

The Pilgrim Church at Plymouth.

We left the Pilgrims in the Mayflower arranged
into a body politic by the Mayflower Compact.
Of their hardships during the winter, the great
difficulty of getting houses built, their sickness,
the death of half the have died, we need not
say speak, for we know that too well for our
ear of conscience, if we should stoop to measure
ourselves by the standards of the Mayflower Pilgrims.
What courage it took after their long and
winter for them to sow grain over the spot
where the dead lay in order that the swallows
might not suspect their meekness, and loss.
Here they stood watching the Mayflower depart for
the old tower, and old England, where if they
would but do that which their conscience
forbade, they could live in ease comfort and
luxury. But these men and women were made
of stern solid stuff, and having put their
hands to the plow they would not turn back.

Now there is no little dispute in regard
to the religious and theological significance
of this band of people. There is the history of

of New England Theology, who have been on the
liberal side, have held always that Plymouth Church
were in spirit liberal, but not in form. On the
other hand the conservative people have always held
that they were strictly and unquestionably
Calvinistic. This question can only be settled by
your point of view, if you look to the outward
mechanical form, you must say they were Calvinistic,
if you look to the inward spirit, and see the
direction in which they were moving, you must
see that they were the extreme liberals of their
time.

Dr. Dexter, who has written at length on this
subject, and done an untold amount of work
in writing his history, holds that they were indeed
conservative, and substantiates his claim by elaborate
quotations from John Robinson's works, and also by the
fact that Robinson in a written treatise defends
the Synod of Darts decision. Of this Synod, John
Lathrop Wootley in his life and death of John of
Barnard ¹⁶¹⁰ says, in a Prouse which Mr. Dexter
quotes, "On the 23rd day of April 1619, the cōmons
were signed by all members of the Synod.
Arminians were pronounced heretics, Schismaties

teacher of false doctrines. They were declared incapable of filling any clerical, or academic post. No worse therefore was to teach children, lecture to adolescents, or preach to the nation, unless a subscriber to the doctrines of the unchanged, unchangeable, orthodox Church. On the 30 of April, and 1st May, the Netherlands Confession and the Heidelberg Catechism were declared to be infallible. No change was to be possible in either formulary. Schools and pulpits were inexorably bound to the only true religion." Dexter 401.

Now, as I see it, Robinson simply defended the doctrines, and not the spirit of this council of Dort.

In comparison with that statement I want to quote one or two passages from men who knew Robinson personally.

Note particularly this passage in which Mr. Dexter quotes, but fails to see the signifi-

conce of. John Bastwick, who knew him["]
at Leyden says. "I can speak thus much
in the presence of God, that Master Robinson
of Leiden, the pastor of the Burmest Church,
there told me and others, who are yet
living to witness the truth of what I
now say, that if he 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 sub-
scription to ~~these~~ them, and imposed
upon him the observation of them,
that he had never referred over
it, or left that church." Dester quotes
that as showing that he was in
substantial accord with current orthodoxy.
But notice that he left that church

because they had forced him to 5
a subscription of them". Is not that
the essential principle upon which a Free
Church is established.

But in addition to this is the evidence
of ~~Gov.~~ Edward Winslow, this evidence
Dexter rejects, but it seems to me that
this is valuable testimony, for Gov. Winslow ~~says~~
Robinson ~~personally~~.

"In the next place, for the wholesome counsel
Mr. Robinson gave that part of the church whereby
he was pastor, at their departure from
him to begin the great work of plantation
in New England, amongst other wholesome
instructions and exhortations, he used
these expressions or to the same purpose.
We are soon ere long to part asunder
and the Lord knoweth whether ever tel
Robinson should live to see our faces

again; but whether the Lord had affinited
it or not he charged us before God, to
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 or
ready to receive it, as ever we were
to receive any truth by his Ministry: For
he was very confident that ^{the Lord} God had
yet more truth and light yet to break
forth out of his holy mind. He took
occasion also misably to bewaille the
state and condition of reformed churches,
who were come to a stand in Religion
and would go no further than the
instrument of their reformation:
As for example, the Lutherans, they could
not be drawne to goe beyond

what Luther saw, for whatever part
of God's will he had further importuned
and revealed to Colvin, they will
rather die than embrace it. And so
also you see the Colvinists, they stick
where he left them: A misery much
to be lamented: For though they were
fearless shining lights in their times,
yet God had not revealed his whole
will to them; And were they now
living, saith he, they would be as ready
and willing to receive embrace further
light, as that they had received.
Here also he set us in mind of our
Church Covenant (scruply) (at least that
part of it, whereby we promise and
covenant with God and one with another
to receive whatsoever light or truth

should be made known to us from his
written word; but without exhorting us
to take heed what we received for truth
and well to examine it and compare
it, and weigh it with other scriptures
of truth, before we received it. For
he saith, 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."

Now it seems to me that Channing
could not have made a more liberal statement,
and while Sexter rejects as untrustworthy,
nevertheless, if Robinson did not say as
much as that. It is certainly what
Minslow thought he said, and
Minslow was the man who came

to New England, and helped shape the⁹
destinies of the Plymouth Church.

That was the spirit of the Plymouth church.

It was not until the Puritans came
that any severe strain was ~~was~~ brought to
bear on the Plymouth church. For seven
years, and eight months, the Plymouth
Church stood alone. But when the Puritans
came to solve new conflicts to aore.
and threatened disturbance, but were finally
settled in a peaceful manner. If those
Conflicts and their results we will
meet next Sunday. But the point to notice
is this that the spirit of the church was far
more light in religious life.

And I went to work the point here that
this was the spirit of the early settlers.
By the end of the year 1630, there were
five congregational churches in New

England, (1) Plymouth, (1606 Secy.) Salem, 1629.
(3) Dorchester 1630; First Church, Boston 1630.
Woburn, 1630. All these churches are
now Unitarian.

By the end of 1640, there were 35 churches
in New England, two thirds of them
are now Unitarian. The spirit of free inquiry
unconcerned by tradition leads to the positions
we now hold. If the early settlers of
New England, who brought the spirit, and
instituted the form of self government,
represent the spirit of our country,
then it follows that they represent the
religious attitude of a Republic like this.

The development of other types of
churches referent, the usual influx
of people who are not over the
ground at the time of battle, but

come around soon after, and seem to
think that they did all the work.