

1665 witnessed the Five Mile Act which forbade dissenting preachers and separatists from coming within five miles of any settled communities...a real distance at that time...and painful penalties could be given for defiance. This act tended to curb the effect and influence of dissent and many persons were imprisoned and persecuted for such violations.

1670 witnessed more conventional acts and in 1673 the Test Act arrived. It was a parliamentary measure that made all communion services, etc., go according to that prescribed by the church of England.

With the acceptance and use of these laws, the Anglican church was militantly established and that picture will not change in the many years that followed. There was open revolt in Scotland on many of these issues and Charles II said on occasion that he had never intended them in a repressive way. He sought to give the indication that the repression was of parliament and that he, as a benevolent and gracious monarch would have opposed such things. As to his real feelings, we may never have knowledge but it seems that in this case he was flying a flag for sympathy in the hope that public support would release him from obligations to parliament and, had this happened, his Roman Catholic ideals would no doubt have quickly surfaced.

some dissenters

Some Dissenters

We attempt to trace only a few of these.

John Bunyan, 1628-1688

As a dissenter Bunyan spent 12 years in Bedford jail and produced the famous PILGRIM'S PROGRESS as well as GRACE ABOUNDING TO THE CHIEF OF SINNERS, etc. Bunyan was of the baptist dissenters but was not a purist and pastored a church where baptism was practiced in any style on any sort of subject. He was independent enough in his thinking to be thought of as not totally orthodox but the general simplicity of his Christianity is very apparent in his writings. Considering that his education came chiefly from reading the Bible, his literary mastery is a subject of wonder. His conversion, incidentally, was much influenced through reading Luther and feeling a companionate suffering to those of Luther as he agonized over life and death.