held for only nine months. The Anglicans, seeing the increase of Catholicism, made serious promises to the Dissenters that, if they would support the Anglican Church by opposing James II's unconstitutional measures, then they would offer them toleration at a future date. Sadly they soon forgot their promises when in 1688 the Glorious Revolution took place and James II fled the country. While granting Dissenters freedom to worship under Licensing Laws, they still barred them from the universities and all offices in the State and the Army.

On 2nd April 1688 James II promised to call a Parliament and issued his Second Declaration of Indulgence which would be established by law. All Anglicans and Dissenters were required to read it to their congregations. Most refused and the Archbishop of Canterbury and six bishops signed a protest to the King and were promptly sent to the Tower. After a trial they were all acquitted, but by then all the clergy and the country was in uproar. Now James II had turned the whole population against the monarchy. On Sunday 10th June 1688 the Queen gave birth to a son, James, later called the Old Pretender, [some wondered whether he was in fact a child of the Queen] and now a Catholic Succession was established and it appeared that the work of the Reformation would be lost. The Anglican bishops responded to the threat by secretly sending an invitation to William of Orange and his wife Mary. Mary was a daughter of James II by his first wife Anne Hyde, and together with her sister Anne [who was to become Queen in 1702] was in direct succession to the throne. Here was a strange irony, that Dissenters branded as revolutionaries now saw Anglicans [their accusers] supporting potential rebels, who invited William of Orange to invade their country and remove

A BRUISED REED

the legitimate monarch and take the throne. After some time for preparation William of Orange landed at Torbay in Devon with his army on 5th November 1688. He went first to Exeter to consolidate his position and wait to see whether the country would support him. Riots broke out in London and Judge Jeffreys was nearly lynched until troops rescued him and put him in the Tower where he eventually died. James II went at the head of a small army to Salisbury to oppose the invaders. This must have been an anxious moment for the Particular Baptists at Porton, who were only a few miles outside Salisbury, on the east side of the city from which the Royal Army must have approached, eagerly watching events to see who would win in the coming battle. James II realised however that his support in the country was dwindling by the hour, and so suddenly he left his army and fled back to London, from where he eventually left the country for France. 'Thus ended the short and unhappy reign of James II and with him the male line of the Royal House of Stuarts, a race of kings Providence raised up to be the scourge of these nations for they were every one chargeable with tyranny and oppression.'³⁰ William and Mary entered London in December and on 2nd January 1689, 'William Kiffin himself led a deputation of Baptists to present an address of welcome to the new rulers of England and made a personal contribution of £500 towards the financial needs of their government when it sought to raise a loan to tide it over the first six months.'³¹

³⁰ Ibid, p.601.

³¹ *English Baptists of the 17th Century*, B. R. White p.162.