

From Compact to Constitution

Video Two: Whereas You Are to Become a Body Politic

Table of Contents

One. Whereas You Are to Become a Body Politic: An Introduction to Video Two.....	2
Two. Transcript of “Whereas You Are to Become a Body Politic”	3
Three. The English Reformation: A Background Essay for Educators and Students.....	4
Four. What is a Primary Source?.....	5
Five. John Robinson (1575 – 1625)	11

One. Whereas You Are to Become a Body Politic: An Introduction to Video Two

Before the *Mayflower* and *Speedwell* departed Southampton, England in August 1620, a letter from the Leiden congregation's pastor, John Robinson, was read to all the passengers. As members of his congregation departed Holland, Robinson advised them on matters spiritual and temporal. He warned his former congregants, and the strangers joining them in England for the journey, that they were embarking on an experiment in building civil community and that no one among them was experienced about the rest. He implored them to honor the most talented man regardless of social standing among the men who were not indentured to others. His language prefigures the words of the *Mayflower Compact*.

Unlike John Winthrop's more famous oration, *A Model of Christian Charity*, Robinson's writing did not focus on the "city on a hill" visibility of the colonial experiment and the potential fame or infamy in the effort. Instead, he humbly focused on the work at hand.

Two. Transcript of “Whereas You Are to Become a Body Politic”

July, 1620. Leiden, Netherlands. After three years of planning, an English Separatist congregation prepares to leave their Dutch homes. Driven from England in a wave of religious persecution, this group, led by Pastor John Robinson, found asylum in Leiden. For them, the Church of England could not be further purified. They needed their own church, but to do so was an act of rebellion against King James, the head of state and church.

For 12 years, the Separatists lived in Leiden where they were able to worship safely. However, life in a foreign country was not without problems. The church saw the need to begin again in America. Robinson planned to follow his flock, but he felt obligated to stay in Leiden to shepherd those who were too old, frail, or fearful for the first voyage.

As it came time for the *Speedwell* to sail away from the shores of the Netherlands, Pastor Robinson crafted a letter that would serve as an inspiration for the new community across an ocean.

August, 1620, Southampton, England. Before *Mayflower* and *Speedwell* depart together, Robinson's letter is read to the passengers. He gives the church members, and the newcomers joining them in England for the journey, a warning. They were embarking on an experiment in building community. No one among them was experienced above the rest. They should honor the most talented man regardless of social standing among the men who were not indentured. The language and the concepts of Robinson's letter influence the Mayflower Compact.

Pastor Robinson: “Things of importance. I could put you in mind, but I will not so far wrong your godly minds as to think you heedless of these things, fair ye well in Him whom you trust and in whom I rest. An unfeigned well willer of your happy success in this hopeful voyage. John Robinson.”

Unlike John Winthrop's more famous oration, called “A model of Christian Charity”, Robinson's writing did not focus on world visibility in Plymouth's colonial experiment, and the city on a hill fame or infamy in the effort. Robinson humbly focused on the work at hand. Robinson very clearly sees the dangers on the horizon, the potential for instability and faction. He knew that the voyage would be made up of some from his church, others filled in from the investors. His letter presents a practical path to overcome these differences. He advised them to focus all their work and feelings on the promotion of the general good and avoid any personal advantages.

The key points in Robinson's letter chart a course towards self-governance. Could they make it work? Could diverse passengers navigate rough waters and unite to create a new community? The Voyage That Made a Nation was about to begin.

Three. The English Reformation: A Background Essay for Educators and Students

In 16th and 17th-century England, church reformation was the age's most dramatic and cataclysmic religious controversy. The Protestant Reformation begun by Martin Luther in Europe officially came to England in 1533 when Henry VIII broke with the Roman Catholic church over the issue of his divorce from Catherine of Aragon. He established the Church of England as the church of the realm, with an English king, rather than the Roman Catholic pope as its head.

The break with Rome precipitated radical changes in English worship, but having opened the door to change, the crown found it difficult to close the door. In Elizabeth I's reign a new wave of religious reformers, inspired by the teachings of John Calvin, began clamoring for further change in the English church.

These Puritans, as they came to be known, maintained that the English Reformation had not gone far enough. The Anglican church, they said, was still too Roman; it wrongfully retained ceremonies and vestments used by the Roman Catholic church and for which there was no scriptural precedent. Christian worship, the reformers maintained, should be based upon the ancient church of the apostles. No elements ought to be allowed that were not scripturally sanctioned.

The Anglicans, on the other hand, found the Church of England to be satisfactory as it stood. They disagreed that the modern church must be an exact copy of the apostolic church. The Anglicans considered the Scriptures to be authoritative in all things retaining to redemption "but permissive in those that did not, in which case men might adjust their own affairs."

The conflict between Puritans and Anglicans was more than a theological debate; it was a power struggle. Each side thought its dogma should be the official religion of England. Toleration was not an issue, for all parties would have agreed that the person who tolerated a different religious point of view showed that he or she had weak and small faith in his or her own professed belief. Moreover, since the Church of England was inextricably bound up with the State, functioning in the Anglican system as a sort of department of religious affairs run by the crown, a host of political considerations hinged on the conflict as well.

A few found that the situation in the Church of England was so lamentable that nothing, but immediate reformation could be interpreted as truly carrying out the will of God. They felt that if the rest of the Church would not follow them in this view, then the rest of the church would have to be abandoned. On their part, the discontents refused to participate in the services in the Church of England. They withdrew and set up what they considered to be true churches on their own. These people were the Separatists.

Four. What is a Primary Source?

Primary sources are like time machines. They are things created during the actual period you're studying. It gives you a first-hand look at what happened back then. For example:

Diary entries or journals: Someone writing about their life at the time.

Letters: Messages exchanged between people long ago.

Photographs: Pictures taken during an important event or era.

Official Documents: Things like law, speeches, or contracts.

Artifacts: Objects like tools, clothing, or art from a specific time.

Primary sources are unique because they come directly from the past—straight from the people who were there—so they help us understand history in personal way. They are different from secondary sources, like history books, which talk about the past but were not made during the same time. Think of it like hearing the story from someone who was there versus someone telling it second-hand.

The document which follows is the opening chapter of William Bradford's *Of Plymouth Plantation*. It is a Separatist account of the English Reformation until the moment a secret Reformed Christian congregation was gathered in Scrooby, Nottinghamshire, England in 1606. Chapter One is newly transcribed from the Plimoth Patuxet Press/State Library of Massachusetts facsimile.

Editor's Note: The transcriptions which follow use modernized American spelling, yet they are faithful to Bradford's original punctuation and his idiosyncratic use of Upper-Case letters. Period verbs and modifiers such as *hath*, *appeareth*, and *resteth* have been retained. The transcriptions also preserve small mistakes such as dropped periods or parenthetical phrases that only have one parenthesis.

Of Plymouth Plantation

And first of the occasion, and Inducements thereunto; the which that I may truly unfold, I must begin at the very root, and rise of the same. The which I shall endeavor to manifest in a plain style; with singular regard unto the simple truth in all things, at least as near as my slender judgment can attain the same.

1 Chapter

It is well known unto the godly, and judicious; how ever since the breaking out of the light of the gospel, in our Honorable Nation of England (which was the first of nations, whom the Lord adorned therewith, after that gross darkness of popery which had covered, and overspread the Christian world) what wars, and oppositions ever since Satan hath raised, maintained, and continued against the saints, from time, to time, in one sort, or other. Sometimes by bloody

death and Cruel torments; other whiles Imprisonments, banishments, and other hard usages. As being loath his kingdom should go down, the truth prevail; and the churches of God revert to their ancient purity; and recover, the primitive order, liberty, and beauty. But when he could not prevail by these means, against the main truths of the gospel; but that they began to take rooting in many places; being watered with the blood of the Martyrs, and blessed from heaven with a gracious increase. He then began to take him to his ancient stratagems, used of old against the first Christians. That when by the bloody, and barbarous persecutions of the Heathen Emperors, he could not stop, and subvert the course of the Gospel; but that it speedily overspread, with a wonderful Celerity, the then best known parts of the world. He then began to sow Errors, heresies, and wonderful dissensions among the professors themselves (working upon their pride, and ambition, with other corrupt passions, Incident to all mortal men yea to the saints themselves in some measure) by which woeful effects followed; as not only bitter contentions, and heartburnings, schisms, with other horrible confusions. But Satan took occasion and advantage thereby to foist in a number of vile ceremonies, with many unprofitable Canons, and decrees which have ever since been as snares, to many poor, and peaceable souls, even to this day. So as in the ancient times, the persecutions by the heathens, and their Emperors; was not the greater then* of the Christians one against other. The Arians, and other their complices, against the orthodox, and true Christians. As witnesseth SOCRATES in his 2 book.* His words are these; "the violence truly" (saith he) was no less than that of old, practiced towards the Christians when they were compelled and drawn to sacrifice to Idols; for many endured sundry kinds of torment, often rackings, and dismembering of their Joints; confiscating of their goods; some bereaved of their native soil; others departed this life under the hands of the tormentor; and some died in banishment, and never saw their country again" etc.

**Bradford's marginal note: Lib. 2. Chap. 22.*

The like method Satan hath seemed to hold in these later times, since the truth began to spring, and spread after the great defection made by Antichrist that man of sin.

For to let pass the Infinite examples in sundry nations, and several places of the world; and Instance in our own. Whenas that old Serpent could not prevail by those fiery flames, and other his cruel Tragedies which he (by his Instruments) put in ure*, everywhere in the days of Queen Mary, and before. He then began an other kind of war, and went more closely to work; not only to oppugn, but even to ruate and destroy the kingdom of Christ, by more Secret and Subtle means. By kindling the flames of contention, and sowing the seeds of discord, and bitter Enmity amongst the professors (and seeming reformed) themselves. For when he could not prevail (by the former means) against the principal doctrines of faith; he bent his force against the holy discipline, and outward regiment of the kingdom of Christ; by which those holy doctrines should be conserved, and true piety maintained amongst the saints, and people of God.

Mr. Fox recordeth, how, that besides those worthy martyrs and confessors which were burned in Queen Mary's days and otherwise tormented, "Many (both students and others) fled out of the land, to the number of 800. And became Several congregations. At Wesel, Frankfurt, Basel,

Emden, Marburg, Strasbourg, and Geneva," etc.* Amongst whom (but especially those at Frankfurt), began that bitter war of contention and persecution about the ceremonies, and service-book, and other popish and Antichristian stuff. The plague of England to this day (which are like the high places in Israel, which the prophets cried out against, and were their ruin) Which the better part sought (according to the purity of the gospel) to root out, and utterly to abandon. And the other part (under veiled pretenses) for their own ends, and advancements) sought as stiffly, to continue, maintain, and defend. As appeareth by the discourse thereof published in print, Anno: 1575. (a book that deserves better to be known, and considered).

**Bradford's marginal note: Acts, & Mon: [Monuments] pag. 1587 Edition 2*

The one side labored to have the right worship of God, and discipline of Christ, Established in the church, according to the simplicity of the Gospel; with the mixture of men's Inventions. And to have, and to be ruled by the laws of God's word; dispensed in those offices, and by those officers of pastors, Teachers, and Elders, etc., according to the Scriptures. The other party (though under many colors, and pretenses) endeavored to have the Episcopal dignity (after the popish manner) with their large power, and Jurisdiction, still retained; with all those Courts, Canons, and ceremonies, together with all such Livings, revenues, and subordinate officers, with other such means, as formerly upheld their Antichristian greatness. And enabled them with lordly, and tyrannous power, to persecute the poor servants of God. This contention was so great, as neither the honor of God, the Common persecution; nor the mediation of Mr. Calvin, and other worthies of the Lord, in those places could prevail with those thus Episcopally minded, but they proceeded by all means to disturb the peace of this poor persecuted church. Even so far as to charge (very unjustly, and ungodlily; yet prelate-like) some of their chief opposers, with rebellion, and high treason against the Emperor, and other such crimes.

And this contention died not with Queen Mary; nor was left beyond the seas, but at her death these people returning into England under gracious Queen Elizabeth. Many of them being preferred to bishoprics, and other promotions, according to their aims, and desires. That Inveterate hatred against the holy discipline of Christ in his Church hath continued to this day. Insomuch that for fear it should prevail, all plots, and devices have been used to keep it out, Incensing the Queen, and state against it as dangerous for the commonwealth; And that it was most needful that the fundamental points of Religion should be preached in those Ignorant, and superstitious times; And to win the weak and Ignorant they might retain harmless Ceremonies, and through it were to be wished that diverse things were reformed, yet this was not a season for it. And many the like to stop the mouths of the more godly. To bring them on to yield to one Ceremony after another, and one corruption after another; by these wiles beguiling some, and corrupting others till at length they began to persecute all the zealous professors in the land (though they knew little what this discipline meant) both by word, & deed if they would not submit to their ceremonies, and become slaves to them, and their popish trash, which have no ground in the word of God, but are relics of that man of sin. And the more the light of the gospel grew, the more they urged their subscriptions to these corruptions. So as (notwithstanding all their former pretenses, and fair colors) they whose eyes God had not Justly blinded, might easily see where to these things tended. And to cast

contempt the more upon the sincere servants of God; they opprobriously, and most Injuriouly, gave unto, and Imposed upon them, that name of puritans; which is said the Novatians* (out of pride) did assume and take unto themselves. And lamentable it is to see the effects which have followed; Religion hath been disgraced, the godly grieved, afflicted, persecuted, and many Exiled, sundry have lost their lives in prisons, and other ways. On the other hand, sin hath been countenanced; Ignorance, profaneness, and Atheism Increased, and the papists encouraged to hope again for a day.

**Bradford's marginal note: Eusebius lib. 6. chap 42*

This made that holy man Mr. Perkins cry out in his exhortation to repentance, upon Zephaniah 2. *"Religion" (saith he) "hath been amongst us this 35 years, but the more it is published, the more it is contemned, and reproached of many, etc. Thus not profaneness, nor wickedness; but Religion itself is a byword, a mockingstock; and a matter of reproach; so that in England at this day, the man, or woman that begins to profess Religion, and to serve God, must resolve with himself to sustain mocks, and Injuries even as though he lived amongst the Enemies of Religion." And this common experience hath confirmed, and made too apparent.

**Bradford's marginal note: pag 421*

Editor's Note: The quotation is from William Perkins' *Exposition of Christ's Sermon on the Mount* (1618)

But that I may come more near my Intendment; whenas by the travail, and diligence of some godly, and zealous preachers, and God's blessing on their labors; as in other places of the land, so in the North parts, many became Enlightened by the word of God; and had their Ignorance and sins discovered unto them, and began by his grace to reform their lives, and make conscience of their ways. The work of God was no sooner manifest in them; but presently they were both scoffed, and scorned by the profane multitude, and the ministers urged with the yoke of Subscription, or else must be silenced; and the poor people were so vexed with apparitors, and pursuivants, and the Commissary Courts, as truly their affliction was not small; which notwithstanding they bore sundry years with much patience, till they were occasioned (By the continuance, and increase of these troubles, and other means which the Lord raised up in those days) to see further into things by the light of the word of God. How not only these base and beggarly Ceremonies were unlawful; but also that the Lordly, and tyrannous power of the prelates, ought not to be Submitted unto; which thus (contrary to the freedom of the Gospel) would load and burden men's consciences; and by their compulsive power make a profane mixture of persons, and things in the worship of God. And that their offices and callings; courts, and canons, etc., were unlawful, and Antichristian; being such as have no warrant in the word of God; but the same that were used in popery, and still retained. Of which a famous author thus writeth in his Dutch commentaries. At the coming of King James into England; "The new king" (saith he) "found there established the reformed Religion, according to the reformed religion of King Edward the 6 Retaining, or keeping still the spiritual state of the Bishops, etc. After the old manner, much varying, and differing from the reformed churches, in

Scotland, France, and the Netherlands, Emden, Geneva," etc., whose Reformation is cut, or shapen much nearer the first Christian churches, as it was used in the Apostles' times." So many therefore (of these professors) as saw the Evil of these things (in these parts), And whose hearts the Lord had touched with heavenly zeal for his truth; they shook off this yoke of Antichristian bondage. And as the Lord's free people, Joined themselves (by a Covenant of the Lord) 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 endeavors) whatever it should cost them, the Lord assisting them. And that it cost them something this ensuing history will declare.

**Bradford's marginal note: "The reformed churches shapen much nearer the primitive pattern than England, for they cashiered the Bishops with all their courts, canons, and ceremonies, at the first; and left them amongst the popish trash to which they pertained."*

Editor's note: Bradford's marginal quotation comes from Emmanuel Van Meteren's General History of the Netherlands (London 1608)

These people became 2 distinct bodies, or churches; and in regard of distance of place did congregate severally; for they were of sundry towns and villages, some in Nottinghamshire, some of Lincolnshire and some of Yorkshire, where they border nearest together. In one of these churches (besides others of note) was Mr. John Smith, a man of able gifts, and a good preacher; who afterwards was chosen their pastor. But these afterwards falling into some Errors in the Low Countries, there (for the most part) buried themselves, and their names.

But in this other church (which must be the subject of our discourse) Besides other worthy men, was Mr. Richard Clifton 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. And also that famous, and worthy man Mr. John Robinson, who afterwards was their pastor for many years, till the Lord took him away by death. Also Mr. William Brewster a reverent man, who afterwards was chosen an Elder of the church and Lived with them until old age.

But after these things, 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 clapped up in prison, other had their houses beset and watched night and day, and hardly escaped their hands; and the most were fain to fly, and leave their houses, and habitations, and the means of their livelihood. Yet these and many other sharper things which afterward befell them, were no other than they looked for, and therefore were the better prepared to bear them by the assistance of God's grace and spirit. Yet seeing themselves thus molested and that there was no hope of their continuance there. By a joint consent they resolved to go into the Low Countries where they heard was freedom of Religion for all men; as also how sundry from London, and other parts of the Land had been Exiled, and persecuted for the same cause, and were gone thither, and lived at Amsterdam, and in other places of the Land. So after they had continued together about a year, and kept their meetings every Sabbath, in one place, or other, exercising the worship of God amongst themselves; notwithstanding all the diligence and malice of their

adversaries; they seeing they could no longer continue in that Condition, they resolved to get over into Holland as they could. Which was in the year 1607 and 1608. Of which more at large in the next chapter.

Editor's note: In 1646, during religious tumult in England and the collapse of the Church of England under Puritan attack, Bradford revisited Chapter One and wrote these comments on historical change and God's providence.

Discussion Questions

1. Explain the role of German priest Martin Luther in igniting the Reformation movement.
2. What event sparked the Reformation movement across Europe in the 16th century?
3. Describe the reason for Henry VII's break with the Catholic Church in England.
4. Discuss Henry VIII's initial reaction to Martin Luther and the Reformation.
5. Explain Henry VIII's motivation for seeking a divorce from Catherine and his plan to achieve it.
6. Analyze the reasons behind Henry VIII's decision to declare himself the head of England's new church.
7. Describe the changes implemented in the Church of England after Henry VIII's death.
8. How did England's path to Protestantism take a detour during Mary Tudor's reign?
9. Discuss the religious reforms introduced by Queen Elizabeth I and their impact on England.
10. Explain the emergence of the Puritans and their eventual split from the Anglican Church.

Five. John Robinson (1575 – 1625)

The Separatist congregation gathered at Scrooby, Nottinghamshire, England between 1604-1606 called Richard Clyfton to serve as pastor and John Robinson to be their teacher – essentially an assistant pastor. Robinson was educated at Calvinist-leaning Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. He received his BA (1596), was admitted as a fellow of Corpus Christi (1598), was ordained in Church of England, and received his MA (1599). After leaving the Church of England, Robinson was a rigid Separatist throughout much of his ministry. By the end of his life, Robinson was much more ecumenical.

When the Scrooby congregation fled to Amsterdam, Robinson went with them. He was ordained pastor when the congregation moved from Amsterdam to Leiden, and Clyfton remained behind with the Ancient Brethren, one of Amsterdam's oldest Reformed Christian English churches. When life in Holland proved untenable, Robinson had hopes of leading his church in America, but parties within the congregation could not or would not leave Leiden and demanded that their minister stay with them until a successful settlement could be established. While not officially the pastor of the Plymouth church, Robinson was an influential spiritual adviser who longed to join the halves of his congregation in New England. After 1620, having been prevented from emigrating to Plymouth by hostile forces among Puritan merchants supporting the colony, Robinson died in Leiden in 1625.

The Dialogues of William Bradford *From the First Dialogue*

Written late in life, when William Bradford believed the colony had disintegrated morally and had abandoned its primitive Christian purpose, the Platonic-style *Dialogues* were attempts to awaken Reformed zeal in Plymouth's younger generation who never suffered persecution and poverty. This is Bradford's brief biography of the Pilgrims' pastor.

John Robinson

Mr. John Robinson was pastor of that famous church of Leyden, in Holland; a man no easily to be paralleled for all things, whose singular virtues we shall not take upon us here to describe. Neither need we, for they so well are known both by friends and enemies. As he was a man learned and of solid judgment, and of a quick and sharp wit, so was he also of a tender conscience, and very sincere in all his ways, a hater of hypocrisy and dissimulation, and would be very plain with his best friends. He was very courteous, affable, and sociable in his conversation, and towards his own people especially. He was an acute and expert disputant, very quick and ready, and had much bickering with the Arminians, who stood more in fear of him than any of the university. He was never satisfied in himself until he had searched any cause or argument he had to deal in thoroughly and to the bottom; and we have heard him sometimes say to his familiars that many times, both in writing and disputation, he knew he had sufficiently answered others, but many times no himself; and was ever desirous of any

light, and the more able, learned, and holy the persons were, the more he desired to confer and reason with them. He was very profitable in his ministry and comfortable to his people. He was much beloved of them, and as loving was he unto them, and entirely sought their good for soul and body. In a word, he was much esteemed and revered of all that knew him, and abilities [were acknowledged] both of friends and strangers. But we resolved to be brief in this matter, leaving you to better and more large information herein from others.

Reverend John Robinson's Farewell Letter, publicly read at Southampton before the *Mayflower* and *Speedwell* sailed. It is newly transcribed from the original edition of "Mourt's Relation" (London, 1622)

Editor's Note: Robinson (or the printer) uses *then* where we would typically use *than*. There is no period in the final sentence of the letter in the first printed edition of *Mourt's Relation*. The letter also appears in Bradford's manuscript, the *Plymouth Church Records* in Nathaniel Morton's hand, and printed in Nathaniel Morton's history of Plymouth *New England's Memorial* (Cambridge, 1669). There are minor differences in the 17th-century transcriptions – mostly differences of comma placement and the occasional transformation of a word into an adverb or insertion of a helping word. What does this publication history reveal? It reveals the value that was placed on Robinson's word throughout the 17th century. John Winthrop's now famous *Model of Christian Charity* with its iconic phrase *City on a Hill* was not published until the 19th century.

CERTAIN USEFUL

ADVERTISEMENTS SENT

In a Letter written by a discrete friend unto
The Planters in New England, at their first setting
Sail from Southampton, who earnestly desireth
The Prosperity of that their new Plantation.

Loving and 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 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 myself with great pain, and as (natural bonds set aside) having my better part with you. And though I doubt not but in your godly wisdoms you both foresee and resolve upon that which concerneth your present state and condition both severally and jointly, yet have I thought but my duty to add some further spur of provocation unto them who run already, if not because you need it, yet because I owe it in love and duty.

And first, as we are daily to renew our repentance with our God, special for our sins known, and general for our unknown trespasses; so doth the Lord call us in a singular manner upon occasions of such difficulty and danger as lieth upon you, to a both narrow search and careful reformation of our ways in his sight, lest he calling to remembrance our sins forgotten by us, or

unrepented of, take advantage against us, and in judgement leave us for the same to be swallowed up in one danger or other; whereas on the contrary, sin being taken away by earnest repentance and the pardon thereof from the Lord, sealed up unto a man's conscience by his Spirit, great shall be his security and peace in all dangers, sweet his comforts in all distresses, with happy deliverance from all evil, whether in life or in death.

Now next after this heavenly peace with God and our own consciences, we are carefully to provide for peace with all men what in us lieth, especially with our associates, and for that end watchfulness must be had, that we neither at all in ourselves do give, no nor easily take offense being given by others. Woe be unto the world for offenses, for though it be necessary (considering the malice of Satan and man's corruption) that offenses come, yet woe unto the man or woman either by whom the offense cometh, sayeth Matthew 18:7. And if offenses in the unseasonable use of things in themselves indifferent, be more to be feared then death itself, as the Apostle teacheth, 1 Corinthians 9: 15 how much more in things simply evil, in which neither honor of God nor love of man is thought worthy to be regarded.

Neither yet is it sufficient that we keep ourselves by the grace of God from giving offense, except withal we be armed against the taking of them when they are given by others. For how unperfect and lame is the work of grace in that person, who wants charity to cover a multitude of offenses, as the Scriptures speak. Neither are you to be exhorted to this grace only upon the common grounds of Christianity, which are, that persons ready to take offense, either want charity to cover offenses, or wisdom duly to weigh human frailty; or lastly are gross, though close hypocrites, as Christ our Lord teacheth, Matthew 7: 1,2,3 as indeed in mine own experience, few or none have been found which sooner give offense, then such as easily take it; neither have they ever proved sound and profitable members in societies, which have nourished in themselves that touchy humor. But besides these, there are diverse special motives provoking you above others to great care and conscience this way: As first, you are many of you strangers, as to the persons, so to the infirmities one of another, and so stand in need of more watchfulness this way, lest when such thing fall out in men and women as you suspected not, you be inordinately affected with them; which doth require at your hands much wisdom and charity for the covering and preventing of incident offenses that way. And lastly your intended course of civil community will minister continual occasion of offense, and will be as fuel for that fire, except you diligently quench it with brotherly forbearance. And if taking of offense causelessly or easily at men's doings be so carefully to be avoided, how much more heed is to be taken that we take not offense at God himself, which yet we certainly do so oft as we do murmur at his providence in our crosses, or bear impatiently such afflictions as wherewith he pleaseth to visit us. Store we up therefore patience against the evil day, without which we take offense at the Lord himself in his holy and just works.

A fourth thing there is carefully to be provided for, to wit, that with your common employments you join common affections truly bent upon the general good, avoiding as a deadly plague of your both common and special comfort all retiredness of mind for proper advantage, and all singularly affected any manner of way; let every man repress in himself and the whole body in each person, as so many rebels against the common good, all private

respects of men's selves, not sorting with the general conveniency. And as men are careful not to have a new house shaken with any violence before it be well settled and the parts firmly knit: so be you, I beseech you brethren, much more careful, that the house of God of which you are and are to be, be not shaken with unnecessary novelties or other oppositions at the first settling thereof.

Lastly, whereas you are to become a body politic, using amongst yourselves civil government, and are not furnished with any persons of special eminency above the rest, to be chosen by you into office of government: Let your wisdom and godliness appear, not only in choosing such persons as do entirely love, and will diligently promote the common good, but also in yielding unto them all due honor and obedience in their lawful administrations; not beholding in them the ordinariness of their persons, but God's ordinance for your good; nor being like unto the foolish multitude, who more honor the gay coat, then either the virtuous mind of the man, or glorious ordinance of the Lord. But you know better things, and that the image of the Lord's power and authority which the Magistrate beareth, is honorable, in how mean persons soever. And this duty you both may the more willingly, and ought the more conscionably to perform, because you are at least for the present to have only them for your ordinary governors, which yourselves shall make choice of for that work.

Sundry other things of importance I could put you in mind of, and of those before mentioned in more words, but I will not so far wrong your godly minds, as to think you heedless of these things, there being also divers among you so well able to admonish both themselves and others of what concerneth them. These few things therefore, and the same in few words I do earnestly commend unto your care and conscience, joining therewith my daily incessant prayers unto the Lord, that he who hath made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all rivers of waters, and whose providence is over all his works, especially over all his dear children for good, would so guide and guard you in your ways, as inwardly by his Spirit, so outwardly by the hand of his power, as that both you and we also, for and with you, may have after matter of praising his Name all the days of your and our lives. Fare you well in him in whom you trust, and in whom I rest

An unfeigned well-willer
Of your happy success
In this hopeful voyage,

J.R.

Reverend John Robinson as quoted in Edward Winslow's pamphlet "Hypocrisie Unmasked"
(London, 1646)

I charge you before God and his blessed angels that you follow me no further than you have seen me follow Christ. If God reveal anything to you by any other instrument of his, be as ready to receive it as ever you were to receive it as ever you were to receive any truth from my

[1] Blessed Robinson hath Run his Race
from earth to heaven is gone
to be with Christ, in heavenly place
the blessed saints among

[2] A burning and a shining Light
was he while he was here
a preacher of the Gospel Bright
whom we did love most dear

[3] What though he dead his works alive
and live will to all Age
The Comfort of them pleasant is
To living saints each day

4 Oh Blessed holy Savior
the fountain of all Grace
from whom such blessed Instruments
Are sent and Run their Race

5 To lead us to and Guide us in
the way to happiness
That so oh Lord we may always
for evermore Confess

6 That whosoever Gospel preacher be
or waterer of the same
We may always most Constantly
Give Glory to thy Name

Discussion Questions

1. Who was John Robinson and what were some key ideas he emphasized in his Ministry?
2. Describe the impact that Reverend William Perkins had on John Robinson's beliefs and teachings.
3. How did King James I affect John Robinson's goal of reforming the English church?
4. Explain the challenges John Robinson faced in Norwich as a minister.
5. What led John Robinson to become a separatist in search of a new family of Believers?

6. How did Richard Clifton influence John Robinson's practices at All Saints Church in the village of Babworth?
7. Describe the innovative changes Richard Clifton made to the order of worship.
8. In what ways did John Robinson apply the principles of self-governance in the congregation in Leiden?
9. Discuss John Robinson's role in influencing the Pilgrims with democratic principles for their self-governing colony.
10. How did John Robinson's teachings and farewell letter impact the concept of government in America?