

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

PayPal

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *Transactions of the Baptist Historical Society* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_tbhs_01.php

The Fifth Monarchy Movement.

THE term "Fifth Monarchy" serves as a summary designation for an extraordinary religious and political movement, based on intense belief in the imminence of the "Fifth Monarchy," or universal rule of God's people on earth, as gathered from revelations contained in the apocalyptic book of Daniel (esp. chapters ii., vii., xi.). This movement is one of the numerous movements or parties that existed during the Commonwealth period in England, and owed its rise to the unique conditions of the time—a fervid religious spirit brooding upon the great political crisis, and seeking the key to it in the prophetic Scriptures, more especially the books of Daniel and Revelation. Under such conditions arose a very general expectation of some extraordinary dispensation shortly to appear. We have to recognise at the outset that the anticipation of the Fifth Monarchy—of an earthly reign of Christ and the saints—was very widely distributed at this time. Thomas Goodwin, in a sermon of the Fifth Monarchy, 1654, affirms that "all sorts, almost out of all quarters of the world, though they run several ways, yet they fall all into this notion. Those that are for the restoration of the churches to their first purity, they conclude for this reigning for 1,000 years. . . . Others that are for the coming of Christ in spirit (as the language of some is) they say this also That towards the end of the world, Jesus Christ will break forth to his people with a great deal of glory and splendour, so as never before. The very Jesuits themselves have been so much convinced that such things are to be in the later days, that some of them have written a book of the Fifth Monarchy; only, indeed, they do apply and appropriate it unto themselves." Modern students of the period confirm this testimony. "The idea of the near approach of a 'Fifth Monarchy' was *most widely spread*." . . . "there was not a denomination in which the idea did not exist" (Barclay, "Inner Life of the Religious Societies of the Commonwealth," 182, n 486. n) Hardly less comprehensive is the statement of Gooch ("History of English

Democratic Ideas in the 17th Century," 1898). "At the basis of the creed of every religious body of the time, except the Presbyterians, lay the Millenarian idea" (p. 127).

There is, then, a sense in which the great majority of (religious) Englishmen at that time might be called Fifth Monarchists. The name, however, is actually, and better, reserved for a minority with whom this belief was not merely a pious opinion or aspiration, but became their central and all dominating idea, and a primary principle of action—who were disposed to pursue, by such means as lay in their power, constitutional, or sometimes even unconstitutional, the aim of bringing nearer the realisation of that hope. A Fifth Monarchy party, in this narrower sense, first showed conspicuously in the army, where they are traceable (say) after the battle of Naseby (June, 1645). This victory, it will be remembered, had been won by the army that had sprung from the New Model (February 19),¹ and the Self Denying Ordinance (April), and which consisted largely of Independents and Anabaptists. For these sects, with their strong recoil from the established ecclesiastical order, and their belief in a direct guidance by the Spirit of the individual's understanding of the Word, there was in Fifth Monarchism something congenial, and it was specially among them that the movement found its recruits. These multiplied rapidly among the rank and file of the army, and included also some prominent officers (Rainsborough, Rich). Foremost among the latter was Colonel Harrison, one of the bravest and most capable of the Parliamentary commanders, who enjoyed the special confidence of Cromwell.

The military Fifth Monarchists soon became a party that counted in public affairs. In the struggle that presently ensued between the (Independent) army and the (Presbyterian) Parliament, their voice began to be heard. In the Army Declaration, 1647 (*e.g.*), the officers say that several of their number are in favour of placing authority in the hands of some "approved at least for moral righteousness," and specially actuated "by the principles of morals and religion" (Simpkinson, Thomas Harrison, p. 62). But their influence was shortly to be exerted with tragical effect, in a national affair of the first importance. The king was now under Parliamentary custody. What was to be done with

¹ Thomas Goodwin, preaching before the House, Feb. 25, on the "great interest of States and Kingdoms," declared that Christ would show himself King of nations as well as of saints, by ruining nations (containing his saints) which should not comply with his interest; and claimed the rapid changes of the last few years as signs of the near approach of Christ's Kingdom.

him? The retention of any earthly king, whatever limits might be set to his powers, was an obstacle to the realisation of the personal rule of Christ. Charles must die. It was accordingly the Fifth Monarchy officers who led in insisting on the execution of the king. The murder of Rainsborough by Royalists (October, 1648), only made them more resolute to have the king's life. Soon the extreme difficulties of the situation brought round to their view Cromwell and other leaders, who had been reluctant, and Charles was beheaded January, 1649. Harrison had been sent to escort him to London before his trial, and was popularly credited with being chiefly responsible for his death. From about the time of this event may be dated the appearance among the Fifth Monarchists of "a party which in comparison may be described as revolutionary" (Gooch)—a party (*i.e.*) which, not content with passively awaiting the introduction by providential interpositions of the reign of the saints, or at any rate with only such active measures towards its introduction as did not exceed lawful agitation, was disposed, whenever a promising opportunity should offer, to attempt to hew out with the sword a road for the saints to the government. Views of this kind find expression before long in Cary's "Little Horn's Doom and Down-fall" (April, 1651), in which it was affirmed "that nobles and mighty men were about to become subject to the saints, that it was lawful to combat Christ's enemies with the material sword, and that the saints should then possess riches, and reign with Him on earth" (Gooch).

Apart from the movement in the army, Fifth Monarchy principles were by this time laying hold of civilians in various parts of the country. Norfolk was a county in which they soon found numerous adherents. We have evidence of this in a petition (February, 1649), prepared for presentation to the Council of Officers "by many Christian people dispersed abroad throughout the county of Norfolk and city of Norwich." "It asked for the establishment of the reign of Christ and His saints. As only the godly were fit to govern, the Church should be the sole depository of civil authority. Independents and Presbyterians were to combine to choose delegates, who were in turn to elect "general assemblies or Church Parliaments, as Christ's officers and the Church's representatives, and to determine all things by the Word, as that law which God will exalt alone and make honourable" (Gardiner, Commonwealth and Protectorate, 132-3). In Wales, again, Fifth Monarchy views soon began to be ardently propagated. In January, 1650, an Act was passed for the teaching and preaching of the Gospel in Wales. The commission to execute it was given to Harrison, and among his assistants was Vavasour

Powell, who became (as we shall see) one of the most vigorous ministerial champions of Fifth Monarchy. The commission proceeded by replacing clergy, that seemed to them inefficient, with Independent ministers, preachers "of the spirit." But soon Cromwell had to march north to engage the Scotch, and Harrison was recalled to take (as major-general) the chief command in England. Powell, for his part, raised troops, and assisted him in the work of keeping order at home. At Musselburgh (August, 1650), the English army put forth a declaration to the people of Scotland, which we notice here for its plain tincture of Fifth Monarchy sentiments, language which was in later days thrown up against the army by steadfast Fifth Monarchists in proof that it was renegade from its "primitive Virgin spirit." "We did many of us rejoice at the Covenant [the solemn League and Covenant of 1654], because we found in it strains towards these ends ["the destruction of anti-Christ and the deliverance of the Lord's Churches"] . . . although some being more enlightened, did apprehend it to be so mixt with worldly interest, that they justly feared the INTEREST OF JESUS CHRIST would be but only pretended to, and the interest of this world and of anti-Christ himself carried on in a vizard, as we have since had abundant experience of," etc. The authors declare themselves "persuaded in our consciences that he [the king] and his monarchy was one of the ten horns of the Beast spoken of Revelation vii. 12-15," and confident that "the Lord will own" his execution. . . "When he brings forth these his enemies that will not suffer Jesus Christ to be king in the midst of His saints, and breaks them in pieces like a potter's vessel, let not Scotland nor any other nation say What dost thou?" The Scotch were crippled at Dunbar (September, 1650), and finally disposed of at Worcester (September, 1651).

There was henceforth in the three kingdoms no power that could resist the victorious army. The Presbyterian remnant of the Long Parliament could not hope for much more respite. The army was bent on getting rid of it. In April, 1653, it was dissolved by Cromwell, driven thereto (as he hinted) by parties led by Generals Lambert and Harrison respectively. The rule of the people had now gone the same way as the old monarchy. To the Fifth Monarchy men the opportunity seemed to have arrived for bringing in a government of the godly. In a letter to the officers serving under Fleetwood, in Ireland, at the time of the dissolution of the Parliament, 1653, Harrison, and some other army magnates, say, "The Lord hath once again pulled down the mighty from their seats, and we trust it is that Himself may reign. . . It will be your duty, and ours, to pray without

ceasing that those whom God shall call to the government may be men full of the Holy Ghost and Power." But how was such a government to be secured? Fifth Monarchy men were opposed on principle to parliaments elected by the people. The right government was one called of Christ, the King, and responsible only to Him. Harrison's wish was that the new Council of State (chosen by Cromwell and other leading officers) should choose a Parliament, with the help of nominations sent in by the "gathered" or voluntary churches throughout the land. John Spittlehouse, who described himself as a "late member of the army," advocated a Committee chosen by the officers (Army Vindicated, April 24th), or preferably a government nominated by Cromwell, who, like Moses, was divinely appointed to rule the Lord's people (A Warning-piece discharged, May 19th). Yet another pamphleteer ("The army no usurpers") roundly asserted it to be "of not less than divine institution that men fearing God should have the government." Specially full and interesting is the programme embodied in the numerous manifestoes of John Rogers, Independent minister, who, however, could boast of having on occasion borne arms in the Parliamentary cause. He was by this time one of the most eminent preachers of the Fifth Monarchists. He now (April 25th) "humbly offered to his excellency Lord-General Cromwell, a few proposals relating to civil government. 1. That your Excellency do choose the men that must govern this commonwealth. 2. Either a Synhedrin, Parliament, Council of seventy, or else one of a [each] county. But if the present junction of affairs requires a quicker despatch, that in the interim twelve worthies may be chosen as present governors—like to Israel's twelve judges. 3. They must be men fearing God, lovers of truth and justice, hating bribes and covetousness, which corrupt justice, not respecters of persons, wise (though not politic), and understanding in the times and seasons [Scripture references for each quality]. They must govern as the servants of Jesus Christ, but not as Lords over Christ." Rogers urges the Protector to "consult with the saints, and send to all discerning and spirited men for their proposals." At the end of May Rogers gave Cromwell one or two additional hints in the dedicatory epistle to his "Ohel or Bethshemesh. . . . an idea of Church Discipline," etc., a work which contended for the Congregational form of Church government as against the (established) Presbyterian form—it even claimed that the former is one of the great promises of these latter days, in which Christ alone shall reign, and an earthly paradise be restored! Rogers here adds, "Seeing running waters are always sweetest, that there might be a yearly election (or so) of officers in greatest

trust or power, lest they should in time assume an absoluteness to themselves, and become oppressors." He also beseeches Cromwell (1) not to usurp (as his predecessors had done) Christ's power in matters of religion (2) to countenance all he can to Congregational churches, "as the gates and palaces of Zion. But 3. lest we lost the substance for the shadow, there be, my Lord, a hidden number of saints (so called in Ps. 83^d) that you must be a shield to, too, in your capacity. They are as yet scarce known in the world, as they will be ere long."

With these proposals (save as regards the *numbers*) substantially coincided the plans that were actually adopted. Nominations were called for, and were sent in by congregations of most of the English counties; and a Parliament representative of all the counties, and of Scotland and Ireland, was chosen by the Council of State, which Parliament, after co-opting five of the chief military magnates, numbered in all 144. It was to retire in November, 1654, having first appointed successors for twelve months. That Cromwell himself largely shared at this time the hopes of the Fifth Monarchists, appears from the speech he made when delivering over to this Parliament the supreme authority. (July 4th). I confess I never looked to have seen such a day; I did not . . . indeed, we have not allowed ourselves the choice of one person in whom we had not this good hope, that there was in him faith in Jesus Christ; and love to all his People and Saints. . . . Never was a supreme authority under such a notion, in such a way of owning of God and being owned by him: And therefore I may also say, never such a people so formed, for such a purpose, thus called before Who can tell how soon God may fit the people for such a thing [themselves electing a Parliament]? and give me leave to say: if I know anything in the world, what is there likelier to win the people to the Interest of Jesus Christ, to the love of godliness (and therefore what stronger duty lies on you, being thus called) than an humble and godly conversation? And why should we be afraid to say or think, That this may be the door to usher in the Things that God has promised: which have been prophesied of. . . . And we have thought, some of us, That is it our duties to *endeavour* this way; not merely to *look* at that prophecy in Daniel, 'And the kingdom shall not be delivered to another people.'" etc.

The hopes of Fifth Monarchists naturally rose high. Never, indeed, had they a fairer prospect of achieving their political programme. What they were hoping from this Parliament we can now perhaps gather best from another publication of John Rogers, written probably in the autumn of 1653, "Sagrir, or

Doomsday drawing nigh, with Thunder and Lightning to Lawyers," etc., 1654. Again he begins with an address to Cromwell—"now you have won us, you must wall us with the good and wholesome laws and liberties of the people, as we were before the Norman invasion, or rather as Israel of old, Deut 61." Then follows an address to readers of various "faculties." The "Parliament man" is to make a clean sweep of the existing laws, and substitute "the laws of God given by Moses for republic laws, as well as the laws of God given by Christ, which must in for Church laws," thus "throwing down the standing of lawyers and priests." *Ministers*, in their turn, are warned that "their maintenance, which is now by tithes, must tumble (ere long) to purpose . . . not but that there is to be a maintenance for the Gospel Ministry, which is moral, and the equity of the Law, but this must be in Gospel manner" ("in as voluntary a way as may be, so that the people ought to be free in the manner of payment," Bethshemesh). *Lawyers* also are admonished, and much of the book is devoted to an exposure of the tyrannies, inequities, delays, and costliness of the existing laws, and the corrupt and grasping administration of them by the lawyers. Ch. V. is "of the Fifth Monarchy, when? and how? and why?" etc. All agree as to the near and swift approach of the Fifth Monarchy, though differing as to the precise time. The prophecy of the little Horn (Daniel vii.) has been variously interpreted of the Pope, the Turk, Julius Cæsar, anti-Christ, and Antiochus Epiphanes. "With much assurance and clear light," however, Rogers identifies it with William the Conqueror, and the subsequent line of English kings. Its predicted judgment took place in the case of Charles I. "After this horn (thus judged) . . . the Day of Judgement will reach France, Spain, Denmark, Poland, etc., with all the rest of the 10 horns. . . . Then enters the Fifth Monarchy. . . . Within this seven years, by 1660, the work will get as far as Rome, and by 1666 this Monarchy must be visible in all the earth." (The author cites in support of his views various prognostications of former times, one of which at least may be admitted here, if only to illustrate the naive arbitrariness with which Fifth Monarchists interpreted prophecies to their own purpose). "Cataldus Finius, minister of Trent. . . . when Rome (says he) begins to hear the loud bellowing of the fat cow (I know not who that is, unless the English nation, as seems by what follows) woe! woe then be to thee, O Flanders full of blood! and Zeeland and Holland full of treacheries (as if this were the way of the war to Rome)."²

² England was at war with the Dutch. Fifth Monarchists desired to impose

Respecting the laws and officers of the new order, Rogers says, "Christ hath (of right) the supreme authority of the nations. . . . Although he doth delegate a judicial power to his servants, Isai. 1²⁷ 1 Kgs 6¹², and subordinate officers, Isai 60¹⁷ Dan 7²⁷ Rev 19¹⁴, which must all be saints too; yet he keeps the legislative power to himself, and will not part with it (nor can he) to princes or parliaments." The business of Parliament is "to model and conform the civil affairs for Christ's coming. 1. Constitute none but honest, faithful men, such as follow the Lamb, into places of trust, or offices of this nation. 2. See that . . . those laws which are contrary to sound reason or religion, whether in things civil or ecclesiastic . . . be abolished for ever. 3. Improve your utmost for Jesus Christ, and his monarchy at home and abroad. . . . The law of God, which is now slighted as imperfect, while men set up their own notions and forms, in the stead, and prefer Gratian's or a Justinian's law, and so make themselves as heathens without the law of God amongst them, this law lies in Deut. 6¹. These are the commandments (i.e. the 10 in 2 tables given to Moses on Mt. Sinai Exod 20) the statutes (i.e., the several cases depending on, and arising out of each command . . .) and the judgments (i.e. the sentence upon the breach of every law, how and what punishment must be). Now this law . . . must be set up," etc.

In the Parliament (the "Little," "Barbon," or "Nominated" Parliament) there was, under the lead of Harrison, a strong minority, which sympathised with such views. Through their efforts, more or less progress was made towards abolition of ecclesiastical patronage and tithes, and of the Court of Chancery, and towards a comprehensive simplification of the existing code of laws. They were further disposed to challenge the vote for the pay of the army. Thus they alienated and alarmed various classes of the community. Their opponents in the House also raised the cry that property in general was being attacked, and obtained a snap vote for returning authority into the hands of Cromwell (December 12th).

Great were the surprise, disappointment, and indignation of the Fifth Monarchists; and these feelings they expressed in unmeasured terms, which drew to their fellowship many of the more violent and desperate spirits in the nation. On December 18, at Blackfriars, then the chief meeting-place of Fifth Monarchists in London, a preacher (Powell or Feake) adjured any

upon them a "peace upon the account of Christ, to engage together against Anti Christ, Rome, prelates, enemies of all nations." (Bethshemesh, dedication).

friend of Cromwell present to tell him that he was "the dissemblingest perjured villain in the world, and that soon he should be served worse than that great tyrant, the last Lord Protector [Somerset]." Preaching was resumed next day. Christopher Feake, a Baptist Fifth Monarchist preacher,³ handled the description of the little horn in Daniel vii. in such a way as to insinuate its identification with Cromwell, while declaring that he would name nobody. Powell followed him, enlarging on the subject from Daniel xi. with less reserve. "The King of the North" he interpreted to be the late king, and applied the description of the "vile person" who should succeed him (*v.* 21) to the existing régime. After someone, who attempted to express some opposition, had been howled down, Mr. Cockaine discoursed for the rest of the time on Hosea v. 1-2, affirming that the unholy alliance of king and idolatrous priests had its parallel in England at that moment, *i.e.*, in the Protector and the established ministry. Rogers, for his part, published, on December 21st, his "humble cautionary proposals" to the Protector, bidding him take heed of being guided or governed with "the old State principles of carnal policy," and so on. On the other hand, in January, 1654, "the most respected of the London Baptists wrote to disclaim all participation in the views of the Fifth Monarchists" (Gardiner, *Commonwealth and Protectorate II.*, 305). In a letter to Baptists in Ireland, Kiffin criticises the Blackfriars preachings, for (1) implying that magistrates are "only accountable to Christ for their actions, and not to men; and would not this have been the same with the late king" . . . (2) asserting that the policy of war or peace with other nations should be determined by "a spirit stirred up, as they say, by God to throw down potentates and powers, rather than the prudential rules of justice and righteousness in the doing to all men as they would man should do to them."

A kindred sobriety of mind was shown by Cromwell himself. At the opening of the Parliament of 1654, while cordially recognising "that Jesus Christ will have a time to set up His reign in our hearts," he said, "but for men, on this principle, to betitle themselves, that they are the only men to rule kingdoms, govern nations, and give laws to people, and determine of property and liberty and everything else; when such a pretension as this is, truly they had need to give clear manifestations of God's presence with them, before wise men will receive or submit to their conclusions." Cromwell now firmly repressed the turbulence of the Fifth Monarchists. Many officers and men were dismissed from

³ Feake "occupies a middle position between the quiet dreamers and the armed fanatics—his violence was exclusively of the tongue." (*Dict. Nat. Biog.*)

the army. Harrison, having neglected an order to keep at home, was presently imprisoned for a while. The prominent preachers were called before the Council, and Feake and Simpson were sent to Windsor Castle (January 28, 1654). Rogers' house was searched, and his papers seized. This drew from him a solemn remonstrance to Cromwell, Mene, Tekel, Perez, etc. A few months later, he held a day of humiliation at St. Thomas Apostle's, where he had a lectureship, and in his sermon accused the apostate Protector of having broken all the ten commandments, called him a "great thief," and complained of his spies and tale bearers. Shortly after the Council ordered his apprehension, and he was imprisoned (Lambeth, July, 1654; Windsor, March, 1655; Carisbrooke Castle, December, 1655). Of the very harsh treatment to which he was subjected in Lambeth, "that old butcher's shop and shamble of the saints," and other strong places, he wrote in prison a very detailed account ("Jegar Sahadutha, or a heart appeal").

In February, 1655, owing to an appeal by friends for the release of himself and Feake, he was brought before the Protector to discuss whether it was for Christ's sake that he suffered—supporters of both parties being also present. Cromwell told him that there was, as never before, complete liberty of conscience, called God to witness that none suffered in England for the testimony of Jesus, said that Rogers suffered for "railing, lying, and as a raiser of sedition," that parties intolerant of others' views must be kept out of the government; and when Rogers besought him to "consider how near it is to the end of the Beast's dominion, the forty-two months"; cut him short with "Talk not of that, for I must tell you plainly they are things I understand not." Rogers, for his part, defied all law and rule that trespassed on his Spirit-prompted faith. ("Faithful narrative," etc., by Fifth Monarchy men present, 1655). General Harrison, Colonel Rich, and two other Fifth Monarchy leaders, Messrs. Carew and Courtney, afterwards waited on Cromwell with a request for release of the prisoners. A few days later they were themselves brought before Cromwell, in presence of ministers, representing both sides (Simpson was one). They declined in any way to acknowledge this 'anti-Christian and Babylonish' government, and having refused an undertaking to keep to their own counties, were committed for contempt and various treasonous practices" (Thurloe to Monk).

Rogers' prison-book bewails the present apostasy, "not only among mercenary professors, but the little remnant." He would not know what to make of its coldness, cowardliness, and carelessness, "were it not to fulfil the word of God" (Rev. ii. 9), and

that the enemy "may be surprised as in the days of Noah and Lot," etc. He is stimulated to write by many requests from perplexed saints "for resolves in the work of the day about the witnesses, the time, the street [Rev. xi.] . . . the order and effects of their rising; also about the vials . . . the first and second Beasts . . . and who is the man that makes up the last character of the Beast, viz. 666." True, he has had his own misgivings, from "the intricacy, depth, and incomprehensiveness of those deep prophecies which I have to ferry over or pass through," as well as from "the bellowing threats and atrocity of the Beast now up in England." But he has been confirmed by the reported visions of a woman subject to hypnotic trance, and by dreams of his own—"for though I am as far from . . . having dependence upon dreams or visions as any man alive, yet I must not omit the night-teaching of the Spirit, nor such dreams and visions which bring forth blessed effects upon the spirit of men, or are notifications of the truth and mind of God." He also comforts himself that fools "are the Lord's instruments, yea, such asses and idiots as we are (by grace) the King of saints shall ride upon into his throne." Accordingly he gives a vigorous exhortation to the "remnant" to be ready, and especially to the imprisoned leaders. "Come, come, sirs, prepare your companies, for King Jesus his Mount Sion muster day is at hand. . . . We wait only for the word from on High to fall on, and faith and prayer to do the execution according to Rev. 18⁶,—and then by the grace of God the proudest of them shall know we are engaged . . . to stand or fall with the Lord Jesus . . . so as neither to give nor take quarter, but according to his orders. . . . Is it not high time for the witnesses to be rising. . . . Yea, the man among the myrtle-trees (Zech. 1⁸) on his red horse is already mounted, if I mistake not, and ready to march, with his sword to execute, and fire to plead with all nations; for his bow⁴ he used upon his white horse (Rev. 6³) hitherto, but the next is his sword on his red horse, and the slain of the Lord shall be many (Isai. 66¹⁶)."⁴ Finally, Rogers calls on "this bastard of Ashdod" to release the prisoners; or "else I say unto thee by the authority of the Lord committed to me that thou shalt die like a BEAST. . . . And I summon you all that have a hand or heart in this persecution to appear before my Christ, his elect angels and saints . . . after the 1335 days, when we shall judge you that now judge us." . . .

Partly owing to the violent spirit here illustrated, Fifth Mon-

⁴ Interpreted as the *Word* of God, Goodwin, Sermon of the Fifth Monarchy, 1654.

archism had, indeed, largely declined in credit and in numbers. By the spring of 1656, the Welsh Fifth Monarchists were settling down into peaceful Baptists, like their leader Powell, who had lately received baptism, and whose "Word for God" (1655) expressed the political views of Fifth Monarchy in a milder form. In Norfolk, also, the Fifth Monarchy congregations were losing many to the Baptists or Quakers. Even in London the cause had lost ground. Here the chief meeting-places were now at Allhallows (milder), and Swan Alley, Coleman Street (more violent). In the winter of 1655-6 were started five meetings of twenty-five members each, of whom one only was to know of, and be the channel of communication with, the other meetings. Emisaries from these meetings went forth to proselytise in the country (Thurloe). In the spring of 1656 the government's informers reported growing excitement in the Swan Alley congregation; now led by Thomas Venner, a wine-cooper, who had come from New England in 1651, and had since held, and lost, on suspicion of disloyal designs, a post in the Tower of London. In July there was a meeting of London Fifth Monarchists, which "concluded the time to be now, and the means, by the sword." They next sought the co-operation of the so-called "Commonwealthsmen" (who favoured a republic, ruled by democratic Parliaments). These, however, desired to restore in some shape the Long Parliament, "while the constitutional aims of the Fifth Monarchy men were either purely negative or absolutely vague" (Firth, "Last Years of the Protectorate"); and a conference between leading representatives of both parties led to no result save an interrogation of these leaders before the Protector's Council. They were, however, left at liberty; and near the end of the year there was a release of Fifth Monarchy prisoners. Rogers and Feake resumed their attacks on the government. On January 5, 1657, at All Hallows, the latter declared that in substance monarchy and popery were still maintained. Another ex-prisoner, however, the Baptist preacher, Simpson, condemned Feake's aversion from civil government, as did other leading Baptists, some saying that those who tried to interpret obscure prophecies, like Daniel and Revelations, were fools (Thurloe). (Dr. Whitley has kindly pointed out to me that by this time the Seventh Day controversy was becoming the centre of attention to Simpson and most other Fifth Monarchy Baptists). There was, however, a London congregation of Baptists concerned in the designs of Venner's following. These are known to us in some detail from some minutes of the Coleman Street meeting, recently reprinted by Mr. Champlin Burrage in the "English Historical Review" (October, 1910). Arrangements were adopted for the

choice of various kinds of officers, and Venner was elected chief captain. A rendezvous was appointed at Mile End Green, whither arms and ammunition were to be transported, and the conspirators were to proceed from various points in the City, on April 7. It was hoped to surprise some government troop of horse, and after executing its officers, and such men as resisted, to appropriate their horses, "because the Lord hath need." Any booty that might be acquired was to go into a common treasury, applicable to the maintenance of the conspirators and their families. A Declaration was printed, and plans made for distributing it in London and various parts of the country. These proposals were not carried through without opposition from some dissenting brethren, among whom at one point "a very unsavoury and uncrucified spirit appeared." They accused the leaders of self-seeking. One objected that: "1, the ancient wise Christians are not with us, as Mr. Harrison, Carew, Mr. Rogers; 2, the time is not come by two months" [42 months (Rev. xi. 2) from the Protectorate, December, 1654]. Ultimately some members withdrew. The Baptist meeting also doubted if the time were come, while there was such disunion among the saints; and there were such mutual distrusts and recriminations between them and Venner's meeting, that the latter resolved to proceed without them. At last, however, there was prospect of an understanding, and in the hope of their coming in, the rising was postponed to April 9. Its programme was embodied in "A Standard set up, etc., William Medley [son-in-law of Venner], scribe," 1657—Christ, the supreme law-giver; the Scriptures, as His revealed will, the sole law; a government of "men of the choicest light and Spirit," chosen annually by "the Lord's freemen" (who would also choose district judges); the government not competent, however, to alter "any of the Foundations of Common Right and Freedom," once agreed upon; "save in case of a further convincing light," and then by law; no taxes in time of peace, and only by law and the people's assent in time of war, the charges of which shall fall chiefly on its occasioners, the Beast and his officials; no tithes, or fixed salaries, for ministers; "the Lord's people, of what opinion soever, besought to come in with us in this Bottome."

Thanks to the efficiency of Thurloe's system of espionage and information, timely notice reached Whitehall of a suspicious gathering in Shoreditch. The house was surrounded, and about twenty men, armed and spurred, were seized, together with some money, arms, and ammunition, bundles of declarations, and a standard bearing the red "lion of the tribe of Judah" and the motto, "Who shall rouse him up?" Venner, Medley, and others

were confined in the Tower and elsewhere. Harrison, Rich, and some other Fifth Monarchy leaders were arrested on suspicion, but released after a few days. In February, 1658, when danger threatened the Protector's government from a conjunction of hostile parties, Cromwell, on his personal warrant, had Harrison, Rogers, and other eminent Fifth Monarchy men arrested. Their chief offence was circulating seditious pamphlets among the army, e.g., "Some Considerations . . . for . . . the Faithful," etc., 1657. The authors of this tract ask "whether Jesus Christ is not by the saints as his battle-axe to break and consume both the magistratical and ministerial authority of the Beast [Cromwell] and his horns, before his personal coming"; and agree "to arm against, resist, and openly oppose them, and do our utmost endeavour to force the power out of their hands," while we "own and approve of such a magistracy as is according to the heart of God," Rom. xiii. 3. The dissolution of Parliament (February) provoked further violent talk from Fifth Monarchists. In April, the Coleman Street meeting was raided, those present arrested, including Cornet Day and John Canne, Baptist, and sentenced to a fine of £500, or a year's imprisonment. Feake also brought the authorities down on him again, but was released, as was Rogers, on April 16. Harrison and others recovered liberty after Cromwell's death, September, 1658.

With regard to the complicated political intrigues that followed that event, it must suffice here to say that Fifth Monarchists had their full share in them. In May, 1660, Charles II. was proclaimed in London. Harrison was already again in the Tower; in the autumn he, first of the regicides, was tried and executed. This exasperated the Fifth Monarchy men, who doubtless realised that their cause was desperate under the new régime. Venner led the Coleman Street meeting in planning another rising. It, too, had its manifesto, "A door of hope," in which the conspirators devoted their lives to the cause, and vowed not to sheathe their swords again "until Mount Sion became the joy of the whole earth. . . . For that we are purposed . . . to go on to France, Spain, Germany, and Rome, to destroy the Beast and whore." On Sunday evening, January 6, about fifty men broke out into the streets, challenged passers, shot down one who declared himself for King Charles, terrorised the city till Wednesday, held at bay the troops sent to quell them, refused quarter, and were not disposed of till the King's Life-guards and another city regiment had turned out. Venner (wounded) and a number of others were taken alive, tried, and executed in various places. Clearness of complicity in this rising was claimed by "several Anabaptist societies in a humble representation to the king" (January 30).

Here the story of the Fifth Monarchy as a serious movement ends, though there were abortive plots, or rumours of plots, for several years longer.

A passing strange, and to this day a moving story!—of men from whose virtues, as well as mistakes, we can still learn much, and in whom there is surely not a little for us to admire. These were men of vision and faith; and that a faith so clear and convinced that they were ready to stake life and liberty and all in a conflict against the world, for a land of promise which after all existed, so far, only in their dreams. We, no doubt, think it strange and almost laughable to see men deciding the gravest political movements by reference to obscure prophecies, actually counting on the resurrection of the two witnesses (Rev. xi.), and so on. Some, perhaps, were reckless adventurers, but only a minority. Most were sincere, and not a few were high-minded men. Their errors were largely due to ignorance of the true way of reading Bible prophecy, their extravagancies to the extraordinary difficulties and trials of their situation; their fight, if misguided, was, after all, a whole-hearted fight for liberty, both civil and religious; and grandly noble, if impracticable, is their ideal of a rule of the saints.

It might have been desirable to add a brief summary of their principles, but limitation of space forbids, and perhaps they have been sufficiently indicated in the course of the narrative. One further point, however, may still be touched—the relation between Fifth Monarchists and Baptists. It can be briefly stated. The Fifth Monarchy party embraced members of various religious denominations. As Rogers told Cromwell, "That Fifth Monarchy principle . . . is of such a latitude as takes in all saints, all such as are sanctified in Christ Jesus, without respect of what form of judgment he is." With Rogers, however, "saints" meant practically members of Congregationalist Churches. And no detailed exposition is needed to show a special kinship between Fifth Monarchy on the one hand and those churches on the other, with their exclusive acceptance of the Scriptures, as the rule of faith and practice, their belief in the Spirits' illumination of each individual member, and their strong discontent with the existing conditions of church and state. We might, then, expect beforehand to find many Baptists in the ranks of Fifth Monarchy. We have seen that this was actually the case. But we have also seen that as the movement developed, Baptists tended to draw off from it; and from the first there were many who kept clear of it; and, on the whole, we may follow Gooch's statement ("English Democratic Ideas in the 17th Century"), "Except in the case of Canne, who was more a Millenarian

than a Baptist, every authoritative declaration of principle leads us to regard the English Baptists as an orderly and relatively conservative society. The typical Baptist is to be found, not among those who haunted the meetings of the Millenarians, but in such men as Tombes, the friend of Clarendon and Sanderson, in the learned Jessey, and in the saintly Hanserd Knollys."

Captain John Spencer.

A long record in the State papers about this pioneer of lay-preaching, confirms our suggestions on page 128. On 10th April, 1650, when Major-general Harrison was putting the militia into safe hands, Spencer was made lieutenant-colonel in Yorkshire, to assist Lidcott. Next year he and Captain Kiffin were directed to enlist the well-disposed around Theobalds, a royal manor on the edge of Middlesex and Hertfordshire, to which Theobalds Road led, there being a special King's Gate into it just north of Holborn—facts with a peculiar interest for friends of the Kingsgate Press. In 1653 he began a close association with Colonel Packer, who with him and Kiffin and three others received on 7th July a warrant entitling them to preach in any pulpit whatever. On 7th February, 1654, he joined Jessey and Highland in moderating the heat of Simpson's congregation at Allhallows. On 5th December, 1655, he and Packer were of a body of officers who tendered advice to Cromwell, received graciously; on 10th March, 1656, the pair joined in a recommendation to Major Bourne. On 24th September, 1657, the same Council which granted the ruined site of the Convocation House to the unlucky Simpson, granted Spencer £60 yearly as preacher: this was adjusted next March to £50, and he was appointed to Theobalds. In June, 1659, he was commissioned again as captain under Packer, and in November was at the Ayr garrison. Here he formed another Baptist church, with twenty-three privates and corporals of his company, but the Clarke papers tell how Monk got him and Colonel Sawrey ousted. The colonel retired to Broughton Tower in Lancashire, and founded the church now known as Tottlebank. The captain retired to Theobalds, where he had acquired the manor, said next June to be worth £10,000. The Act of Oblivion and Indemnity possibly assured him in this, but when in 1664 he was accused of a new plot to raise Westmorland, a good pretext was given. The Dutch ambassador reported on 10-20th August, 1665, that he was in prison. These facts link up the author of 1639 and 1642 with the rich captain Spencer of Hertford in 1669, who in 1672 was licensed for Baptist worship at Cheshunt.