

The Shrewsbury tailor, Chidley, was, like Pride, a freeman of the Haberdasher's Company. Others members were David Brown, a Scottish teacher who taught adults to read and write; John Jerrow, a Tewkesbury glover; and Rice (properly Rhys or Reece) Boy, an itinerant preacher who had travelled in Wiltshire and Gloucestershire before gravitating to London.<sup>15</sup> The congregation clearly offered a welcome to those from outside the capital.

Where did Pride's separatist beliefs come from? There were dissenters in the rural backwaters of Somerset, certainly: a petition to exclude bishops from the House of Lords was circulated in the county in 1642,<sup>16</sup> but this was a form of

1642

With whose name are the words of the petition  
 Dore to fit to all to find it may be true. That the house  
 of lords John Dore is a man of an honest life & a religious  
 And will be affected to the Parliament and good government  
 And one that is devoted to the state service in the  
 strength of his ability in the way for it is possible of him  
 attending to the petition for the use of the state of  
 some ship or vessel in the employment will be given  
 the best of the state for one of the best of the state  
 in the service of the state who is a man of the state  
 subscribed and named March the 1642

The name John Dore Smallish  
 in the name of London

Thomas Pride  
 John Dore  
 H. Dore  
 London

Thomas Pride's ungainly but domineering signature.

anti-Episcopalian protest rather than the more contentious brand of nonconformity taken up by Pride. From the available evidence, Pride's religious separatism is likely to have been the effect of radical and compelling thinking circulating in London during the 1620s and 30s on an impressionable young man. Pride's fellow worshipper, William Kiffin, left an account of the important role religion played in his own apprenticeship:

I began to be acquainted with several young men who diligently attended on the means of grace... And, being apprentices as well as myself, they had no opportunity of converse, but on the Lord's days. It was our constant practice to attend the morning lecture, which began at six o'clock ... We also appointed to meet together an hour before service, to spend it in prayer and communicating to each other what experience we had received from the Lord.<sup>17</sup>

The congregation was not simply a place of worship for the apprentices, it provided an opportunity to socialise and a way of allowing disparate people to identify themselves as a distinct group. It is quite possible that Pride was one of the fraternity that Kiffin recollects in his memoirs. They were clearly an enthusiastic bunch, although Kiffin admitted that they studied the Bible with some difficulty: 'we also read some portion of Scripture, and spake from it what it pleased God to enable us'.<sup>18</sup>

This brand of eager, individualistic interpretation of the Bible was problematic for those in authority. Throughout the 1630s Charles I governed through Royal edict with no recourse to an elected assembly. One aspect of Monarchy, specifically the brand of absolutist, unrestrained monarchy of the Tudors and Stuarts, is that subjects are expected to worship in the manner of the sovereign. William Kiffin describes the effect this situation had on the gathered church which he and Pride attended in the 1630s:

It being then the heat of the Bishops' severities, we were forced to meet very early in the morning, and to continue till night ... meeting one Lord's day at a house on Tower-hill, on coming out, several rude persons were about the door; and many stones were flung.<sup>19</sup>

Fearful of travelling in daylight, confined to the house during the day, sought by the authorities, vulnerable to attack: for Thomas Pride and others this was what religious worship had been reduced to. Two years after Pride and his fellow worshippers broke away with Duppa the Jacob Church was uncovered by William Laud's pursuivants in a determined effort to stamp out religious separatism. On 29 April 1632 the congregation was arrested *en masse* while at worship in the Blackfriars home of Humphrey Barnet, a brewer's clerk. The arrested members, charged with delinquency and schism, were uncooperative with the High Commission that tried