

JOHN ROBINSON
1575?–1625

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JOHN ROBINSON

THE CELEBRATION OF THE SAILING OF THE “MAYFLOWER,” 1620

IN planning to celebrate the third centenary of the sailing of the *Mayflower*, the Free Churches of England have more than one aim in mind.

The men of the *Mayflower* stand out among English men of action. They thought deeply; they ventured in faith; they achieved what they sought, and far more. They laid the foundations of a great Commonwealth, whose part in the world's history has been great and will be greater yet. It is well to look back to our past and to recall these heroic men of our own blood and our own faith, for they remind us of tasks set before us and the power by which we may do them.

In the next place, such a celebration must draw our two great peoples together in something of more moment than the ties of ordinary intercourse and of common political action. At the heart of the Pilgrim movement lay a passion for liberty, that led the Pilgrims, as it leads other men, further than they dreamed. It is the soul of progress, and it was first realised in the sphere of the Christian faith—a high memory and inspiration to two peoples who have known more than once “under God a new birth of freedom.”

Above all, we commemorate men who set loyalty to God first, who stood by the priesthood of all believers, the real foundation of Christian democracy, and the human soul's right of immediate access to God; and who in their faith in God, “dared to do their duty as they understood it,” and as God revealed it to them. And in so doing we commit ourselves, with those who join with us on both sides of the ocean, to a closer attention to the will of God, and to a higher resolve to follow the voice of God, to whatever end He calls us. We believe that “the Lord hath more light and truth yet to break forth out of His holy word”; and we look in this commemoration more to the future than to the past, to fresh insight into God's will for the life of men and nations, to new develop-

ments of freedom along the lines of God's law, and to fuller knowledge of God's revelation of Himself in Jesus Christ.

JOHN ROBINSON

(1575?-1625)

BY THE REV.

F. J. POWICKE, Ph.D.

AUTHOR OF "HENRY BARROW, SEPARATIST," "ROBERT
BROWNE, PIONEER OF DERN CONGREGATIONALISM,"
"ESSENTIALS OF CONGREGATIONALISM," "THE
INEVITABLENESS OF THE CONGREGATIONAL
PRINCIPLE," ETC.

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PREFACE

THIS little book has been written at the instance of Dr. Rendel Harris, whose manifold activities in connection with the Tercentenary of the *Mayflower* this year are not only a proof of his own enthusiastic interest, but also no small contribution towards ensuring for it a conspicuous and worthy success. He thought there was need of a brief account of Robinson which should sum up the known facts about him and make clear his right to a central place in the “Pilgrim” movement from Scrooby to New Plymouth. This account I have tried to furnish—this, and nothing more. I have, therefore, omitted picturesque details of place and circumstance which the reader may find, to his satisfaction, in Dr. Dexter and Dr. John Brown.

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Nor has it been my concern to dwell at any length on the men—men, in some respects, as great as Robinson himself—who imbibed his spirit and helped to work out his ideals. Brewster, Bradford, Winslow, and even Cushman, deserve special treatment, and have received it—except, perhaps, Cushman. There is no doubt of the prominence which will be given to two or three of them in the forthcoming celebration. But it is not quite so certain that Robinson’s place is secure. He stands for the purely spiritual and ecclesiastical element in the Adventure; and, although that element was the mainspring of all the rest, experience suggests a fear that its relative significance may be overshadowed. Hence it seemed worth while to detach him from the great story of political and national growth to which he may be said to form the frontispiece and set forth what is known of him and what he taught in a plain narrative by itself. It is a very unexciting narrative. Its events made no noise when they transpired,

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and awake no thrills when they are read. But there was behind them a rich soul, of which they were, more or less, symbolic; and by a sympathetic

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imagination that soul can still be felt, and its voice heard in needed lessons
for to-day.

FRED. J. POWICKE.

Heaton Moor,

Stockport,

January 1920.

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AUTHORITIES

PRIMARY

- Governor William Bradford's "History of Plimoth Plantation," down to 1646—lost from about 1775, found in the Bishop of London's Library at Fulham in 1855, handed over to the Governor of Massachusetts in 1897, published in quarto from the original MS. in 1901. It is this edition which is quoted. "A Relation or Journal of the Beginning and Proceedings of the English Plantation settled at Plymouth in New England . . ." 1622.
- Governor Edward Winslow's "Brief Narration"—an appendix to his "Hypocrisie Unmasked," 1646.
- Bradford's "Dialogue"—Chapter 26 of "Chronicles of the Pilgrim Fathers of the Colony of Plymouth," by Alexander Young, 1844.
- "The Works of John Robinson," 3 vols. Edited by Robert Ashton, 1851.

SECONDARY

- Joseph Hunter's "Collections concerning the Early History of the Founders of New Plymouth." First edition, 1849; second edition, revised and much enlarged, 1854. (Mr. Hunter was the first to locate Scrooby as with Gainsborough the birthplace of the new movement and Austerfield as the birthplace of William Bradford, etc.)
- Dr. Henry Martyn Dexter's "Congregationalism, as seen in its Literature," 1879. Lecture XII.

- "Pilgrim Fathers of New England," by Dr. John Brown, 1897.
- "The Story of the Pilgrim Fathers," by Edward Arber, 1897.
- "The Early English Dissenters in the Light of Recent Research," 1912. Vol I, By Champlin Burrage.
- "New Facts concerning John Robinson" (1910), by C. Burrage.

CHRONOLOGICAL

The day of the month is Old Style

1575 *circ.* John Robinson born.

1592. April 9th, enters Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. 1597. Fellow of his college.

1604. Feb. 15th, married at Greasley, near Nottingham. 1604-6. Preaching Elder or Curate at St. Andrew's Church, Norwich.

1606. Formation of separatist Church at Gainsborough. 1606-7. Church divides into two companies at Scrooby and Gainsborough.

1607-8. Robinson at Scrooby.

1608 (summer). Removes with Church to Amsterdam. 1609 (spring). Settles with Church at Leyden.

1615 *circ.* Conducts public disputation against Arminianism.

1615. Sept. 3rd, becomes "an honorary member of the University" of Leyden.

1617. Negotiations begin for migration of Church to America.

1620. About July 22nd the *Speedwell* sails from Delfshaven for Southampton with a part of the Church.

1620. About August 5th *Speedwell* and *Mayflower* sail from Southampton.

1620. Sept. 6th, *Mayflower* sails alone from Plymouth. 1620. Nov. 11th, *Mayflower* reaches Cape Cod. The Pilgrim's Covenant. 1620. Dec. 16th, comes to harbour at Plymouth. 1625. March 1st, death of Robinson at Leyden.

ROBINSON'S PRINCIPAL WRITINGS

1609. "An Answer to a Censorious Epistle" (of Joseph Hall, entitled, "A Letter to Mr. Smyth and Mr. Robinson, Ringleaders of the late Separatists at Amsterdam.")

Between 1609–1611, a lost writing now known from "An Answer to John Robinson the Brownist on Separation from the Church of England."¹

1610. "Justification of Separation from the Church of England," against Rev. Richard Barnard's invective, entitled, "The Separatist's Schism."

1614. "Of Religious Communion Private and Public." 1615. "A Manumission to a Manuduction" (the latter by Dr. William Ames).²

1618. "The People's Plea for the Exercise of Prophecy," a defence of lay-preaching against John Yates, B.D., minister of St. Andrew's Church, Norwich.

1625. "A Just and Necessary Apology of certain Christians no less contumeliously than commonly called Brownists or Barrowists" (first published in Latin, 1619).

1634. A Treatise on the Lawfulness of hearing Ministers in the Church of England (written in 1624), 1634.

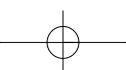
"New Essays," or "Observations Divine and Moral."

These seem to have been written at various times and were collected for publication in this year.

¹ The "Answer" exists in a MS. discovered by Mr. Champlin Burrage and is described in "New Facts concerning John Robinson," 1610. There is no certain clue to the author, but he "was an old friend of Robinson's" (p. 10).

² This came to light in 1851, and was reprinted in "Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society," 4th Series, vol. i.

For all the above, except 1 and 2, see Ashton's edition of Robinson's works.



I

CHAPTER I

THANKS to successful research by the Rev. Walter H. Burgess,¹ the question of Robinson's home and probable birthplace—after a long period of conjecture—seems to have been set at rest. He has discovered that “both Robinson and his wife Bridget lived at Sturton-le-Steeple, Nottinghamshire.” Here his father, also named John, “was a substantial yeoman.” “Besides John, Pastor of the Pilgrim Fathers, he had another son, William, and a daughter, Mary. By his will, and also, to a greater extent, by the will of his wife Ann, his son John Robinson received bequests. His little grandson, John-at Leyden—and the other

¹ Mr. Burgess first published his discovery in two articles in the *Christian Life* (February 4th and February 18th, 1911), entitled, “John Robinson, Pastor of the Pilgrim Fathers and his Wife”; and, in America, in the *Christian Register*, entitled “John Robinson and his Wife,” in February 1911, and *Who was John Robinson?* February 1911. See also his *John Smith, the Se-Baptist*, p. 317.

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children in the Pastor's family, were not forgotten. Bridget,” the Pastor's wife, “came of a well-to-do family of a similar rank in life, but apparently of greater estate. She was the second daughter of Alexander and Eleanor White, of Sturton-le-Steeple, and had many brothers and sisters.”¹ These are some of the facts which Mr. Burgess has brought to light; and, while not proving that Sturton-le-Steeple was Robinson's birthplace, they evidently render this very probable. At any rate, Sturton was his early home; and there he grew up in a Puritan atmosphere. William Brewster, of Scrooby (1566–1643), William Bradford, of Austerfield (1589–1654), Thomas Helwys, of Broxtowe Hall (1550?–1616?), and perhaps John Smith (*d.* 1612), were his neighbours. John Smith, indeed, may have been his school-mate, if Mr. Burgess is right in thinking that he has traced his origin to the same parish.¹

¹ Burgess, *John Smith, the Se-Baptist*, p. 327.

² So he says in a private letter to the writer.

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It has been pointed out that over all the district represented by such names Puritan influence was rife. There was Richard Clifton (*d.* 1616), Rector of Babworth, six miles south of Scrooby, from 1586 to 1613—a “grave and reverend preacher, who by his pains and diligence had done much good, and under God had been a means of the conversion of many.” There was Richard Bernard (1567?–1641), Vicar of Worksope, some eight miles south-east of Scrooby, whose puritanism at one time advanced to the verge of separatism. “He went so far as to set up a Congregational Church within the walls of his parish church,” and “did separate from the rest “of the parishioners” a hundred voluntary professors into covenant with the Lord, sealed up with the Lord’s Supper, to forsake all known sin, to hear no wicked or dumb ministers.” There was Thomas Toller (*d.* 1644), Vicar of Sheffield, some twenty-five miles to the west of Scrooby, who was presented before the ecclesiastical court

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at York in 1607, as a Precisian if not a Brownist. There was Robert Gifford (*d.* 1649) of Laughton-en-le-Northen, adjoining the Parish of Worksope who, “though he did not go the length of actual separation,” was one of those ministers who “seemed weary of the ceremonies,” and whom William Bradford describes as being “hotly pursued by the Prelates.” And there was another clergyman of the neighbourhood, Hugh Bromehead (a native and, in due course, curate of North Wheatley),¹ who shared these convictions so strongly as to become a member of John Smith’s congregation at Gainsborough and go with it into exile.

Then, “besides these brethren on the Nottinghamshire side of the Trent, averse from what they regarded as Romish concessions in the Church, there were Puritan ministers also across the river in Lincolnshire, who in 1605 published an abridgment

¹ See chap. xi. pp. 167–174 of *Smith, the Se-Baptist*, and, for the whole paragraph, see Joseph Hunter’s *Founders of New Plymouth* (1854), pp. 35–53; and Dr. John Brown’s *Pilgrim Fathers of New England*, chap. iii.

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of the points at issue between themselves and the conformable clergy. In this pamphlet they state that they can join with the Church in her doctrines and sacraments, but cannot declare their approbation of the ceremonies.” It was the Puritan sentiment thus fostered by many of the clergy on both sides of the Trent which finally crystallised, so to speak, in the formation of a separatist community first of all in the town of

Gainsborough (probably) in the year 1606; and it was among people imbued with this sentiment, more or less, that young Robinson grew toward manhood.

From an entry in the register of Leyden University¹ it appears that he was born about 1575. Thus he would be in his seventeenth year when admitted a sizar at Corpus Christi, or Benet, College, Cambridge, on April 9th, 1592. His course there is traceable by

¹ See H.M. Dexter's *Congregationalism of the last Three Hundred Years*, p. 360 (note). Under date, September 5th, 1615, it records that John Robinson, Englishman, aged 39, matriculated.

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little more than a series of dates. In January 1595–6 he was elected a scholar, and in the following month was approved for B.A. Two years later he became a Fellow of his College, and in 1599 proceeded M.A. In the same year he was “Plector Græcus,” and in 1600 “Decanus.” He was still a Fellow in 1602 (mentioned fifth in the list); and, moreover, by this time had not only taken orders in the Established Church but had passed from Deacon to Priest,! But next year an entry in the college order–book (February 10, 1603–4) relates that “Thomas Knowles of Norfolk, B.A., has been elected and admitted a Fellow on the withdrawal and resignation in writing (*in scriptis*) of Mr. Robinson.”¹ Mr. Robinson, in fact, was now a preaching elder or curate at St. Andrew’s Church, Norwich; and five days after the induction of Mr. Knowles to his vacant fellowship he was married to

¹ In the *Register of Corpus Christi*, under the year 1602, he is “John Robinson of Nottinghamshire, A.M., Priest.”

² Burrage’s *New Facts concerning John Robinson*, p. 23.

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Bridget White at Greasley, Nottinghamshire.¹ This happy event would have vacated his Fellowship as a matter of course; but he had withdrawn and resigned some time before—perhaps in view of it, or on account of some incipient scruples tending to Nonconformity, or for both reasons.

How he obtained the appointment at St. Andrew’s is not known—possibly, through Jegon, the Bishop, who, as former Master of Corpus

Christi, was acquainted with him. Anyhow, if Robinson already felt scruples about church-order which inclined him to welcome a sphere of comparative liberty, he found it at St. Andrew's.

¹ A village about ten miles west of Nottingham. Burrage (*New Facts concerning John Robinson*, p. 24 note) says the Register of Greasley dates back only to 1620, and so the statement about Robinson's marriage cannot be verified. But, in fact, the Register goes back to 1600, and has been printed in vol. viii. of *Nottinghamshire Parish Registers*, edited by Phillimore and Blagg (1905). Here, on p. 99, is the entry: "Mr. John Robynson and Mistress Bridget Whyte, 15 Feb., 1603." The "Mr." and "Mistress" are notable. They are omitted in nearly all the other cases (amounting to hundreds). Why did the couple choose Greasley?

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For this, along with another Church in the city, St. Peter Mancroft, possessed the right (still valid) of electing its own vicar; and the vicar probably was Puritan, as he had been in Robert Browne's time, 1580, and was after Robinson's.¹ There was a Brownist congregation in Norwich, the remnant of that which Robert Browne had left behind at the time of his migration (1581) to Middelburg. Norwich, indeed, was then, and had long been, a hot-bed of separatist tendencies. But,

¹ John More was incumbent in 1580, and John Yates after 1616. Who he was in Robinson's time is not clear. Mr. Burrage infers from an anonymous MS.—"An answer to John Robinson the Brownist"—which he discovered in the Bodleian, "that there was a type of congregationalism in the Church of England before the time of Robert Browne and Robert Harrison, viz, in such churches as St. Peter Mancroft and St. Andrew's, Norwich, which by purchasing the patronage had obtained the right to elect their own ministers; and, further, that Browne probably derived many of his ideas on Congregational Church Polity from his study and criticism of these two Churches during his sojourn in Norwich" (*New Facts*, p. 21). It may be so. But I would point out that Mr. Burrage's citations from Robinson's reply scarcely bear him out. The whole point of these seems to be that there was nothing congregational at St. Andrew's.

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apart from these, Puritanism of a strong type flourished there, and may have had its centre at St. Andrew's. If so, it served Robinson for a congenial half-way house.

For two or three years he seems to have enjoyed his ministry unmolested. He was not the man to hide his light under a bushel. I imagine him being quite frank in the expression of his opinions and sympathies. But if local opinion generally or largely was Puritan, he had nothing to fear. The test came with the enforcement of subscription. This followed on Archbishop Bancroft's circular letter to the Bishops (enclosing a copy of the Privy Council order touching Nonconformity) in December 1604.¹ If the Bishops promptly obeyed, as on the whole they were glad to do, Robinson's

turn cannot have been long delayed—certainly it cannot have been later than the episcopal visitation of 1605 and 1606.

In 1610 Dr. Joseph Hall, afterwards

¹ See Prothero's *Select Statutes* (1558–1625), p. 421.

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Bishop of Norwich, wrote *A Common Apologie of the Church of England*, against the Separatists. He had known Robinson, and recalls what he had done a few years before. At first he contented himself with “refusing the Prelacy”; then, later, he “branded the ceremonies.” The penalty was suspension from his preachiership. Hereupon he applied for the position of Master of St. Giles’s Hospital (otherwise known as the Old Men’s Hospital)—a post in the gift of the Mayor and Aldermen. Hall more than insinuates that if they had bestowed it on Robinson, or the other favour he asked—viz. a “lease from the city” (which may mean a licence to preach), the world would have heard nothing of his separation. “Neither doubt we to say that the Mastership of the Hospital of Norwich, or a lease from that city (sued for, with repulse), might have procured that this separation from the communion, government, and worship of the Church of England should not have

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been made by *John Robinson*.” Which shows that Dr. Joseph Hall may have known some things about the man he libelled, but did not know the man himself.

Robinson by this time had two children, and might well be anxious for his family’s sake to maintain a home in Norwich if possible. He was, however, the last man to save life and livelihood at the cost of conscience. Some “departed from” the city—leaving wife and children behind for a while; leaving also many friends. Henry Ainsworth (Teacher of the Amsterdam Church) makes a note of his high reputation when, in 1608,¹ he refers to “the late practice in Norwich, where certain citizens were excommunicated for resorting unto and praying with Mr. Rob(inson), a man worthily revered of all the city, for the graces of God in him.” And Robinson himself sheds light on “the late practice” when, writing from Leyden in 1610, he speaks of the Church within a Church which

¹ *Counterpoison*, pp. 246–7 (1608).

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it had been his privilege and joy to serve:

“We do with all thankfulness to our God acknowledge, and with much comfort remember, those lively feelings of God’s love, and former graces wrought in us; and that one special grace amongst the rest by which we have been enabled to draw ourselves into visible covenant and holy communion. Yea, with such comfort and assurances do we call to mind the Lord’s work this way in us, as we doubt not but our salvation was sealed up with our conscience, by most infallible marks and testimonies (which could not deceive) before we conceived the least thought of separation; and so we hope it is with many others in the Church of England, yea, and of Rome too.”¹

When he departed from Norwich he did not go at once into separation.

¹ *Justification of Separation*, p. 60. It was to these same “Christian friends in Norwich and thereabouts” that he addressed (1618) his preface to *The People’s Plea for the Exercise of Prophecy against Mr. John Yates* (incumbent of St. Andrew’s) *his Monopolie*.

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He “was held back,” he tells us, for a time, by the example of many who did conform, “blushing in myself to have a thought of pressing one hairbreadth before them in this thing, behind whom I knew myself to come so many miles in all other things; yea, and even of late times, when I had entered into a more serious consideration of these things, and, according to the measure of grace received, searched the Scriptures, whether they were so or no . . . had not the truth been in my heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones (Jeremiah 20:7), I had never broken those bonds of flesh and blood wherein I was so straitly tied, but had suffered the light of God to have been put out in mine own unthankful heart by other men’s darkness.”

This passage distinguishes an earlier from a later stage of “mental strife”—corresponding, I think, to the times before he went to Norwich, and the time immediately after his departure. During this later stage, when the “bonds of flesh

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and blood” or of kindred and friends, urged him to compromise, he made his final choice. He chose what he believed to be “the light of God.” But he did not choose in a state of isolation. He did not merely retire into himself and think the matter out. Like George Fox, he waited until he had given due heed to others. And it seemed to him a “work of God’s providence” on his behalf that what he heard from one or two of the best Puritan preachers tended only to confirm his own conclusions.

Thus, here is an account of his experience on a certain Sunday in Cambridge:

“Coming to Cambridge (as to other places), where I hoped most to find satisfaction to my troubled heart, I went the forenoon to Mr. [Laurence] Cha[derton]¹ his exercise, who upon the relation which *Mary made to the disciples of the resurrection of Christ*, delivered in effect this doctrine, that *the things which concerned*

¹ Lecturer at St. Clement’s Church and Master of Emmanuel College.

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the whole Church were to be declared publicly to the whole Church, and not to some part only; bringing, for instance and proof, the words of Christ, Matt. xviii. 19, *Tell it to the Church*—confirming therein one main ground of our difference from the Ch[urch] of Engl[and], which is, that Christ hath given His power for excommunication to the whole Church gathered together in His name, as 1 Cor. v., the officers as the governors, and the people as the governed, in the use thereof; unto which Church His servants are commanded to bring their necessary complaints. . . . In the afternoon, I went to Mr. [Paul] B[aynes], the *successor of Mr. Perkins*,¹ who from Eph. v. and v. 7 or 11, showed the unlawfulness of familiar conversation between the servants of God and the wicked, upon these grounds, or the most of them:

“1. That the former are *light* and the other *darkness*, between which *God hath separated*.

¹ Lecturer at Great St. Andrew’s.

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“2. That *the godly hereby are endangered to be leavened with the others’ wickedness*.

“3. That *the wicked are thereby hardened in receiving such approbation from the godly*.

“4. That *others are thereby offended and occasioned to think them all alike, and as birds of a feather, which so flock together*.”

“Whom afterwards privately I desired, as I do also others, to consider whether these very reasons make not as effectually, and much more, against the spiritual communion of God’s people (especially where there wants the means of reformation), with the apparently wicked, to whom they are as *light to darkness*.”¹

It reads as if this visit to Cambridge—with its providential encouragement from two unwitting “instruments” cleared Robinson’s mind. He had already reached a practical decision—so much so

¹ *A Manuaction* (1615), p. 20, quoted by Burrage, *New Facts*, pp. 28–29 (note 2).

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that, according to his admission to a Cambridge acquaintance, “he had been amongst some company of the separation,” and by “exercising amongst them” had, in effect, “renounced his former ministry.” But still he was not quite sure of himself. He was liable to visitations of doubt and misgiving. He had, therefore, stopped short of “professed separation.” Now, however, he goes forward free and bold of heart. Now, at length, he can whole-heartedly enlink his future with that of separatist brethren at Scrooby. And this he does.¹ The date must have been near the end of 1606 or (more probably) somewhere in

¹ Mr. Burrage (*New Facts*, p. 30) quotes John Bastwick’s statement printed in 1646 that “Master Robinson of Leiden, the Pastor of the Brownist Church there, told me and others, who are yet living to witness the truth of what I now say, that if hee might in England have enjoyed but the liberty of his ministry there, with an immunity but from the very ceremonies, and that they had not forced him to a subscription to them and imposed upon him the observation of them, that hee had never separated from it, or left the Church.” Mr. Burrage agrees; but surely it is plain that, by the time he actually separated, the ground of quarrel with the Church had gone much deeper than the matter of ceremonies!

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1607—by which time the original company, meeting at Gainsborough, had become “two distinct bodies or Churches, and in regard of distance of place, did congregate severally”: the one at Gainsborough under John Smith, late “minister and preacher of the word of God” at Lincoln,¹ the other at Scrooby under Richard Clifton, late rector of Babworth.

The original company at Gainsborough may well have been the company of the separation among whom Robinson “exercised” “before coming to Cambridge.” But when he had to choose between the two companies, for some reason he chose the one at Scrooby. Gladly did he take the covenant by which, “as the Lord’s free people,” both those of Gainsborough and Scrooby had “joined themselves into a church estate, in the fellowship of the Gospel to walk in all his ways made known, or to be made known, unto them, according to their best endeavours

¹ As late as March 22nd, 1605, see Arber, *Story of the Pilgrim Fathers*, p. 134.

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whatsoever it should cost them, the Lord assisting them.”¹

Gladly also would he assist the “grave and reverend Preacher,” Richard Clifton. But he held no office in the Church. Nor, indeed, does the Church at this time appear to have had any officers. Mr. Clifton has been called its Pastor, but not by Governor Bradford, the earliest, if not the only, authority on the point. Robinson became its Pastor; but not till “afterwards.” William Brewster became its Elder; but again, not till “afterwards.”² In fact, one gets the impression

¹ Bradford, *History*, p. 15, Mr. Burgess (*John Smith*, pp. 85–87) is inclined to ascribe the actual wording of the covenant to John Smith, particularly the phrase “*or to be made known*.” “He had a deep sense of the inexhaustible riches of the Word of God set before them in the books of the Bible.” This seems to indicate that Smith anticipated Robinson’s famous farewell counsel (*infra*, p. 105).

² “An account of the Church of Christ in Plymouth”—in *Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society* for the year 1795, p. 114: “He [Brewster] and many more withdrew from the communion and embodied into a church estate (having the reverend and aged Mr. Richard Clifton, and Mr. Robinson, to preach for them, the latter of which afterward became their pastor. . . .” The “account” is “by John Cotton, Esq., member of the said Church,” and was written in 1760.

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that Clifton, Brewster, and Robinson apportioned the preaching and pastoral work informally among themselves; and that there was no attempt at official organisation in the Scrooby Church. Perhaps the fact of John Smith being definitely “Pastor of the Church at Gainsborough”¹ may partly account for this. I mean that the Scrooby Church may have continued to feel itself so far one with its neighbour as to shrink from setting up a Pastor of its own.

Early in 1608 the Gainsborough company had all gone over to Amsterdam, and were followed a few months later by those of Scrooby. Probably the last to go was Richard Clifton, in August.²

¹ See Arber, *Story of the Pilgrim Fathers*, p. 136.

² Arber, *ibid*, pp. 94–96, quoting “entries in Zachary Clifton’s family Bible.” Here the family name is uniformly spelt *Clifton*. The Bible is in the Finch collection of the Taylolean Institution at Oxford, and the entries were first indicated by the Rev. Joseph Hunter, in his *Founders of New Plymouth*, pp. 42–48 (1854).

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CHAPTER II

IN a review of Professor Roland D. Usher's book, *The Pilgrims and their History*, the *Spectator* (March 29th, 1919) concludes from the author's presentation of the case that—

“The faithful who gathered round John Robinson in William Brewster's house at Scrooby . . . were driven to Holland . . . not by the intolerance of the Church, but by their own intolerance. They went to Amsterdam, and thence to Leyden, not because the Court of High Commission persecuted them, but because they believed that their spiritual welfare would be endangered by further contact with English Churchmen, even if they were Puritans. They left Leyden for America in 1620 to escape the contaminating influence of other Protestant sects, and to

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find a sequestered corner of the world where they could practise their peculiar tenets in isolation.”

There is a strange mingling here of truth and error. It is true enough that the Pilgrims believed their spiritual welfare would be endangered by further contact with English Churchmen, even if they were Puritans, and it is true, also, that their removal from Leyden was partly “motived” by a desire to escape the tainting social influence of that city. But the suggestion that their first migration was not due to persecution is absurd. All they asked was to be let alone, and be allowed to worship God in the way they believed to be most acceptable. If this had been conceded, nothing would have pleased them better than to remain in their dear native land. But the Court of High Commission had no mind to let them alone. On the contrary, it worried them at every turn. The Court, in fact, had no choice. It was bound by the

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Ordinance of 1604 which made even the least degree of nonconformity penal.¹

How such an ordinance acted upon the Puritans may be judged from a pamphlet issued in 1606 under the title: *A Christian and modest offer of a most indifferent Conference, or disputation, about the maine and principall Controversies betwixt the Prelats and the late silenced and deprived ministers in England.*² It was addressed to the King; and—*pro forma*, as was discreet—lays all blame upon the Prelates who have “reviled and disgraced, both in Pulpit and in Press, their brethren”; and have “also, suspended, deprived, degraded, and imprisoned them, yea, caused them to be turned out of house and home, deny’d them all benefit of law, and used them

¹ See “Proclamation enjoining conformity to the form of the service of God established” (July 1604); and Bancroft’s circular letter, with a copy of the Privy Council Order touching clerical nonconformity (December 1604). (Prothero, *Select Statutes, 1559–1625*, pp. 420–422.)

² Its authors were “some of the said ministers,” and it was “tendered to the Archbishops, Bishops, and all their adherents.”

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with such contempt and contumely as if they were not worthy to live upon the face of the earth.” These “usurping and time-serving” men have made “such woful havock” “as the like hath never been heard of under the Gospell . . . so that, many painfull preachers of the Gospell (even 300 or thereabouts) have, in one year or a little more, been turn’d out of Christ’s service, only for refusing such ceremonies as have their life, breath, and being from Popery, and such a subscription¹ as the like, for ought we know, hath never been urged upon any Church of Christ in any age, under a Christian magistrate: there being, in the meantime, whole swarmes of idle, scandalous, Popish, and non-resident ministers tolerated everywhere amongst us.” Moreover, there are “many hundreds of the

¹ The subscription is No. 37 of the 141 “constitutions and canons ecclesiastical” of 1604. It involved “consent” to the “three articles” recited in No. 36, of which the second asserts that “the Book of Common Prayer . . . containeth in it nothing contrary to the Word of God,” and binds the ministry to use it “and none other.” See Cardwell, *Synodalia*, vol. i. pp. 268–269.

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most painfull and profitable Preachers in this kingdom (besides those already turned out) which are readie to lose both their ministry and their maintenance, and to expose themselves and theirs to all manner of misery rather than they will renounce this cause, and conforme themselves to the corruptions of the times.”

So much for the mere Puritans. As to the Separatists, who just turned their back on what the Puritans vainly tried to reform, they were not likely to suffer less. Indeed, they were harried out of the land.

“ . . . They could not long continue in any peaceable condition, but were hunted and persecuted on every side, so as their former afflictions were but as flea-bitings in comparison of these which now came upon them. For some were taken and clapt up in prison. Others had their houses beset and watched, night and day, and hardly escaped their hangs;

and the most were fain to fly and leave their houses and habitations, and the means of their livelihood.”¹

Dr. Brown lights up these words of William Bradford from the records of the Ecclesiastical Court at York. He cites, *e.g.*, the case of Gervase Nevile of Scrooby, who, for refusing “to take oath and make answer, or to recognise the authority of the Archbishop,” was delivered over, “as a very dangerous schismatical Separatist, Brownist, and irreligious subject,” “to the hands, ward, and safe custody of the Keeper of His Majesty’s Castle of York, not permitting him to have any liberty, or conference with any without licence.” Another case was that of Richard Jackson, who, “for his disobedience in matters of religion,” was served with a process to appear at York, was fined twenty pounds for his failure to appear according to promise, and pursued by a warrant for his apprehension (December 1607). Jackson had already been imprisoned along with

¹ Bradford, *History*, pp. 13–14.

William Brewster; and, in the following April, both of them were fined twenty pounds apiece for not answering a “lawful summons” to York. Robert Rochester for the same reason was fined the same amount at the same time. These are but a few of many similar experiences¹ in a situation which ruthlessly drove the victims to seek a way of escape.

When the thought of escape occurred to them, it would at once associate itself with Holland—the one country in Europe where (since 1573) real religious freedom existed—all sects being tolerated, and an asylum offered to persecuted fugitives from every land. But then arose the question—how to get there unmolested? For it was not merely, as Dr. Brown says,² that “emigration without licence” had

¹ Other sufferers were Joan Heburys, John Drewe, Thomas Jessop (*John Smith*, p. 116); and Bradford says the persecution went on for years: “the poore people were so vexed with

apparators, and pursuants and ye commissarie courts, as truly their affliction was not smale; which, notwithstanding, they bore sundrie years with much patience" (*History*, p. 12).

² *Pilgrim Fathers of New England*, p. 97.

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been "prohibited by an ancient Statute of 13 Richard II.;" it was also that, as Nonconformists, they fell under the dreadful Act of April 1593, which decreed that "if any person above sixteen years of age . . . shall obstinately refuse" to go to some authorised church, etc., he, "being thereof lawfully convicted, shall be committed to prison, there to remain without bailor mainprize"; shall be kept there three months, and, if still obstinate, shall then "upon his corporal oath" "abjure this realm of England and all other the Queen's Majesty's dominions for ever"; and if, having so sworn, he "shall not go to such haven and within such time as is before appointed," or "shall return into any Her Majesty's dominions without Her Majesty's special licence," he "shall be adjudged a felon," and die a felon's death. Furthermore, "all his goods and chattels" shall he forfeit to Her Majesty for ever, and "all his lands, etc.," during his own life.¹

¹ "An Act to retain the Queen's subjects in obedience" (Prothero's *Select Statutes*, 1558–1625, pp. 89–92).

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Thus exile for the Separatists was easy enough, in a manner. All they need do was to let themselves be caught; and then, after three months' imprisonment, exile would be theirs for life-exile, or death, if they came back without leave. No wonder they schemed to get away by stealth! They succeeded, even as the London Separatists had done before them in and about 1593—"through much tribulation." Particulars supplied by Governor Bradford¹ compose a moving story. But

¹ There is one passage in the Bradford *History* (p. 19) which seems to make it clear that he himself and some other of the Scrooby men got over in the spring of 1608. They had to leave their women and children behind on the shore—at the mercy of troops who bore down on the spot before they could be embarked. Bradford's ship "endured a fearful storm at sea, being fourteen days or more before" arriving at its destination. "In seven whereof . . . neither sun, moon, nor stars" was seen, and the ship was "driven near the coast of Norway." Those left behind, "being apprehended," "were hurried from one place to another, and from one Justice to another, till, in the end, they knew not what to do with them." What *could* they do with "so many women and innocent children" but let them go? So "some at one time, and some at another," "some in one place and some in another," "all got over at length," and "met together again, according to their desires, with no small rejoicing." There is no reference to Robinson. Was he in Bradford's ship?

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I omit them, because my point in this section has been simply to prove the absurdity of saying that the Pilgrims were not driven to Holland by the intolerance of the Anglican Church.¹

1 It is not easy to acquit Professor Usher of perversity in his treatment of this point in chap. ii. of *The Pilgrims and their History*. He says, e.g., "there was no trace of Puritanism or Separatism in the district" (p. 17); and this, in view of Bradford's clear witness to the contrary (*History*, p. 12), cp, *supra*, pp. 3-4. Again, he draws an imaginary picture (p. 18), for which there is no tittle of evidence, so far as I know, of the constant *local* hostility which Brewster and his friends had to face—"daily nagging, scoffing, and deriding—most difficult of persecutions to endure." But such a fact as that on two occasions at least a large mixed company of men, women, and children got away safely to the coast without hindrance until the last moment may surely be taken to imply no small degree of neighbourly connivance, or even assistance. There is nothing to show that those who molested or betrayed them were neighbours. Once more, Bradford (*History*, p. 14) expressly relates that a time came when they "were hunted and persecuted on every side, so as their former afflictions were but as flea-bitings in comparison of those which now came upon them." What time? Evidently the time, when the law, as reinforced by the canons of 1604, came into full operation. True, the law did not at once proceed to hang Brewster, etc., as it had hanged Barrow, Greenwood, and Penry in 1593; but it made their situation intolerable, or, as Bradford says (*History*, p. 15), "constrained them" "to leave their native soyle and countrie, their lands and livings, and all their friends and familiar acquaintance." Does this look like voluntary exile merely out of a fanatical desire to avoid infection from a corrupting religious atmosphere?

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CHAPTER III

It was natural that the exiles should make for Amsterdam, not only on account of its comparative importance and accessibility, but also, and perhaps chiefly, because people of kindred views and experience were settled there. For fifteen years a majority of “the Ancient Church of the Separation” (formed in 1589) had made Amsterdam its home. Francis Johnson, the Pastor, had come in 1597, and Henry Ainsworth, the Teacher, somewhat earlier. By 1604 the Church—through gradual additions from London, the West of England, and Norwich—had grown numerically strong;¹ and, notwithstanding some more or less scandalous episodes, it had remained spiritually united, if not prosperous. “Truly there

¹ “About 300 communicants” (Bradford), see next note.

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were “many worthy men,” says Bradford,¹ “and if you had seen them in their beauty and order, as we have done, you would have been much affected therewith, we dare say.”

There was, accordingly, no apparent reason why the newcomers of 1608 should hold aloof. Nor did they. John Smith and his people seem, indeed, to have become an integral part of the older Church. Robinson and his people did not go so far—partly, it may be, for want of room, but partly also because, by the time of their arrival, signs of trouble had begun to develop. John Smith was the occasion of it; and it developed so rapidly that, within a year, a split took place, and Smith, with his sympathisers, set up what he called the “Second English Church at Amsterdam.” Trouble even more serious, which brought about the secession of Ainsworth and many others in December 1610, was also fermenting and showing signs of itself. In short, the Ancient

¹ Bradford’s “Dialogue,” p. 455, in *Chronicles of the Pilgrim Fathers*, by A. Young (1844).

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Church had started on the course which ere long brought it to ruin.

So it came to pass that—

“When they had lived at Amsterdam about a year, Master Robinson, their Pastor, and some others of the best discerning, seeing how Master John Smith and his company were already fallen into contention with the Church that was there before them; and no means they could use, would do any good to cure the same; and, also, that the flames of contention were like to break out in the Ancient Church itself, as afterwards lamentably came to pass . . . ¹ For these, and some other reasons, they removed to Leyden, a fair and beautiful city, and of a sweet situation; but made more famous by the University wherewith it is adorned, in which, of late, had been so many learned men. But wanting that traffic by sea which Amsterdam enjoys, it was not so beneficial for their outward

¹ Bradford, *History*, p. 23.

means of living and estates. But being now here pitched, they fell to such trades and employments as they best could; valuing peace and their spiritual comfort above any other riches whatsoever; and, at length, they came to raise a competent and comfortable living, but with hard and continual labour.”¹

Richard Clifton remained at Amsterdam;² and, although he may never have been Pastor of the Scrooby Church in a formal sense, it is not probable that the Church would elect anyone else to the office, while a man so revered was still one of its members. This lends weight to Mr. Burrage’s belief that Mr. Robinson “became for the first time Pastor of the Church” after its settlement at Leyden.³ We know that Master William Brewster was *then* called and chosen by the Church to be “Assistant unto him in the place of

¹ Bradford, *History*, pp. 23–24.

² And, after Henry Ainsworth’s retirement, December 1620, became Teacher in the “Ancient Church.”

³ *Early English Dissenters*, vol. 1. p. 291.

an Elder.” We know, too, that Robinson speaks of himself as called and chosen by the Church; and the double event, together with the election of its three Deacons, may well have taken place at the same time. For order and convenience’ sake, the time would be as soon as possible; and so we may think of the Church as fully equipped¹ from the summer of 1609. Then, under so able a ministry—

“They grew in knowledge, and other gifts and graces of the Spirit of God; and lived together in peace and love and

¹ The “Ancient Church” had, for officers, Pastor, Teacher, Elders, Deacons, and widow. The official simplicity of the Leyden Church presents a contrast; and Mr. Burgess (*Smith, the Se-Baptist*, pp. 140–141) ascribes it to the example and influence of John Smith, who came to believe that “all the elders had the same office of Pastor, and so were all of one sort.” Robinson seems to mean the same when he says: “This office of Eldership is committed by Christ to a company or colledge of Elders who are; oyntly to minister to the particular Churches over which they are sett” (Burrage, *New Facts*, p. 18). But I am not clear that he owed it to Smith, or that both did not hold it in common from the first.

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holiness. And many came unto them from divers parts of England; so as they grew to a great congregation. And if at any time any differences arose or offences broke out (as it cannot be but some time there will, even amongst the best of men) they were ever so met with and nipt in the head betimes, or otherwise so well composed, as still love, peace, and communion was continued: or else the Church purged of those that were incurable and incorrigible, when, after much patience used, no other means would serve—which seldom came to pass.¹ I know not but it may be spoken to the honour of God, and without prejudice to any, that such was the true piety, the humble zeal, and fervent love of this people (whilst they thus lived together) towards God and his Ways, and the singleheartedness and sincere affection one towards another, that they came as near the primitive pattern of the first churches as any other church of these later times

¹ Bradford, *History*, p. 24.

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have done, according to their rank and quality.”¹

And this, under God, was mainly the Pastor’s work. His personality was as a soul of all good to the Church.

“Yea, such was the mutual love and reciprocal respect that this worthy man had to his flock, and his flock to him, that it might be said of them, as it once was of that famous Emperor Marcus Aurelius and the people of Rome, That it was hard to judge whether he delighted more in having such a people or they in having such a Pastor. His love was great towards them; and his care was always lent for their best good, both for soul and body. For besides his singular abilities in divine things (wherein he excelled), he was also very able to give directions in civil affairs and to foresee dangers and inconveniences:

by which means he was very helpful to their outward estates; and so was, in every way, as a common

¹ Bradford, *ibid.* p. 26.

father to them. And none did more offend him than those that were close and cleaving to themselves, and retired from the common good: as also such as would be stiff and rigid in matters of outward order, and inveigh against the evil of others, and yet be remiss in themselves and not so careful to express a virtuous conversation. They, in like manner, had ever a reverent regard unto him, and had him in precious estimation as his worth and wisdom did deserve. And though they esteemed him highly whilst he lived and laboured amongst them, yet much more after his death, when they came to feel the want of his help; and saw (by woful experience) what a treasure they had lost, to the grief of their hearts and wounding of their souls. Yea, such a loss as they saw could not be repaired.”¹

¹ Bradford, *History*, p. 25.

CHAPTER IV

WE have outrun the story; and will go back to the time when Robinson and his people resolved on Leyden as their home. They at once took the proper course of applying to “the Honorable the Burgomasters and Court of the City” for permission to live there; and “have the freedom thereof in carrying on their trades without being a burden in the least to anyone.” In this application they describe themselves as “members of the Christian Reformed religion born in the Kingdom of Great Britain, to the number of one hundred persons or thereabouts”; and express the wish to be settled “by the first of May next” (1609). The answer is dated February 12th, and runs:

“The Court, in making a disposition

of this present Memorial, declare that they refuse no honest persons free ingress to come and have their residence in this city; provided that such persons behave themselves, and submit to the laws and ordinances: and, therefore, the coming of the memorialists will be agreeable and welcome.”¹

In after-years it was alleged that the magistrates found reason to repent, grew weary of them, and, at length, made their departure (in 1620) a necessity rather than an act of “free choice.” To which slander Governor Bradford replies by quoting “a particular or two to show the contrary.”

“And, first, though many of them were poor, yet there was none so poor but, if they were known to be of that congregation, the Dutch (either bakers or others)

¹ Arber, *Story of the Pilgrim Fathers* (pp. 147–8); quoted from H.C. Murphy in *Historical Magazine*, vol. iii. See separate note, pp. 125 ff.

would trust them in any reasonable matter, when they wanted money: because they had found by experience, how careful they were to

keep their word; and saw them so painful and diligent in their callings. Yea, they would strive to get their custom; and to imploy them above in their work, for their honesty and diligence.”

“Again, the magistrates of the city, about the time of their coming away, or a little before, in the public place of justice, gave this commendable testimony of them, in the reproof of the Walloons, who were of the French Church in that city: These English, said they, have lived among us, now this twelve years; and yet we never had any suit, or accusation came against any of them: but your strifes and quarrels are continual,” etc.

Another part of the slander was to the effect that Robinson thrust himself into the turmoil of debate, then at its height in Leyden, as elsewhere, between the

Arminians and Calvinists, and that he took sides too obtrusively with the latter. To which Bradford replies, that his Pastor, “being very able,” did indeed appear “at sundry disputes,” and begin “to be terrible to the Arminians”—so much so that Polyander, the Calvinist Professor of Leyden University, “did importune him” to stand up against the Theses put forth by his opponent Episcopius, the Arminian Professor. As a stranger, Robinson “was loath,” but finally agreed. “And when the day came the Lord did so help him to defend the truth, and foil his adversary, as he put him to an apparent *non-plus*, in this great and public audience. And the like he did a second, or third time, upon such-like occasions. The which, as it caused many to praise God that the truth had so famous victory, so it procured him much honour and respect from those learned men, and others which loved the truth.” But let it be noted, that by way of preparation and to avoid partiality, he,

first of all, went constantly to the readings or lectures, of both sides; “and heard the one as well as the other”—although with his three sermons a week, and sundry books to write, and other “manifold pains,” he had but little time to spare.¹ Bradford omits the date of these grand debates; but not unlikely a quick result and reward was Robinson’s admission to be “an honorary member of the University on September 3rd, 1615”—a distinction which carried with it not only literary privileges, but also certain substantial civil advantages. Altogether the little Church had good cause to be proud of its Pastor and to rejoice in his light.

For two years after May 1609, there is no information as to where the Church met for worship. No meeting-place was assigned to it by the municipal authorities, for the sufficient reason that it did not ask or wish for one. In this as in other respects it preferred to be independent,

¹ Bradford, *History*, pp. 37–8.

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or else not to run the risk of a refusal. But in May 1611 a house was purchased which gave a home both to the Church and the Pastor. The purchasers were the Pastor himself and three others, including Ralph Tickens, who had married his wife's sister.¹ The site was on the south side of Peter's Church, near the belfry, and the house had a garden situated on its west side. The price, equal to £1,400, bespeaks its spacious character; and the whole of it passed into the possession of John Robinson, except a "certain small room" over the eastern door, which the vendor reserved for himself. That Robinson and his family were the sole occupants is made clear by a list of those rated for a poll-tax on October 15th, 1622, in which the only persons living in the house are given as—

John Robinson, minister

Brugitta (Bridget) Robinson, his wife.

¹ Jane White, whose name occurs with her husband's in the purchase-deed, probably as being the "monied partner."

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James

Brugitta

Isaac Robinson's children.

Mercey

Fear

Jacob

Mary Hardy, maid-servant.

Such a family must have taken up most of the house. But if there was a room large enough to feast the whole Church—as Edward Winslow relates²—the same room would serve for its ordinary meetings. Here, in fact, we may imagine the congregation to have been in the habit of assembling—though, if its number grew to 300, surely no room of the house can have held them all. Possibly they took it in turns to attend; or did they

¹ Bridget married a Leyden student of theology, named John Glynwich, in May 1629—having her mother for a witness. Isaac emigrated to New England in 1631, and was still living in 1702, aged ninety-two, which points to 1610, as the year of his birth and Leyden as his birth-place. The two eldest children were born at Norwich (Arber, *ibid.* pp. 159–

160).

² In his “Brief Narration,” the Appendix to *Hypocrisie Unmasked* (1646).

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make use of “the large garden”¹ when the weather permitted, and, at other times, meet in part at other houses?

¹ Dr. Brown (p. 122) says that William Jepson built twenty-one small tenements in the garden, “probably intended as dwellings for the poorer members of the congregation.” But if Jepson did not acquire the property till December 13th, 1629 (Arber, p. 157), he must have built them after the congregation, to a large extent, was dispersed, and years after the Pastor’s death. The house has long since been displaced by a modern building upon whose front, by consent of the owners, is a marble slab, with the inscription: “On this spot lived, taught, and died, John Robinson, 1611–1625.”

“William Jepson, a leading member of John Robinson’s Church” was cousin to Jane Murton (nee Hodgkin) and Alexander Hodgkin, members of John Smith’s Church. Both families were of Worksop. (Burgess, *John Smith*, p. 298, note.).

CHAPTER V

IN one of his smaller treatises entitled *A Just and necessary Apology*¹ (1619) Robinson outlines the relations which subsisted between his Church and its neighbours, and incidentally throws light, at the same time, on its own internal conduct. For this reason the book is worth some notice.²

Some anonymous "Dutch balladmaker" had published "a rhyme" which, comparing the received religion in the Dutch Churches to a tree, and "the sectaries in the country" "to certain beasts endeavouring this tree's ruin," likened "the Brownists to a little worm,

¹ Published first in Latin, and then translated by himself into English. The English version was printed in the year of his death, 1625.

² It deserves reading, also, as Robinson's best brief exposition of his whole case.

gnawing at the root thereof, and not having less will, but less power, to hurt than the residue."¹ In plain words,

¹ There was another "contumely," not a mere "flying bruit spread amongst the multitude" by a ballad-maker, "but a solemn accusation to them in special authority" in England. It proceeded from enemies "who in our own country" (says Robinson) "are reputed the chief masters and patrons both of religion and truth." Its charges were fourfold.

First, that we (lewd Brownists) do refuse and reject one of the sacraments.

Secondly, that we have amongst us no ecclesiastical ministry, but do give liberty to every mechanical person to preach publicly in the Church.

Thirdly, that we are in error about the very Trinity.

Fourthly and lastly, that being become so odious to the magistrates here, as that we are by violence to be driven the country, we are now constrained to seek some other and far part of the world to settle in.

The first three of these points, at least, were brought up in the Privy Council by some of its members as a reason against permitting Robinson's people to settle in Virginia; and were dealt with in a letter to Sir John Wolstenholme from Robinson and Brewster dated Leyden, January 27th, 1617-18 (see Bradford, *History*, pp. 43-4). Bradford spells the name "Worssenham."

The *Just and necessary Apology*, written two years later, deals with them more elaborately, though not so directly. In fact, this was much more its purpose than "to justify the occasional intercommunion between the members of Mr. Robinson's Church and those of the Belgian Churches" (so Ashton in Prefatory Notice).

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Robinson and his people were seeking, in a secret fashion, to undermine their neighbours' religious position. How can this be, answers Robinson, seeing that, on matters of doctrine, we agree, point by point, with everything in their faith, except one, viz. that, while they allow the use of the Apocrypha in public worship, we reserve it for private reading only? How can this be, moreover, when, in respect of government and administration, we are also substantially agreed?

“We account them” (the Reformed Churches) “the true Churches of Jesus Christ, and both profess and practise communion with them in the holy things of God, which in us lieth; their sermons such of ours frequent as understand the Dutch tongue; the sacraments we do administer unto their known members, if by occasion any of them be present with us; their distractions, and other evils, we do seriously bewail, and do desire from the Lord their holy and firm peace.”

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But undoubtedly there were differences—sufficient to exercise charity, though by no means to justify contention; and these Robinson proceeds to state.

(1) He holds that a Church ought not to consist of more members than can meet together in one place.¹ One place, with one Pastor, seems to be his rule, or, rather, as he tries to prove, the New Testament rule: not one Pastor of a Church so large as to need several places, according to the way of his neighbours. One place with one Pastor, and so, outside the place where his flock is located, he has no right to execute the pastoral office.

“It is not lawful for thee, Reverend brother, to do the work of a Pastor where thou art no Pastor, lest thou arrogate to thyself that honour which appertains not unto thee. Thou art called—that is,

¹ Robinson's word is “temple,” the place of meeting for the Church. His idea may seem to exclude my conjecture that his own Church may have been too large to meet in one room; but perhaps “place” might be taken to mean the house and its garden!

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elected and ordained—a Pastor of some particular Church and not of all Churches.”

He may preach for other Churches than his own, “out of the common bond of charity in which he is obliged”; but so may any private member of a Church. Mere preaching is a lay function. Pastoral authority, however,

is restricted to one single congregation meeting in one place. Here only, e.g., can the Pastor lawfully administer discipline or the sacraments.

“We will illustrate by a similitude. Any citizen of Leyden may enjoy certain privileges in the city of Delft, by virtue of the politic combination of the United Provinces, and cities, under the supreme heads thereof, the States-General; which he is bound also to help and assist with all his power if necessity require; but that the ordinary magistrate of Leyden should presume to execute his public office in the City of Delft, were an insolent,

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and unheard-of, usurpation. The very same, and not otherwise, is to be said of Pastors and particular Churches, in respect of that spiritual combination mutual, under their chief and sole Lord, Jesus Christ.”

(2) Baptism should be limited to the children of parents, one of whom at least is within the covenant, or a member of the Church,¹ not extended, as in the Dutch Reformed Churches, to all and sundry. “This doth neither well provide for the dignity of the thing;” nor is it scriptural.

(3) “We cannot but mislike that custom in use by which the Pastor is wont to repeat and read out of a prayer-book certain forms, for his and the Church’s prayer.” Many New Testament reasons against the practice are adduced—from some of which we gather that the Leyden Church was accustomed to

¹ This was twisted into a charge of refusing one of the Sacraments.

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the singing of psalms,¹ and to utter their “Amen” at the close of the minister’s prayer, and to make no formal use of the Lord’s Prayer. It would seem, also, that in praying the minister stood and lifted up his eyes to heaven.²

“In prayer we do pour out matter, to wit the holy conceptions of the mind, from within to without; that is, from the heart to God: on the contrary, in reading, we do receive and admit matter from without to within; that is, from the book into the heart. Let him that prayeth do that which he doth, not another thing, not a divers thing. Let the whole man, and all that he is, both in soul and body, be bent upon God, with

¹ “It was their practice from the beginning, till October 1661, to sing the Psalms without reading the line.” Then they “altered the custom” to meet the need of a brother who could not read. First the Pastor expounded the Psalm and then the Elder “lined it.” Up to June 1692 Mr. Ainsworth’s translation was the one” sung in the congregation.” (*An Account of the Church of Christ in Plymouth*, pp. 126–127.)

2 He prayed, too, with his head covered—unlike the French Reformed.

whom he converseth. The eyes of the mind are lifted to God in prayer; and why not the eyes of the body also? both which, he that prayeth, by intending them upon a book . . . depresseth and averteth from God.”

He reaches the climax of his argument when he says:

“If to read such a form of prayer be to pray aright and pastor-like, no probable reason can be rendered, wherefore to read a *sermon*, or homily, is not as well to preach aright, and as is required of the Pastor of the Church. Which so being, small reason had the Apostle, treating of the ecclesiastical ministry, which principally consists in these two exercises (Acts 6:4), to cry out, as he did, “Who is sufficient for these things?” (2 Corinthians 2:16). For who is not sufficient, even of the vulgar sort? Who cannot read a liturgy or a homily?

“Lastly, if it would be just matter of

shame to any earthly father that his child, who desired of him bread, fish, or an egg, should need to read out of a book, or paper (saying), ‘Father, I pray you give me bread, fish, or an egg,’ how much more contumelious is it, to our Heavenly Father, and His Holy Spirit, wherewith He furnisheth all His children, especially His ministers according to their place, that an help so unworthy, and more than babyish, and indeed the instrument of a ‘foolish shepherd,’ should be employed in prayer!”

(4) In the eldership all the elders must be apt. to teach as well as to govern; must be appointed for life; must discharge their functions in public—“with the people’s privity and consent.” This is the Congregational, as opposed to the Presbyterian, way. Not that the Church is a democracy. By no means. Under Christ, “the only mediator and monarch thereof,” the Church “is plainly aristocratical.” That is to say, “it appertains

to the people freely to vote in elections and judgments of the Church”; but, having done this, and so set the elders in office, it behoves them to let the elders really rule, and to “give their assent to the holy and lawful administration” of these. Power originates from the people under Christ, but is vested in the elders, who are not to be hindered in its use, nor, to

that end, from meeting in private, and preparing what is necessary for the Church's order. Still, the people have the right to know their decisions and express consent or otherwise. For "most conveniency" and "least trouble," decisions may be arrived at in private. Their execution, however, must be "publicly and before the people." Nor must the people be denied a final voice. In this sense, the elders, though an aristocracy, are responsible to the congregation. In fine, the Church, as Robinson sees it, reflects the representative system of the English Parliament. Nor is the parallel lessened when he adds:

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"By the people whose liberty, and right in voting, we thus avow, and stand for, in matters truly public and ecclesiastical, we do not understand, as it hath pleased some contumeliously to upbraid us, women and children; but only men, and them grown, and of discretion: making account, that as children by their nonage, so women by their sex, are debarred of the use of authority in the Church."

The source of the model which the Pilgrims framed for a political constitution is not far to seek.

(5) Unlike the Dutch Reformed Churches, Robinson's Church treated marriage as a civil act; took no notice of holy days, such as Christmas or Easter or Whitsun tide; but were very strict in observance of the Lord's Day. His reason for repudiating Easter is that the great event it celebrates is celebrated every Sunday¹ by the Lord's own appointment; and so the addition of "an anniversary

¹ "We used to have the Lord's Supper every Sabbath" (*An Account*, etc., p. 108).

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memorial" is a presumptuous human device. Christmas he repudiates as likewise a human device,¹ while, with regard to other festivals, he asks why a day should be consecrated rather to the birth, circumcision, and ascension of Christ, than to His death, seeing that the Scriptures everywhere do ascribe our redemption and salvation to His death and passion, in special manner.

As to the special sacredness of Sunday, he holds that this is derived:

(a) From the "very essence of the fourth commandment," which lies in the fact that "a day of seven" (not necessarily the seventh day) "be kept holy, that is, separated from common use and consecrated to God, in which, as in a holy day, the works of Divine worship, and such as serve for the spiritual man, ought to be exercised."

¹ He adds: "Not to meddle with the uncertainty either of the day of the month, or month

of the year in which Christ was born, as it is most certain, on the contrary, that this twenty-fifth of December cannot be the time.”

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(b) From the authority of “Christ Himself who, first, by word of mouth for the forty days after His resurrection taught the disciples the things which appertained to the Kingdom of God”; next by His “setting Himself in the midst of” the Apostles, “the first day of the week . . . every eighth day, till His ascension into heaven”; finally, “by His spirit speaking in the Apostles,” and directing them to the day of His resurrection as pre-eminently the Lord’s Day. “Neither did Patmos more distinctly denote a certain and known island, and John a certain and known person, than did the Lord’s Day a day certain, and known especially unto Christians unto whom the Apostle wrote.”

It is, therefore, binding on Christians with all, and more than all, the sanction of the Jewish Sabbath. His last words on this point, written with the laxity of Leyden society—countenanced by the Leyden Churches—before him, have not lost any of their force:—

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“It seemeth natural that some day, and moral that some day certain and distinct, be sacred unto God; and the same, as Junius saith, every seventh day; in which men, forbearing all servile works, may consecrate and give themselves to God in the duties of piety and charity to men. Which with what hindrance unto the one and the other, is everywhere neglected, can scarce either be uttered or conceived. For what marvel if, upon the overslipping of the most seasonable seed-time, a slender harvest follow; or that, the market-day being neglected, penury of provision should be found in the family? We Christians have the Lord’s Day by the Lord Christ assigned us for the exercises of piety, and mercy, in which He offers, and exhibits Himself in, the fruits of His gracious presence in a singular manner to be seen, and enjoyed of his, religiously observing the same. Let us at no hand, as alike unmindful of God’s ordinance and man’s infirmity, suffer the fruit of such a benefit to die

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in our hands; but let us accordingly acknowledge the same in thought, word, and work, to His honour, and our own good.”

CHAPTER VI

NEXT to Robinson, the most influential member of the Leyden Church was its elder, William Brewster. More than to anyone else the Church owed its origin to him; and he shared all its fortunes.

“After he came into Holland he suffered much hardship, after he had spent the most of his means, having a great charge and many children; and, in regard of his former breeding and course of life, not so fit for many employments as others were, especially such as were toilsome and laborious. But yet he ever bore his condition with much cheerfulness and contentation. Towards the latter part of those twelve years spent in Holland, his outward condition was mended, and he lived well and plentifully. For he fell

into a way (by reason he had the Latin tongue), to teach many students who had a desire to learn the English tongue, to teach them English; and by his method they quickly attained it with great facility: for he drew rules to learn it by, after the Latin manner. And many gentlemen, both Danes and Germans, resorted to him, as they had time from other studies: some of them being Great Men’s sons.

“He also had means to set up printing (by the help of some friends), and so had employment enough: and by reason of many books which would not be allowed to be printed in England, they might have had more than they could do.”¹

It was in connection with this printing business that an episode occurred (in 1619–20) which much excited the Leyden Church, and deserves more attention than it has usually received. Professor Arber calls it “The hunt after William

¹ Bradford, *History*, p. 190.

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Brewster.”¹ For more than a year the hunt went on. What set it going was a letter from Sir Dudley Carleton, English Ambassador at the Hague, to Sir Robert Naunton, Secretary of State in London. Writing on Saturday, July 17th, he says:

“I have seen within these two days a certain Scottish book, called *Perth Assembly*, written with much scorn and reproach of the proceedings in that Kingdom concerning the Affairs of the Church. It is without name, either of Author or Printer; but I am informed it is printed by a certain English Brownist of Leyden.”

Five days later, July 22nd, he had found reason to be “somewhat doubtful” of that point, “yet, in search after that book,” he believes himself to have discovered the printer of another book

¹ See *Story of the Pilgrim Fathers*, chap. xxv. 195 H. Arber’s authorities are H.M. Murphy in *Historical Magazine*, vol. iv., and the *S.P. Holland*. Bundles 132–5, as quoted by Murphy.

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entitled, *De Regimine Ecclesie; Scoticanæ*, in “one William Brewster, a Brownist who hath been, for some years, an inhabitant and printer at Leyden.” Within the last three weeks, however, he had disappeared, and is said to be now in London, “where he may be found out and examined not only of this book, *De Regimine*, but likewise of *Perth Assembly*, of which, if he was not the printer himself, he assuredly knows both the printer and the author.”

The author of both books was David Calderwood, historian of the Kirk of Scotland; and their peculiar offence, of course, was in oppugning the King’s Scottish ecclesiastical policy. They were dead against him in his violent efforts to impose episcopacy upon an unwilling people. Neither author nor printer, therefore, need look for mercy at the hands of His Majesty, whose littleness magnified opposition to himself into the worst of crimes. So, at his command, strict watch was kept for Brewster both at London and Leyden. Nay, his Ambassador was

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required, in the King’s name, “to deal roundly with the States-General, for the apprehension of the said Brewster; as they tender His Majesty’s friendship.” On August 20th it was reported that he was certainly not in Leyden, nor likely to be, “having removed from thence both his family and goods”; yet on the 28th, that he had been seen there “yesterday.” On September 3rd he is said to “keep most at Amsterdam,” but to be preparing

to settle himself at a village called Lastdorp [Leiderdorp], not far from Leyden, on the 10th the Ambassador announced to the Secretary that at last he has been tracked down. He is really in Leyden. The magistrates at his instance “apprehended him yesternight,” though he was sick in bed.

But, alas! on the 12th (Sunday) he had to write that there had been a mistake, “in that the Scout” (or bailiff) “who was employed by the magistrates for his apprehension, being a dull, drunken fellow, took one for another.” But

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Brewster’s partner had been seized, sure enough. This was Thomas Brewer, “who set him on work, and, being a man of means, bare the charge of his printing.”¹

He, as “a member of the University,” has been delivered to the Rector Magnificus, and is now in the university prison. Moreover, the “printing letters,” or type, used by Brewster have been “found in a garret” of Brewer’s house (in Bell Alley, near Robinson’s house). These, together with his books and papers, have been “all seized and sealed up”; and it is expected that he will volunteer a full account of what “he has caused to be printed by Brewster” since the press started work, including *Perth Assembly* and *De Regimine Ecclesiae Scoticanæ*. But he turned out

¹ Arber (*Story*, p. 195) thinks the type was English—bought by Brewer, set up by Brewster, and printed from by some Dutch master-printer. He has compiled a list of fifteen books which, “if not more, were produced by this secret press in the thirty-three months, at the furthest, between October 1616, and June 1618, both inclusive” (*Story*, p. 245). If there could be a successful hunt after William Brewster’s edition of these fifteen books, the little collection would form a unique “Pilgrim” memorial.

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disappointing. His “answers are so indirect that they give no man satisfaction that sees them.” On the 18th, therefore, the Ambassador writes that he has now “used the Prince of Orange’s authority”; that the Prince has “spoken to the Rector,” “not to give the prisoner any liberty until His Majesty’s pleasure be known concerning him”; that the Rector has promised, “notwithstanding that the whole company of Brownists” have offered “caution” (or bail) for him and that the university scholars have been “stirred up by” them to plead privilege. His British Majesty, it seems, was pleased with “the noble Prince” and the Rector for their “serious care and respect.” He sent his own “princely thanks to them.”

But Brewer’s “confessions” he found far from satisfactory; and would like to examine the man himself. So, on September 28th, the Ambassador

is instructed “to move the States earnestly, in his name,” that the prisoner may be sent over; and, if there be any “fond scruple

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or difficulty” about “Privilege,” to promise that the King “will return him back again, after he shall have informed himself from him, of divers things merely concerning his own special service: His Majesty having no intention to touch him either in body or goods.” All the same, the University pleaded privilege; and was backed up by the town. In the end, however, they compromised. Brewer was to go, as by “his own desire,” in order “to give His Majesty all satisfaction”; going “as a free man,” he should “not be punished during his abode in England, either in body or goods”; he should “be suffered to return in a competent time”; and his journey should be “without his own charge.”

To these conditions the Ambassador for the King gave his “verbal promise”; and Brewer submitted himself to Sir William Touche, the “noble gentleman” who undertook to conduct him into England. There were members of the Church who “endeavoured to dissuade

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him”; but, resisting their fears, he joined Sir William at Rotterdam, according to arrangement. He arrived there at 10 p.m. on November 13th, and one of his companions was “Master Robinson.” “The gentleman”—wrote Sir William to the Ambassador—“seems very ready and willing to go with me; and hath good hope of his dispatch and happy issue, if he be not referred to the judgement of the Bishops; concerning which, he says, he made caution before his departure: and if you have not written so much already, he desires you will do so much, when you write next to Master Secretary.” This dread of the Bishops should be noted.

It explains, undoubtedly, why his friends of the Church tried to hold him back.

On his way to Flushing, whence he intended to sail, Sir William stayed at Middelburg—associated, for Separatists, with Robert Browne’s congregation. Here Brewer found “many friends”; and “those exceedingly earnest in his cause.”

Among them were three brothers of the

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name of Teelinck: one of them “the Treasurer-General,” another “chief of the Reckon[ing] Chamber,” the third “a minister.” A fourth friend,

“Master Vosberghe, chief Reckon-Master [accountant], was on the way towards Holland, to speak to his Excellency [Maurice, Prince of Holland] in Master Brewer’s behalf.” Evidently, news of his case had spread abroad, and evoked keen interest. There is nothing to show that his Middelburg friends were “Brownists.” Brownists were very unlikely to be of such high social standing, nor, indeed, is there any trace of a Brownist remnant at this late date. What interested Brewer’s friends was simply the King of England’s claim to effect the extradition of an Englishman from Holland and draw him into his power upon conditions which he might see fit to break. This matter, therefore, they “did expostulate” with Sir William—at a dinner to which they invited him; and, also, “much importuned him,” by “many

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promises of their loves and friendship,” to show Mr. Brewer all possible kindness. As to the last point, at any rate, he appears to have done his best. For, during a twelve days’ enforced wait at Flushing—the storms being so “rude” as to scale the walls and floor the streets “with salt water”—he enlisted him as a boon companion; and Brewer’s “fellow Brownists at Leyden”—wrote the Ambassador to the Secretary—“are somewhat scandalised, because they hear Sir William hath taught him to drink healths.”

On Friday, December 3rd, Sir William and his charge reached Whitehall. But when the King came face to face with his man he realised that the “stipulations” entered into by Sir Dudley Carleton rendered him practically helpless. Brewer stood stoutly by his rights; parried the royal questions in a way that disclosed nothing of consequence; especially, could not be got to say a word as to Brewster’s whereabouts; and so, at length, on January 14th, 1619–20, was discharged. Mr.

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Secretary wrote at once to forewarn the Ambassador that Brewer had “offered to return at his own charge”; and that he would try, no doubt, to “advise Brewster to conceal himself.” To which Sir Dudley replied (January 29th), “As yet, he appears not in these parts,” but when he does, “the curators of the University” will again take him in hand, and—“unless he undertakes to them to do his uttermost in finding out Brewster”—“he is not like[ly] to be at liberty.”

But Brewer, getting wind of this kind intention, did not return to Leyden; nor was Brewster taken. The latter, as we know, was the Church’s

authorised messenger in England; and, with Robert Cushman,¹ was stealthily busy in preparations for the great adventure of 1620. He was back in Leyden for the last prayer-meeting and decision. By special desire

¹ Cushman, writing to the Church from London, knew of his whereabouts on May 9th, 1619, and says: "Master B. is not well at this time. Whether he will come back to you, or go into the north, I yet know not." Did he find refuge in and around his old home at Scrooby?

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of those who offered themselves for the pioneer voyage, he agreed to go with them. He crossed to Southampton in the *Speedwell* about July 22nd, and, after the breakdown of that unlucky vessel, joined the crowded company who came, through stormy seas, to anchorage at Cape Cod in the *Mayflower* (November 11th). For twenty-four years he continued to be the revered and beloved elder of the Plymouth Church. What his friend Governor Bradford says of him conveys the impression of a richly Christian character:

"For his personal abilities, he was qualified above many. He was wise and discreet and well spoken, having a grave and deliberate utterance, of a very cheerful spirit; very sociable and pleasant amongst his friends; of a humble and modest mind; of a peaceable disposition; undervaluing himself and his own abilities, and sometime overvaluing others; inoffensive and innocent in his life and

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conversation, which gained him the love of those without as well as those within; yet he would tell them plainly of their faults and evils, both publicly and privately, but in such a manner as usually was well taken from him. He was tender-hearted and compassionate of such as were in misery; but especially of such as had been of good estate and rank, and were fallen unto want or poverty, either for goodness' and religion's sake, or by the injury and oppression of others. He would say, Of all men these deserved to be pitied most. And none did more offend and displease him than such as would haughtily and proudly carry and lift up themselves, being risen from nothing, and having little else in them to commend them, but a few fine clothes and a little riches more than others. In teaching, he was very moving and stirring of affections; also, very plain and distinct in what he taught, by which means he became the more profitable to the hearers. He had a singular

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good gift in prayer, both public and private, in ripping up the heart and conscience before God, in the humble confession of sin, and begging the mercies of God in Christ for the pardon of the same. He always thought it were better for ministers to pray oftener, and divide their prayers than be long and tedious in the same (except upon solemn and special occasions, as in days of humiliation and the like). His reason was, that the heart and spirits of all, especially the weak, could hardly continue and stand bent (as it were), so long towards God, as they ought to do in that duty, without flagging and falling off. For the government of the church (which was most proper to his office), he was careful to preserve good order in the same, and to preserve purity both in the doctrine and communion of the same; and to suppress any error or contention that might begin to rise up amongst them. And accordingly, God gave good success to his indeavours herein all his days; and he saw the

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fruit of his labours in that behalf.”¹

We have here a picture on which any Christian man or minister might often look with profit.

A last word must be spared for his faithful comrade, Thomas Brewer, who was appointed to a sadly different fate. For a time he stayed about London; and helped the Pilgrims’ enterprise with his money, if in no other way. Subsequent to Robinson’s death in 1625, he is said to have returned to Leyden; sold his property there; and crept back to England. Here, however, he was seized (before long) as a “special patron of the Kentish Brownists”; and was kept close prisoner in the King’s Bench till 1640, when, by order of the House of Lords, in response to his petition, he obtained an immediate discharge—on the very day on which the same House called upon the Earl of Strafford “to put in his answer unto this Court to the impeachment

¹ Bradford, *History*, pp. 392–3.

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made against him by the House of Commons by Tuesday next come sevensight, viz., December 8th, 1640, and sooner if he can.”¹

Brewer never saw “the American strand.” Neither at home nor abroad does he seem to have become conspicuous. His vocation was rather to suffer than to “do exploits.” But was he the less heroic on that account?

¹ Brown, *Pilgrim Fathers*, p. 163.

CHAPTER VII

THE episode just described must not only have had a thrilling interest for the families of Robinson's congregation, but must also have had a marked effect in those anxious debates of 1619 which were concerned with the decision "to remove to some other place." It must, at least, have strengthened the feeling that Leyden was not the "secure abode" it had seemed to be. Other reasons for the decision were of yet greater force. "The grave mistress, Experience" (says Bradford),¹ "having taught them many things, those prudent Governors [Robinson and Brewster], with sundry of the sagest members, began both deeply to apprehend their present dangers, and wisely to foresee the future and think of timely remedy." There

¹ *History*, pp. 29–32.

was, *e.g.*, the hardness of the place and country—a hardness so extreme that but few would come to them from the home-land; and fewer still that would bide it out, and continue with them. "Yea, some preferred and chose the prisons in England rather than the liberty in Holland, with so many afflictions." Indeed, "their Pastor would often say, that many of those which both wrote and preached now against them, if they were in a place where they might have liberty and live comfortably, they would then practise as they did."

Again, it was too evident that these same hardships were breaking down some of the stoutest of their number, and making them prematurely old. This was true not only of young men and servants, but also of the children—many of whom, however "willing to bear part of their parents' burden, were, oftentimes, so oppressed with their heavy labours" that "their bodies bowed down under the

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weight of the same, and became decrepid in their early youth, the vigour of Nature being consumed in the very bud, as it were.” This was a grievous sight for parental eyes; but even more grievous was it to see how many of the young people (owing to “the great licentiousness of youth in that country and the manifold temptations of the place”) “were drawn away by evil examples into extravagant and dangerous courses: getting the reins off their necks, and departing from their parents. Some became soldiers. Others took upon them far voyages by sea; and other some, worse courses, tending to dissoluteness, and the danger of their souls; to the great grief of their parents, and dish on our of God. So that they saw their posterity would be in danger to degenerate and be corrupted.”

“Lastly (and which was not least), a great hope and inward zeal they had of laying some good foundation, or at least to make some way thereunto, for the propagating and advancing the Gospel of the Kingdom

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of Christ in those remote parts of the world: yea, though they should be but even as stepping-stones unto others, for the performing of so great a work.”

Such reasons made a strong case for the proposal to seek a remedy in exile; but the proposal, when laid before the congregation by Robinson and Brewster, raised at first many doubts and fears. Only as the result of repeated and patient discussion, with “fasting and prayer,” did a majority vote in its favour. Perhaps the clinching argument, advanced, one imagines, by the Pastor, was this:¹

“True it is that such attempts are not to be made and undertaken without good ground and reason; not rashly, or lightly, as many have done for curiosity, or hope of gain, etc. But our condition is not ordinary. Our ends are good and honourable; our calling lawful and urgent; and, therefore, we may expect the blessing of God in our proceeding. Yea, though

¹ Bradford, *History*, p. 35.

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we should lose our lives in this action, yet may we have comfort in the same, and our endeavours will be honourable.”

But the decision to depart, first come to towards the end of 1617, was but the first step. The next turned on the question, Whither? Some, and

none of the meanest, advocated Guiana; “others were for some parts of Virginia.” Finally, the conclusion was for Virginia, provided they could live under its “general government” “as a distinct body,” and obtain “freedom of Religion” from His Majesty, James I. To this end, a draft was drawn up of “Seven Articles which the Church of Leyden sent to the Council of England to be considered of, in respect of their judgements: occasioned about their going to Virginia.” They were signed by Robinson and Brewster, and carried to London by the Church’s agents, John Carver and Robert Cushman. On Wednesday, November 12th, 1617, Sir Edwin Sandys, Secretary to “His Majesty’s

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Council for Virginia,” replied in terms breathing warm personal sympathy. He spoke for the Council also, to whom the Articles had given such a “good degree of satisfaction” as would ensure their hearty support.

Indeed, the Articles were surprisingly compliant. For, after confessing unreserved agreement with the English Church and the Reformed Churches in doctrine, and acknowledging the saving fruits of that doctrine in thousands of English Conformists—with whom, therefore, “as with our brethren, we desire to keep spiritual communion in peace”—the spokesmen for the Leyden Church go on to own the King’s supremacy in all causes, and over all persons, everywhere in his dominions; the duty of active or passive obedience; the right of the King to appoint Bishops to exercise civil authority, according to the laws of the land, in all provinces, dioceses, congregations, or parishes; “the authority of the present Bishops in England,” “so far forth as the

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same is indeed derived from His Majesty unto them”; and the King’s exclusive power over every synod, classis, convocation, or assembly of ecclesiastical officers.

A modern Congregationalist may be astonished at the sheer Erastianism of all this. But he is apt to overlook that the early separatists were always Erastian, in the sense of giving to the civil magistrate, whether King or Queen, a central and unquestioned place in their loyalty. Robinson and Brewster were not more Erastian than Robert Browne and Henry Barrow. What they deprecated and detested was a rule of the Prelates unguided by the laws and unchecked by the royal hand. Such rule, wielded in the name of a higher law, proved itself to be a lawless tyranny; whereas the magistrate, in their conception of him, was an embodiment of law—the

law of the land. Under the influence of bad advisers, or counsellors, he might fail rightly to interpret or apply the law; but in himself he stood for it. His office, bestowed by

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the King of kings, was to administer it. So his claim to obedience was as divine as his claim to rule. Later experience, gained under both James I and his son, brought a change of mind and feeling. But even in the days of the Commonwealth the old attitude persisted. Cromwell clung to it as long as he could; and so did many of the army Independents. It was one of the chief respects in which they differed from the Presbyterians. Nothing but nauseous dose upon dose of Stuart duplicity finally destroyed it.

We need not, then, be astonished at the Erastianism of “the Seven Articles.” But there is in them a hint of something which ought to arrest attention. I refer to the comparative liberality of the second article. When Robinson wrote his *Justification of Separation from the Church of England against Mr. Richard Bernard his Invective* (1610), he construed separation in the strictest terms. Members of the true Church—his own—were not permitted to touch the unclean thing. Not

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merely the English Church as a body, but also its individual adherents, were put under the ban. There was, as it were, a leprous taint which spread itself through all, and cut them off from the religious fellowship of the saints.

Robinson, like his predecessor Henry Barrow, took this to be the logical outworking of his contention that the English church—constitution, from top to bottom, was become unchristian, nay, anti-Christian. Two years later, when Dr. Ames, minister at that time of the English Reformed Church at the Hague, spoke of this (in a private letter) as the “one point which containeth, indeed, the very bitterness of separation,” and argued for the obligation of holding communion—in prayer, e.g.—with whomsoever one “discerns to have communion with Jesus Christ,” Robinson, in his answer, reveals no change of view.¹

¹ The *Dictionary of National Biography*, therefore, is incorrect in saying that Robinson “had always been in favour of private communion with godly members of the Church of England, herein differing from Ainsworth.”

“I deny” (he says) “that external communion doth necessarily flow from the discerning of inward communion with Christ.” “External communion is a matter of external relation and order” in the true Church. It is not to be practised with anyone outside—although “I deem him holy in his person.” Even to pray with him is unlawful: for “prayer is a part of external communion, and, if I grant him a part, why not the whole? Why not admit him to the Lord’s Supper, to the choice of offices, the censuring of offenders?” “Though prayer be in itself a lawful thing, and they holy in their persons that perform it, yet it is unlawfully performed out of the Church in which men ought to be, and therein to use it.”¹

But in 1614 was printed his treatise *Of Religious Communion, Private and Public*; and here there is a notable advance. It amounts to a recantation, so far as his views of private communion

¹ Of course, the reference is to social prayer.

are concerned. In the Preface he says that formerly he had failed to mark any distinction between personal religious actions and church actions. At any rate, he had failed to make the distinction clear to his conscience. Now he sees it clearly; is prepared to defend it; and is glad to act upon it. In other words, he is glad to discover that he was mistaken in refusing to practise such acts as “private prayer, thanksgiving, singing of psalms, profession of faith, confession of sins, reading or opening the Scriptures,” with Christians of any Church simply as Christians. In his heart he had always longed for this, and had always seen some reason for it; but (apparently under the influence of John Smith, and partly out of a desire for peace)¹ he had

¹ He speaks of having had “sundry passages with Mr. Smith” on this point, and of refusing to join with him, because he would use his liberty therein; and of being excepted against by some of Smith’s people on that account when he was “chosen into office” in the Leyden Church. He admits, too, that “through” his “vehement desire of peace, and weakness withal,” he compromised for a time (Preface to *Religious Communion*).

let himself be overruled. What seems to have brought him to a stand, and made him think the matter out, and realise its importance, was the correspondence with Dr. Ames. Then, having come to new light, he did not hesitate to act and persuade his people to act accordingly.

He remained as much opposed to “public communion” with the English Church as ever. Even in his latest work, *On the Lawfulness of hearing the Ministers of the Church of England*—written about 1624, and published in

1634—he goes no further than to grant this lawfulness. He grants it whole-heartedly, within certain limits. But, as to the necessity of “withdrawing from” the English “hierarchical church government and ministry and appurtenances thereof” he is no less “persuaded” than he was twenty years before. Nor is he less sure of the duty of “uniting in the order and ordinances instituted by Christ, the only King and Lord of His Church”—an order

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and ordinances “by all His disciples to be observed.” Nevertheless, as the end of his journey drew near, his most cherished thoughts were of the good in the English Church:

“For myself, thus I believe with my heart before God, and profess with my tongue, and have before the world, that I have one and the same faith, hope, Spirit, baptism, and Lord, which I had in the Church of England, and none other; that I esteem so many in that Church, of what state or order so ever, as are truly partakers of that faith, as I account many thousands to be, for my Christian brethren, and myself a fellow-labourer with them of that one mystical body of Christ scattered far and wide throughout the world; that I have always, in spirit and affection, all Christian fellowship and communion with them, and am most ready, in all outward actions and exercises of religion, lawful and lawfully done, to express the same.”

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These are Robinson’s last published words with reference to his church position; and, while they show him far advanced in charity, he is strictly a separatist still.

Mr. Champlin Burrage (*Early English Dissenters*, vol. i. p. 293) says:

“Little by little and almost imperceptibly, it would seem, Robinson now” (between 1610 and 1616) “began to lay aside his more rigid separatist views, and to adopt those of the broader-minded, non-separatist Independent. However this may be, it is evident that by 1618 the Pastor of the Pilgrim Fathers had become such an Independent Puritan.”

Independent Puritan, according to Mr. Burrage, means the same as non-separatist, or one who, whilst aiming to set up a self-complete and self-governed congregation, yet regards himself and his fellows as members of the English Church. In this sense, Henry Jacob is instanced as a

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typical non-separatist; and, indeed, the direct precursor of the Independents. He was already such when he held conference with Robinson at Leyden about 1612, and had been such since 1605; and, instead of being converted to separatism by Robinson, as is said by the traditional story, he made a convert of Robinson. But how is this consistent with the words just quoted from Robinson's latest writing—words quoted by Mr. Burrage himself? In fact, it seems to me that he elaborates a difference for which he has furnished very scant evidence.! I think this may be said with truth, even as regards Henry Jacob. True, Jacob hoped—and tried—to organise bodies of an independent character and standing within the Church. So did the

¹ Thus he works it out—as something “more or less unnoticed—with respect to the Churches of New England until 1641,” and urges that the assimilation of these to a Congregational type was scarcely due at all to the influence of the Plymouth congregation; on the other hand, this congregation approximated more and more to the Independent Puritan or non-separatist standpoint of its neighbours.

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Presbyterian-Puritans of Elizabeth's day; so did Richard Bernard of Batcombe; so did the Brownists, at first. Their heart was set passionately on bringing the Church round to their standpoint, or, at least, of being allowed to maintain it unmolested. But they failed. Conformity or separation was forced upon them. The same alternative was forced on Henry Jacob. The history of his little Church in Southwark, related by Mr. Burrage, affords the clearest possible illustration of this. Whatever he may have wished, it became, formally as well as actually, separatist; and, as things were, could do no other.

In fine, Jacob's idea of a non-separatist Church had no chance of success, either in the case of his own Church, or of Robinson's Church, or of the later Churches which Mr. Burrage distinguishes from the early separatist as Independent. The established powers thrust them out and made them all separatist with, or against, their will. The most one can

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concede to Mr. Burrage's distinction is this—that there came about a change of emphasis. Whereas the early Independents erected separatism into a principle, and laid stress upon every point in which it could be applied,—their successors were content just to separate; and lay stress not only upon points of contact and resemblance, but still more upon the positive organising principle of a congregational life. In this respect

Jacob was a pioneer. In the same respect, Robinson, also, was a pioneer. But whether, or how far, he owed his development to Jacob's influence is a question which Mr. Burrage, I think, has not succeeded in answering. My own impression of Robinson inclines me to say that he owed it mainly to the spontaneous growth in him of a truly Christian spirit.

CHAPTER VIII

WE have already mentioned the letter of Sir Edwin Sandys (dated November 12th, 1617). It was felt to be a “singular” encouragement. After its receipt the Church met as soon as possible, and, in accordance with Sir Edwin’s suggestion, set down in writing its particular “requests”; subscribed them with the signatures “of the greatest number of the congregation”; and commissioned its agent and deacon, John Carver, to return with them to London. He bore, also, a letter (dated December 18th) to Sir Edwin from Robinson and Brewster which sought to strengthen the requests by enumerating certain “Inducements” to grant them—viz.:

“(1) We verily believe and trust the Lord is with us; unto whom, and whose

service, we have given ourselves in many trials; and that He will graciously prosper our indeavour, according to the simplicity of our hearts therein.

“(2) We are well weaned from the delicate milk of our mother-country: and inured to the difficulties of a strange and hard land: which yet, in great part, we have, by patience, overcome.

“(3) The people are, for the body of them, industrious and frugal, we think we may safely say, as any company of people in the world.

“(4) We are knit together, as a body, in a most strict and sacred Bond and Covenant of the Lord; of the violation whereof we make great conscience: and by virtue whereof, we do hold ourselves straitly tied to all care of each other’s good, and of the whole, by everyone, and so mutually.

“(5) Lastly, it is not with us as with other men whom small things can discourage, or small discontentments cause to wish themselves at home again. We

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know our entertainment in England and in Holland. We shall much prejudice both our arts and means by removal. If we should be driven to return we should not hope to recover our present helps and comforts: neither, indeed, look ever for ourselves, to attain unto the like in any other place, during our lives; which are now drawing towards their periods.”

At this time (December 1617), the outlook was bright, but the prospect clouded over. When the messengers (Carver and Cushman) came back, they had to report that neither the King nor the Archbishop (George Abbot) favoured “Liberty in Religion.” The utmost His Majesty could be persuaded to grant was connivance. “He would connive at them and not molest them, provided they carried themselves peaceably; but to allow, or tolerate, them by his public authority, under his seal” was not to be thought of.

“This made a damp in the business.” “For many were afraid that if they

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should unsettle themselves, and put off their estates, and go upon those hopes, it might prove dangerous and but a sandy foundation.”¹

As we have seen, suspicion had been sown in the minds of members of the Council as to the Church’s orthodoxy and ministry. This, very likely, had been passed on to the King and the Primate. In regard especially to “three points”² explanation was asked for; and this was supplied by Robinson and Brewster in a letter (enclosing two” Declarations”) to Sir John Wolstenholme (dated January 27th, 1617–18). Sir John (like Sir Edwin Sandys) was their good friend; and he was prepared to do his best with the Council. But he had “good news” to announce. For somehow both the King and the Bishops had consented to grant “Liberty in Religion.” So the Declarations were not necessary. In fact, if presented now they might “spoil all.” It appears

¹ Bradford, *History*, p. 39.

² Touching (a) the making and the functions of ministers; (b) the two Sacraments; (c) the Oath of Supremacy.

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that what the Declarations said (or implied) about the making and ordaining of ministers was the crux; and that while Sir John himself viewed the matter with indifference, the Archbishop was likely enough to take offence.¹ The Declarations, therefore, were held back. “He would not show them at any hand.”

As we find no further apprehension expressed on the score of “Liberty in Religion,” it may perhaps be safe to conclude that this trouble was over. But there were others—“many rubs,” as Bradford says—“that fell in their way” and delayed the final step for nearly two years. There is no call to describe them here. Suffice it to say that they mostly arose from the question of ways and means. First, the Virginia Company, “disturbed with factions and quarrels amongst themselves,”

¹ The letter, with enclosures, was handed to Sir John by Sabine Staesmore, who describes his interview in a letter to Leyden dated London, February 14th (Bradford, *History*, pp. 43-51). Staesmore and his wife were prominent members of Henry Jacob’s Church in Southwark, and afterwards of Robinson’s (*Works*, vol. iii. p. 384).

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became a broken reed. Thereupon Robinson, spoken of as a certain English Preacher, versed in the Dutch language,¹ entered into negotiations with the Dutch for migration to their colony of New Netherland—negotiations which, if they had been carried through, would have had momentous consequences. These, however, were suspended, and replaced by negotiations with a voluntary company of “London Adventurers” which, in the end, did manage to achieve its purpose of furnishing monies, shipping, and other things for the voyage.”

But even so late as June 14th, 1620, Robinson, writing to John Carver, was driven to say: “The estate of things here” (in Leyden) “is very pitiful—“especially by want of shipping” and “money.” There seemed, too, so little hope of the shipping that “divers” who

¹ It is added—“who is well inclined to proceed thither to live; assuring the Petitioners that he has the means of inducing over four hundred families to accompany him thither, both out of this country and England” (Arber, *Story*, p. 297). The date is February 2nd, 1619-20.

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had promised money towards it refused to pay. “Neither”—he writes—“do I think there is a man here [who I would pay anything if he had again his money in his purse.” Also, from the same letter it may be gathered¹ how sadly awry the situation had become in London. Yet within six weeks the *Speedwell*—“a small ship of some sixty tons, bought and fitted in Holland”—sailed with her crowd of pilgrims from Delfshaven to Southampton (July 22nd); on September 6th the *Mayflower* sailed from Plymouth; and by November 11th she, with the Pilgrim Church on board, had reached Cape Cod.

It is a surprising transformation; and is, in fact, a proof that faith, contending with doubts and fears suggested by circumstances, had won the upper hand. Just when the sky is most “red and lowering”

¹ And still more clearly from the Church’s letter to John Carver and Robert Cushman (May 31st); and from Cushman’s three letters to Carver at Southampton and to “them at Leyden” (all of the same date, June 10th). These afford instructive and highly interesting” peeps behind the scenes” (Arber, *Story*, pp. 307–17).

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—about May—Robinson and Brewster call for a “public and solemn Fast.” The day is spent in waiting on God. Robinson preaches, from 1 Samuel 23:3–4, and teaches “many things very aptly, and befitting their present occasion and condition: strengthening them against their fears and perplexities; and encouraging them in their resolutions.” Then it is decided, once for all, what shall be done.¹ First, it is decided that it were best for one part of the Church to go at once, viz. the youngest and strongest. Secondly, they that go must freely offer themselves. Thirdly, if the major part go the Pastor is to go with them; if not, the Elder only.

“It was also agreed on, by mutual consent and covenant, that those that went should be an absolute Church of themselves, as well as those that stayed: seeing, in such a dangerous voyage, and a removal to such a distance, it might come to pass they should, for the body

¹ Bradford, *History*, p. 53.

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of them, never meet again in this world. Yet, with this proviso, that as any of the rest came over to them, or of the others returned upon occasion, they should be reputed as members, without any further dismissal or testimonial.” “It was also promised to those that went first, by the body of the rest, that if the Lord gave them life, and means, and opportunity, they would come to them as soon as they could.”¹

The day of departure—determined by the readiness of the ship—was fixed for July 21st, and on the day before, after another fast, the Pastor preached from Ezra 7:31, the rest of the time being spent “in pouring out prayers to the Lord with great fervency, mixed with abundance of tears.” This was the sermon which contained the often-quoted words:

“We are now ere long to part asunder,

¹ Bradford, *History*, p. 53.

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and the Lord knoweth whether ever he should live to see our faces again; but whether the Lord had appointed it or not, he charged us before God and His blessed angels to follow him no further than he followed Christ. And if God should reveal anything to us by any other instrument of His, to be as ready to receive it as ever we were to receive any truth by his ministry. For he was very confident the Lord had more truth and light yet to break forth out of His holy Word.”¹

By way of contrast to the “misery” of the Calvinists and Lutherans, who stick where their teacher left them, he—

“Put us in mind of our Church-Covenant (at least that part of it) whereby we promise and covenant with God and one

¹ Dr. Dexter (*Congregationalism as seen in its Literature*, pp. 407–9) would limit the exhortation to open-mindedness as regards church-polity, not theology—on the ground that Robinson was a strict Calvinist. But the argument is not convincing. For the principle of open-mindedness, once and honestly accepted, will not stop at church-polity, nor is it easy to think of Robinson as meaning it to stop.

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with another to receive whatsoever light or truth shall be made known to us from His written Word. But withal exhorted us to take heed what we received for truth, and well to examine and compare, and weigh it with other Scriptures of truth, before we received it; for, saith he, *it is not ‘possible the Christian world should come so lately out of such thick Anti-Christian darkness, and that full perfection of knowledge should break forth at once.’* Another thing he commended to us was that we should use all means to avoid and shake off the name of ‘*Brownist*,’ being a mere nickname and brand to make Religion odious and the professors of it to the Christian world. ‘And to that end,’ said he, ‘I should be glad if some godly Minister would go over with you, or come to you, before my coming; for,’ said he, ‘there will be no difference between the unconformable¹

¹ It is not clear what name seemed to him appropriate. “Brownist” is crossed out. “Separatist” (in a substantive sense) he does not use; nor “Independent”;

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Ministers and you when they come to the practices of the Ordinances out of the Kingdom. And so advised us by all means to endeavour to close with the godly party of the kingdom of *England*, and rather to study union than division, viz. how near we might possibly, without sin, close with them, than in the least measure to affect division or separation from them. ‘And be not loath to take another Pastor or

Teacher,' saith he, 'for the flock that hath two shepherds is not endangered, but secured by it.'"¹

On July 21st (Friday) almost the whole congregation went as far as Delfshaven (about twenty-four miles from

nor "Congregationalist." His positive conception of the movement with which he was identified, as an effort to realise the New Testament idea, made simply "Church" the natural term, and, as a matter of fact, he speaks of his people as the "Church," or the "congregation," or the "brethren," or (very rarely) the "saints." Perhaps "unconformable" (as above) would have been his inclusive name for them, and others akin to them, on the negative side.

¹ Edward Winslow's *Hypocrisie Unmasked* (1646), pp. 97–98.

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Leyden), the place of embarkation. Such as were detained at first followed after:

"And sundry also came from Amsterdam" (about fifty miles), "to see them shipped and to take their leave of them. That night was spent with little sleep by the most; but with friendly entertainment, and Christian discourse, and other real expressions of true christian love. The next day, the wind being fair, they went aboard" (*i.e.* those who were to sail), "and their friends with them, when truly doleful was the sight of that sad and mournful parting. To see what sighs and sobs and prayers did sound amongst them; what tears did gush from every eye, and pithy speeches pierced each heart; that sundry of the Dutch strangers that stood on the quay, as spectators, could not refrain from tears. Yet comfortable and sweet it was to see such lively and true expressions of dear and unfeigned love. But the tide, which stays for no man, calling them away that

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were thus loath to depart, their Reverend Pastor, falling down on his knees (and they all with him), with watery cheeks, commended them, with most fervent prayers, to the Lord and His blessing. And then, with mutual embraces and many tears, they took their leaves one of another: which proved to be the last leave to many of them."¹

Thus, the Pastor kneeling among them on the deck of the little *Speedwell* was the last picture of him which the Pilgrims bore away in their memory.

Winslow gives the final touch to this historic scene. As the *Speedwell* left the quay-side, those on board fired a parting volley with their muskets, which was followed by a booming sound of shots from three of the ship's cannons; "and so lifting up our hands to each other and our hearts for each other to the Lord our God, we departed, and found His presence with us, in the midst of our manifold

¹ Bradford, *History*, p. 73.

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straits He carried us through.” “The memory of that time,” he adds, “the Dutch, at Delftshaven preserve to this day.”¹

Five days later (July 27th), Robinson wrote two letters from Leyden—one to John Carver, his brother-in-law,² in which “he repeats the assurance of his intention to join them on the other side of the Atlantic, the first opportunity that presented itself,” the other to the whole company. Its first sentences lay bare his soul.

“Loving Christian friends, I do heartily, and in the Lord, salute you all, as being they with whom I am present in my best affection, and most earnest longings after you, though I be constrained, for a while, to be bodily absent from you. I say constrained, God knowing how willingly and much rather than otherwise, I would have borne my part

¹ *Hypocrisy Unmasked*, p. 91.

² “This was the last letter that Mr. Carver lived to see from him.” He was the first Governor, but died at Plymouth in April 1621. (Bradford, *History*, pp. 77–82.)

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with you in this first brunt, were I not, by strong necessity, held back for the present. Make account of me, in the meanwhile, as of a man divided in himself, with great pain; and, as, natural bonds set aside, having my better part with you.”

The letter itself is full charged with wise counsel concerning the way of peace in and among themselves. Peace and unity, springing from unselfish regard for the common good, is its burden. It was received at Southampton, where the whole company of those for the *Mayflower* as well as of those in the *Speedwell*, had come together, and was read aloud to all; and “had good acceptation with all, and after fruit with many.” “Then they ordered and distributed their company for either ship, as they conceived for the best.” Finally, the two ships set sail from Southampton about August 5th (1620).¹

¹ They had not gone far when Reynolds, master of the *Speedwell*, complained of a fatal leak in his ship; so the,

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Here for us the story ends. It remains but to accompany Robinson off the scene. Governor Bradford published two other letters of his, to himself and to William Brewster respectively. They are dated Leyden, December 19th and 20th, 1623. The former—to the Governor—is mostly concerned

with what he had heard about the “killing” of some “poor Indians.”¹ He would not credit the report at first, but it has been confirmed; and—

“Oh ! how happy a thing had it been, if you had converted some before you had killed any; besides, where blood is once

put into Dartmouth for overhauling. On August 23rd, they set out again; but some 100 leagues beyond Land’s End the same thing occurred: so they” put into Plymouth.” Here the *Speedwell* was dismissed, and those of her passengers who had lost heart. These were 18 out of 30. The remaining 12 joined the *Mayflower*, which sailed alone from Plymouth on September 6th, with 102 persons on board.

¹ Refers, no doubt, to Miles Standish’s expedition—sent out by the Plymouth people in March 1623. See Arber, *Story*, pp. 564 ff.

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begun to be shed, it is seldom stanch’d of a long time after. You will say they deserved it. I grant it; but upon what provocations and invitements by those heathenish Christians! ¹ Besides, you, being no magistrates over them, were to consider not what they deserved, but what you were by necessity constrained to inflict. Necessity of this, especially of killing so many, I see not. Methinks one or two principals should have been full enough, according to that approved rule, The punishments to a few, and the fear to many. . . . It is also a thing more glorious in men’s eyes than pleasing in God’s, or convenient for Christians, to be a terror to poor barbarous people;—and, indeed, I am afraid lest, by these occasions, others should be drawn to affect a kind of ruling course in the world. I doubt not but you will take in good part these things which I write, and, as there is cause, make use of them.”² This

¹ Margin, Mr. Weston’s men.

² Bradford, *History*, pp. 197–8.

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was plain dealing; but it must have had its effect in making for Plymouth the honourable distinction of being the most kindly of all the colonies in its treatment of the natives.

The letter to Brewster goes into the reasons why his coming is deferred; and likely to be. “For, first, there is no hope at all that I know of, or can conceive of, of any new stock to be raised for that end.” He and his Leyden people have no resources for getting across, and the Company of Adventurers in London will not, or cannot, produce them. “Besides, howsoever for the present the Adventurers allege nothing but want of money, which is an invincible difficulty; yet if that be taken away by you, others will without doubt be found.” In fact, there is, among the bulk of the Adventurers, a settled purpose to hold back would-be settlers at

Plymouth and Robinson in particular. They prefer, at any rate, to further the going of mere

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“forward preachers” (*i.e.* Nonconformist Puritans) and their adherents rather than reputed extremists. And as to the “forward preachers” he says: “I persuade myself that, for me, they of all others are unwilling I should be transported, especially such of them as have an eye that way themselves; as thinking, if I come there, their market will be marred in many regards.”¹

The letter concludes: “Now touching the question propounded by you, I judge it not lawful for you, being a ruling Elder—as Romans 12:7–8 and 1 Timothy 5:17—opposed to the Elders that teach and exhort and labour in the word and doctrine, to which the Sacraments are annexed, to administer them, nor convenient, if it were lawful. Whether any learned man will come unto you or not

¹ One of the proposals of John Lyford’s “faction” (so troublesome to the Plymouth Church in 1624–5) was that “Mr. Robinson and his company may not go over to our plantation, unless he and they will reconcile themselves to our Church by a recantation under their hands, etc.” (Bradford, *History*, pp. 238, 239).

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I know not; if any do, you must *consilium capere in arena*.”¹

About the beginning of April 1626, news reached Plymouth, not of the Pastor’s arrival, but of his death. He had been dead for thirteen months, since March 1st, 1625. Captain Miles Standish brought the news, in a letter written by Roger White (dated Leyden, April 28th, 1625). It was addressed to the Church through “the Governor and Mr. Brewster,” and said:

“LOVING AND KIND FRIENDS,

“I know not whether this will ever come to your hands, or miscarry,
as

¹ Bradford, *History*, pp. 198–200. A schedule of “objections” to the Plymouth Church, urged by those of the Adventurers who were “especially against the coming of the rest from Leyden,” is quoted by Bradford (pp. 194 ff.), and the 3rd is: “want of both the Sacraments.” The answer is: “The more is our grief that our Pastor is kept from us, by whom we might have enjoyed them; for we used to have the Lord’s Supper every Sabbath, and baptism as often as there was occasion of children to baptise.” It should be said that Robinson was not in the least a sacramentalist. What led him to “annex” the Sacraments to one class of Elders only, Pastors namely, was his belief that so the Scriptures decreed. Most of the early Independents were of the same mind.

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other my letters have done; yet, in regard of the Lord’s dealing with us here, I have had a great desire to write unto you, knowing your desire

to bear part with us, both in our joys and sorrows, as we do with you. These are, therefore, to give you to understand that it hath pleased the Lord to take out of this vale of tears, your and our loving and faithful Pastor, and my dear and reverend brother,¹ Mr. John Robinson, who was sick some eight days. He began to be sick on Saturday in the morning, yet the next day (being the Lord's Day) he taught us twice. And so the week after grew weaker, every day more than other; yet he felt no pain but weakness all that time of his sickness. The physic he took wrought kindly, in man's judgment, but he grew weaker every day, feeling little or no pain, and sensible to the very last. He fell sick February 22nd, and departed this life March 1st. He had a continual inward ague, but free

¹ Mrs. Robinson was his sister.

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from infection, so that all his friends came freely to him. And if either prayers, tears, or means, would have saved his life, he had not gone hence. But he, having faithfully finished his course, and performed the work which the Lord had appointed him here to do, he now resteth with the Lord in eternal happiness.

“We, wanting him and all church Governors, yet we still (by the mercy of God) continue and hold close together in peace and quietness; and so we hope we shall do, though we be very weak, wishing (if such were the will of God), that you and we were again united together in one, either there or here; but seeing it is the will of the Lord thus to dispose of things, we must labour with patience to rest contented, till it please the Lord otherwise to dispose. For news, is here not much; only, as in England we have lost our old King James, who departed this life about a month ago, so here they have lost the old Prince, Grave Mourise [Count Maurice]; who

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both departed this life since my brother Robinson. And as in England we have a new King Charles, of whom there is great hope, so [we] hear they have made Prince Hendrich Generall in his brother's place, etc. Thus, with my love remembered, I take leave and rest

“Your assured loving friend,

“ROGER WHITE.”

“Thus” (adds Bradford) “these two great princes, and their Pastor, left this world near about one time. Death makes no difference.”¹

He died in his own house on the Kloksteeg, and was buried (on March 4th, 1625) under the pavement of St. Peter's Church close by. His wife stayed on in Leyden, but whether or not in the old home, is uncertain. She was a witness

¹ Bradford, *History*, pp. 247–9. White's letter, as printed in Young's *Chronicles* (pp. 478–80), differs considerably from the above; and reads as if it were the unpolished and unpruned original. One omitted sentence says that the Leyden people are without a single "governing officer."

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at her daughter Bridget's marriage to a young Dutchman on May 10th, 1629. There is no trace of the family after this date—except of the second son, Isaac, the only one of the six children to settle in New England. It is probable that they all, like most of the Church, became gradually absorbed in the life around them. As to the Church, if it was "very weak" (according to Roger White), it appears to have got rapidly weaker. In 1634 it is said to "have been only one-fifth as large as in 1624."¹ Inward dissension was the main cause.² "The peace and quietness" which existed at the date of the Pastor's death broke up over such a question as the "lawfulness" of occasional attendance at a service in the English Church. The narrow spirits went off to Amsterdam and joined John Canne's congregation. The moderates and genuine Robinsonians held on for a time

¹ See Burrage, *Early English Dissenters*, vol. i. p. 294.

² But it should be noted that in 1629 thirty-five went to New England and sixty more in 1630.

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in their separateness as a Church, but joined the Reformed Church at length—in 1658.

"On July 24th, 1891, a bronze memorial tablet, fixed in a recess of the exterior of St. Peter's Church at Leyden, was unveiled under the auspices of the National Council of Congregational Churches of the United States."¹ "The ceremony took place in the presence of delegates from England and America, the burgomaster, and the representatives of the Ecclesiastical Commissioners of the city and of the University of Leyden."

¹ Brown, *Pilgrim Fathers*, p. 244.

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CHAPTER IX

AS to Robinson in his private relations—son, husband, father, friend—we can do little more than guess. There is no direct information. But we know what he was as a Pastor, and the light upon him in that respect may guide us not wide of the mark. So good a Pastor cannot have confined his goodness to his church. It must have been a spring of “living water” in his own domestic garden as well. That he was a scholar his early eminence at Cambridge affords proof; and the proof is amplified by much that he wrote. His clear and careful style, the orderly arrangement of his thoughts, the acumen of his logic, his constant effort to be fair and exact and thorough, are traits of the scholar no less than the breadth and wealth of his knowledge. He was

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also a man of the world in the best sense. The sixty-two essays which he wrote from time to time, and published towards the end of his life, may serve as a proof of that. They are all of a moral and religious cast; but they show that he tried to view life under its manifold and varied aspects; that he sympathised with these; that he felt the pulse of nature which beats under them and the need to appreciate their significance. His outlook was limited; but was not, to any great extent, either artificial or prejudiced.

But, chiefly, he was a man of profound religious conviction. God and the soul were the two facts most real to him. His soul found God in Christ, apparently while he was still a youth, and surrendered to Him once for all. To live according to the will of God became henceforth his single aim. He knew quite well where to look for the Divine will. He saw it before his eyes in the Bible; and, as a Puritan, accepted what he saw with unquestioning faith. The only intellectual

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difficulty was so to read the Bible as to make sure of its meaning. That done, obedience to its behests followed as a thing of course. But obedience might be hampered by practical difficulties. In relation to the Church, e.g., he might work his way to clearness as to its proper character and place by a study of the New Testament, and then find the field around him occupied by something very different; and find, further, that any attempt to replace the false by the true brought him up against unyielding forces.

This was what happened in his case; and this was what confronted him with the alternative of choosing between God and man. We may say that the alternative did not really exist, and was his own invention. It may be so. Such alternatives always appear fanciful to those who do not see them. To Robinson's conscience, however, the alternative was as vivid as between light and darkness. And so he took the only possible way that was open to him. This is the simple lesson

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of his life. Nor of his alone, but also of the Puritans generally, or at least of their best examples. They were men sure of God, sure of His will, sure of their absolute duty to act as in His sight and for His approval. Nothing else mattered by comparison. Consequences were of no account. Obedience alone held the secret of freedom, courage, peace, power, happiness, salvation. Essentially they were right. Cleared of mistakes which they could not possibly avoid but which experience has enabled us to outgrow, their position is everlastingly right. And to grasp this fact with a will as loyal as theirs is, perhaps, the great lesson we need to learn if our larger light is to be our blessing.

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A NEW FACT

THE intended removal of Robinson and his people to Leyden became known, it seems, to King James's Ambassador at the Hague, Sir Ralph Winwood, who heard, also, that the "Burgomasters and court of the City" had consented to their settlement. Thereupon he entered a protest, doubtless in His Majesty's name, and drew forth a reply which is "as honourable a document as can be found in the annals of diplomatic correspondence." It is extant in the Leyden *Missiven boek*, C. fol. 126, b. recto, and is quoted by Dr. Plooi in a recent tract on *The Pilgrim Fathers*, who truly says that "Leiden and the Netherlands may be proud of it." Its date is somewhere in April 1609. The following is a translation, and I am able to reproduce it through the kindness of its author, Dr. Rendel Harris.

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"To the honourable, prudent, discreet Ian Janss(en) Baersdorp, Councillor in the College of Deputy Councillors of the State of Holland.

"HONOURABLE, WISE, DISCREET COLLEAGUE:

"We have received your honourable missive of the xxiiiird of this month and understood the contents thereof. We attach the following reply:

"We reckon to be unjustly charged by Sir (Ralph) Winwood, the Ambassador of His Britannic Majesty, to the effect that we had entered into agreement with certain Brownists. It is, however, true that in February last a petition was presented to us in the name of Ian Robarts, minister of the divine word, together with some of the community of the Christian Reformed Religion, born in England, requesting that, as they had the intention of taking up their abode in the city of Leyden, there might be granted to them a free consent thereto. To this

we made reply by an official document, that we did not refuse free entrance to honest people provided they behaved themselves honestly and submitted themselves here to all the Statutes and Ordinances, and, for that reason, the entrance of the petitioners would be welcome and agreeable to us—as may be seen by the Petition and the attached reply of which we send your Excellency a copy, premising that nothing has been done by us further in the matter; and that we have not been aware, nor do we at present know, that the Petitioners have been banished from England, nor that they belong to the sect of the Brownists.

“We therefore beg your Excellency to communicate these presents and the attached document to the Lord Advocate, to the end that no misunderstanding may arise between ourselves and his Majesty’s Ambassadors, and that we may be held excused by their Excellencies and consequently by His Majesty.

“Herewith, etc.”

From which it appears, *inter alia*:

(1) That the Brownists were regarded by His Majesty as persons “banished from England.”

(2) That, nevertheless, His Majesty kept a sharp eye upon them—certainly with no gracious intent. We know the fate which awaited the voluntary or compulsory return of “banished” persons.

(3) That the Leyden authorities were not in the habit of searching into private opinions, and did not mean to begin it. Enough if would-be residents were decent folk. All honour to them!

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