

The Pilgrim Fathers

We are looking at the story of a group of people called the Pilgrim Fathers, who sailed on the ship, "Mayflower," in 1620 and founded the colony in America, which came to be known as New England.

This was not the first European settlement in North America. The Spaniards and the Portuguese had attempted colonization in the early 16th century but largely failed.

In 1562 a group of French Protestants attempted to build the settlement in Florida, but appeared to have lacked the practical skills to cope with the natural conditions they found.

There were tensions also between the French and the Spaniards, and atrocities were committed. In one incident the Spaniards hanged many of the French Protestants, saying they would not hang them because they were French but because they were Protestants. The French sent an expedition to redress this wrong and hanged some of the Spaniards saying they would not hang them as Spaniards but as murderers.

In 1583 Sir Humphrey Gilbert landed on the island of Newfoundland with some 200 men. Amongst them was so Humphrey Gilbert's half- brother Sir Walter Raleigh.

This colony was not successful either, and so Humphrey Gilbert was drowned on the return voyage to England. Sir Walter Raleigh however not easily discouraged returned and landed on another island, Roanoke and named the new colony Virginia in honour of the Virgin Queen Elizabeth 1. This also failed and attempts to colonize North America by the British were put on hold by the events which led up to the coming of the Spanish Armada in 1588.

By 1606 however, the time of James I, a considerable part of the eastern seaboard of North America had been claimed by the British. Outposts had also been established in Newfoundland and Bermuda.

This area was controlled by two commercial enterprises. They were called the First Virginia Company of London which occupied the southern part of the territory. The second was called the Virginia Company of Plymouth and occupied the northern part of the territory.

The First London Company failed, and when a second company of similar name was established it was this company which the Pilgrim Fathers later attempted to enter into a contract with to purchase land on which they could establish a settlement.

In actual fact a long and endlessly complicated attempt to secure land with this company failed. Attempts were made afterwards to secure land from the Dutch New Netherlands Company which also had an interest in North America's eastern seaboard to the north but this also failed. When the Pilgrim Fathers did eventually sail they raised the money by forming a joint stock company, the necessity which however cost the Pilgrims a great deal and left those who finally arrived on the shores of North America in debt. This was just one of the enormous obstacles of the Pilgrims encounter in their attempt to fulfil their vision of religious freedom.

They also before setting out sought to enter into an agreement with King James I that in New England they would be guaranteed religious liberty. James I refused to give them any written guarantee but made a verbal promise that he would in fact turn a blind eye to them, or as he put it, "he would not connive at them, or molest them, provided they lived peaceably." (The Pilgrims Faith p.50.)

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Who were the Pilgrim Fathers and why did they leave England?

The Pilgrim Fathers were we might say one of the fruits of the open Bible. When John Wycliffe first gave the English people the Bible in their own tongue in 1380, a version as one said which in freedom, vigour and richness of expression, could only be likened to the language of Wycliffe's great contemporary Chaucer. Reading this Bible English people for the first time began to compare the Church of which they read in Holy Scripture with that of the later Middle Ages and which they experienced every day. The great Bibles of William Tyndale, and Coverdale etc. followed. As the light entered into the minds of the people the demand for Church reform grew. One of the Martyrs of Queen Mary's reign Robert Smith when demanded by Archbishop Bonner to explain, "In what point do we differ from the word of God? The yeoman Robert Smith was quick to reply, *"in hallowing water; in conjuring of the scenes (meaning to turn bread into the Body of Christ); and baptizing children with anointing and spitting into their mouths, mingled with salt; and many other lewd ceremonies, of which not one point is able to be proved by God's order.*

"The translation of the Bible carried with it immeasurable changes which brought about the birth of the modern world. Tyndale issued his version of the New Testament in 1525. Miles Coverdale gave the English Bible in 1535. The Great Bible was authorized in 1539. That is the Bible which was placed in every church, the chained Bible as it came to be called. The Bible did its own work. Separatism was part of the inevitable outcome. If it were possible today to extinguish Separatism with its doctrines and adherents, and the open Bible were yet retained, there would be Baptists and Congregationalists tomorrow.

Baptist and Congregational Pioneers J.H. Shakespeare p.4

Or we could put it another way, and say that when Martin Luther and the other reformers rose up against the might of the medieval papacy, because they had seen that the Roman Catholic Church and its doctrine, did not compare favourably with the church as it is described in Holy Scripture they demanded reform. They called for a return to the faith of the apostles, Peter, Paul and John. And yet at the same time both he and John Calvin and the other reformers still thought in terms of National Churches allied to the State and its rulers. **Though they were undoubtedly great men, they adamantly rejected the suggestion of any dissenting, independent churches existing alongside those in the national system.**

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In England Henry VIII severed the Church of England from the over-lordship of the Pope and declared himself its head.

Thus the possibility of Reformation in England came about. Those influenced by the writings of Martin Luther prayed and worked for a reformed Episcopal Church of England, catholic in nature, Biblical in theology. The Seven Medieval sacraments would be reduced to two - baptism and the Lord's Supper. The doctrine of the Church would not go beyond the teachings of our Lord and his apostles. The central theme would be justification before God through his grace revealed in Christ. Forgiveness of sin, salvation and eternal life with the gifts of God bestowed upon those who firmly believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God and Saviour of men.

Queen Elizabeth 1st. met their main requirements in her Settlement of Religion in 1559, known as The Act of Settlement, which affirmed that the Church of England was a Protestant Church., With the Queen as its temporal head or governor. However, the Church kept much of its medieval character, retaining Archbishops, Bishops, Deans, diocese and cathedrals, besides various clerical vestments and church ornaments. The Book of Common Prayer was in essence, firmly based on Biblical theology though elements in it still caused concern, such as the way that ministers were called priests.

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Within this new Protestant Church of England, some wanted further Reformation to take place particularly in its organization and the role of the clergy.

The New Testament they saw clearly showed that the early church knew nothing of Archbishops, Archdeacon's or Diocesan Bishops. Each individual church had its own pastor (sometimes referred to as bishop), each church was in congenial rather than bureaucratic fellowship with neighbouring churches. No single minister or church was supreme. They also noticed this pattern in Geneva and other Calvinistic areas of the Continent. They now pressed for a National Church on Genevan lines, in which all ministers would be equal in the service of God. Queen Elizabeth 1st. however would have none of this and their efforts failed.

They also pressed for the removal of various ceremonies required by law – such as kneeling at the communion service and the wearing of clerical vestments, seeing all these things as relics of the medieval Roman Church.

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Those that pressed for these reforms became known as Puritans. They wanted to purify every aspect the church and bring it in closer conformity to the Biblical pattern.

We can identify however various groups of Puritans each pressing for various degrees of further reformation.

1. Some of them were content with the Anglican, Episcopal order of church government. These would have been content to simply rid the church of every vestige of popery, but they were prepared to work slowly seeking to bring changes through political and legal reforms through the civil courts and magistrates.

2. There were others who were also willing to work slowly within the national Church arrangement. These however were not content with the Episcopal system. They wanted to abolish bishops and archbishops and implement a Presbyterian system of church government similar to that being formed in Scotland. What they were seeking was to have a Presbyterian, Church of England.

The leader of this group was the well-known Thomas Cartwright, Lady Margaret Professor of divinity, at Cambridge University.

3. If we list these groups in chronological order we would next come to those, who were not content with either the Episcopal system of church government, nor with the idea of a national Church. These came to be known as the Puritan Separatists and the first known congregation with that designation was founded in London by Richard Fitz in 1567. This group was not calling for the further reformation of the Church of England, but rather its dissolution. They believed that the idea of reforming the church through the medium of the civil magistrate and courts was entirely unscriptural. Neither were they content to work slowly to bring about their ideas. Their purpose was to form what they considered to be biblically-based churches and congregations regardless of the law of the land and to take the consequences.

Henry Barrow, John Greenwood and John Penry were amongst the early leaders of this movement, they were all put to death for their principles in 1593.

4. The fourth group was that group of Puritans which was similar to the above Separatists and became known as the Independents, and later as the Congregationalists. These still recognized that the Church of England was a true church and had fellowship with it. They were not originally totally opposed to the idea of a national church. However, they believed in the autonomous nature of the church and said that each church should be independent and self-governing. No one church only should be above

the others but should work with mutual respect and regard with one and other. It was this system that briefly prevailed in this country in the days of Oliver Cromwell.

It was these last two groups, that found however in the days of Queen Elizabeth I, and carrying over into the days of James I, no true liberty to form churches or worship in the way that they felt the Bible taught.

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The first Protestant Reformers seemed bound by the idea of one single uniform concept of the visible Church.

There were obvious reasons for this.

We need to bear various things in mind here... The first centuries of the early Church saw the Church bitterly persecuted by a hostile state. The Roman empire was at this time the enemy of the Christian Church.

The Church fought this enemy and won. The principle was *not by power, nor by might, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts.*

By heroic endurance, by stainless innocence, by burning zeal, by inviolable truthfulness, by boundless love, the people of God prevailed in the strength of God.

Such was the victory, that the Roman Emperor Constantine himself was converted to Christianity, the church rejoiced and in these days the church lived at peace with the state.

The church was recognized by the state and protected by it not persecuted by it.

Eventually the Empire of Rome collapsed, first the barbarians under Alaric sacked the city of Rome. Later there came the attacks of Attila the Hun.

In those days of collapsing empire, and impending ruin, it was indeed the leaders of the Church, who were able to negotiate with the barbarian invaders. There is the famous account of Attila the Hun being over awed by the presence of Leo III, Bishop of Rome, who risked his life in negotiating good terms for the citizens of his diocese.

One could argue that a great deal of bloodshed was prevented by the influence of the church leaders of this time. Not only so but a great deal that was valuable in the ancient civilizations was really rescued from destruction by the imposition of the church. It is said that at that time the church gained the title of, *Defender of Civilization.*

Dean Farrar put it like this:

She saved the vanquish from extermination, the victors from decay. Barbarians would see such types of noble excellence in pastors like Boniface or Severinus as members of an institution for which they felt a genuine reverence, and this veneration was the means of fusing all was valuable in these violently conflicting elements into one splendid, permanent and progressive society. The Churches of Christian Rome, build out of the marble of heathen temples, which had been levelled by barbarian hands, are at once a history and a symbol of the work which the Church did for the world at that time.

After this the Church was a united body in resisting the inroads of Islam. Its growth in Europe was checked by a long line of Christian heroes from Charles Martel to John Hunniades.

Really we could say from the Fifth century to the Thirteenth century the Church had no external enemies to fear. She arrived in these years at a position where she was separated from the temporal power, and the two worked in mutual independence of each other, and yet such was the influence of the Church on the secular power, that both work together for the amelioration of mankind's situation. In these years the oppression of slavery was softened to that of serfdom, and aggressive war was modified into defensive war. The monasteries preserved learning and maintained a sense of unity throughout Christendom. At this time the concept of chivalry was born and fostered, seeking to inculcate generous instincts into gallant institutions. An emphasis was laid on the development of the Christian virtues of humility tenderness as well as courtesy and strength. We can say that during this period the Church was the one mighty witness and light in an age of darkness, and provided order in an age of lawlessness, and not least personal holiness in an age likely to give way to untempered rage.

Amid the despotism of Kings of the turbulence of aristocracies, it was an inestimable blessing that there should be a power by which the unarmed majesty of simple goodness, made the haughtiest and the boldest respect the interests of justice, and tremble at the thought of temperance, righteousness, and the judgment to come.

p. 113-115 The Witness of History to Christ.

It was in this period the Emperor Charles the Great, King of the Franks, better known as Charlemagne, conceived the idea of the universal Catholic Church built on the idea of the Roman empire.

The concept of the Holy Roman Empire.

His idea was of a visible manifestation of the Kingdom of God on earth.

The idea was also again set out by the German King Otto the Great in AD. 962 who

claimed that he was the successor of the Emperor Augustus, Constantine and Charlemagne.

Both Charlemagne and latter Otto claimed to be the leaders of this Holy Roman Empire.

The question then began to arise, who should the leader of this empire be, the King or the so-called spiritual leader i.e. the Pope?

We may add by way of a note, the idea of one single Pope over all the Church took many years to develop, bishops of large cities were originally called popes, the pope of Rome only had jurisdiction over Rome, by the time we get to the 11th century the Pope of Rome was claiming jurisdiction over the whole Church.

We come to the time of Pope Gregory VII 1073 - 1085, better known as Hildebrand. He set out to create a Christian Commonwealth embracing the whole world and under papal control. Instead of seeing the role of the Church and the role of the state as separate, both having their distinct roles, and mutually respecting one another. Hildebrand insisted that the spiritual power was supreme over the temporal and all was subject to his authority.

It was true Hildebrand freed the Church from state interference in the appointing of Church leaders. Let us concede that many of his motives had good intent and even some beneficial results but his fundamental vision was flawed.

I have mentioning this complex situation to show that the concept of the Middle Ages was of one visible single church organization, with a massive hierarchical organizational structure, governed by men, dominating the whole world.

We might also mention in passing the work of the schoolmen the medieval theologians, who were also gripped with this idea of one universal organization dominating all. Their work of study was to try and reconcile human reason, with Christian teaching. The idea was to bring every aspect of human life under the Dominion of the Church.

This was all well and good up to a point and there is no doubt that there was good intention in many of these endeavours.

However, the teachings of the Church, and the concept of universal outward manifestation of Church power, under the authority of a hierarchy of men was profoundly unscriptural.

The latter part of the Middle Ages leading up to the Reformation, of course witnessed and manifested the corruption of this highly idealistic, though misguided concept, where individuals came into positions of power for very low motives and a bad situation became a disaster and a scandal.

I mention all this because, the early Reformers grew up in this kind of world, and in many respects were dominated by the noble concepts, within this ideal. Not only so but at that time it was these concepts which were holding society together, and in Germany in particular, with the rise of some of the more extreme Anabaptist movements, the removal of some of these old landmarks led to social disintegration, and in some cases the breakdown of law and order.

Those who saw that the way the Church and society was ordered was fundamentally flawed to say the least, and wanted immediate change perhaps did not see that such a change would not be easy and could not be achieved overnight. We might have some sympathy with Elizabeth I, who could also in her day see the threat of Spanish invasion which had the intent of re-introducing Roman Catholicism into England. The last thing she wanted was a disunited Protestant church. I mention all this however so that we can understand in some way why it was, that good and believing Protestants sound in all the fundamentals of the faith, still clung to the principal of uniformity in all things spiritual. It helps us understand also why some went to such extreme measures in seeking to force The Book of Common Prayer, and the Anglican system on all believers.

However, we have to recognize that the Separatists and Congregationalists of the 16th and 17th centuries were far-sighted, and Biblically minded and instructed individuals, who at great sacrifice to themselves pioneered the way to true religious liberty, and the return to the biblical concepts of Church government.

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Returning to the question who were the Pilgrim Fathers.

There were clearly people who held Separatist views in various parts of the country at this time, but there seemed to be a preponderance of them in East Anglia, Lincolnshire and South Yorkshire. We generally identify the Pilgrim Fathers as having their origin in an area covered by North Nottinghamshire, Lincolnshire in South Yorkshire. A Separatist/ Congregationalist Church, and it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between the two, was formed in the village of Scrooby, Nottinghamshire in 1606. The congregation was an offshoot of another Separatist Church that had been formed some years earlier in Gainsborough, Lincolnshire. The pastor of the mother church was John Smyth who eventually led his congregation into exile in Holland. The Scrooby Church was established because some its the members had been trying to travel a long distance to the Gainsborough meeting. The pastor of the newly formed Scrooby Church was a 50-year-old Richard Clyfton, who formally been the Rector of Babworth and been well known for his Puritan sympathies. It is said people would happily walk 20 miles each

Sunday to hear his expositions. Amongst this newly formed Church was one William Brewster. He was one of the former hearers of Richard Clyfton. The newly formed Church at Scooby held its services in his home. William Brewster was a Cambridge University educated man. At Cambridge he had heard the preaching of Robert Browne who was one of the early separatist leaders. It was Brown who had written the book, called, *A Treatise of Reformation without Tarrying for Any* (1582). The title of which became a watchword for the Separatists.

Interestingly Brewster was the bailiff – receiver and postmaster of Scrooby. The irony of it was that he was in the employ of the Archbishop of York, and the manor house in which the newly formed Scrooby congregation met was actually owned by the Diocese of York.

Another who joined the Scrooby congregation was a young man from the hamlet of Austerfield in South Yorkshire about 2 miles north of Scrooby. His name was William Bradford, he was an orphan who the Brewster's subsequently took into their home.

This same William Bradford later described the founding of the Scrooby Church in these words.

We shook off the yoke of anti-Christian bondage, and as the Lord's free people joined ourselves (by covenant to 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 us, according to our best endeavours, whatsoever it would cost us, the Lord assisting them.

The Pilgrim's Faith Peter Toon p.19

It was going to cost them a great deal because Church and State at that time went out to crush the Separatist movement. All this meant trouble for the saints in Gainsborough and Scrooby.

William Bradford was later to write of the Scrooby Church:

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 into the prison. Others had their homes beset and watched nights 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 afterwards befell them, were none other than they looked for; and therefore were the better prepared to bed them by the assistance of God's grace and spirit.

In this early period William Brewster and another member Richard Jackson were fined 20 pounds in the month of December 1607 for their Separatism.

Whilst all this was taking place another, John Robinson, a thirty-year-old Puritan clergyman in the Church of England at a place called Sturton - lee - Steeple, asked to become a member of the congregation. This young man was to become the future pastor and spiritual guide of the Pilgrim Fathers.

John Robinson was born in about 1576 in the village of Sturton and studied later at Corpus Christi College Cambridge. He had been influenced at Cambridge by men such as Lawrence Chatterton, Master of Emmanuel College, and the famous William Perkins. He did not stay at Sturton however for he married Miss Bridget White of Nottinghamshire and the couple eventually moved to Norwich where he became the Minister of St. Andrew's Church. Here he was back again in the State Church, but he was so forthright in his Puritan convictions that he was suspended by the local bishop. After this he returned as a fully-fledged member of the Scrooby congregation.

Things became so desperate for these congregations that they began to form the determination to remove to Holland where at that time there was far greater religious liberty. Once again this project was beset with seemingly insurmountable, and never ending difficulties of perplexities.

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The sea journey to Holland.

At first the plan was to take the sea journey from Boston in Lincolnshire to Amsterdam. Secretly they made their way to Boston in small inconspicuous groups following different routes to reach the waiting ship. The captain of the ship who charged them an exorbitant rate for their passage, on arrival on the ship led them below decks where they became effectively his prisoners. Their goods and belongings left on deck were ransacked by the crew and himself, and everything of value stolen. He then brought them up on deck in twos and threes and ransacked their persons again stealing everything of worth and value. He then handed them all over to the authorities.

The whole company of them were thrown into prison. Unexpectedly, the magistrates of Boston showed them a great degree of sympathy, but it was beyond their powers to release them until the Church authorities had dealt with them. They were held in the cold, hard and hungry comfort of an English prison in midwinter for months before they were released. William Brewster and Richard Jackson were each fined £20 which was a considerable amount of money at that time considering they had had all their goods stolen.

After some time a second attempt was made to flee to Holland. This time it was arranged that the ship would stand off the mouth of the Humber between Grimsby and

Hull. This was to be a Dutch vessel and they were to board the vessel in small parties, carried by rowing boat out to the ship in the estuary. Unfortunately, the small boat grounded on a sandbank due to the falling tide, before it could reach the main vessel. The Dutch captain however was far more sympathetic to them than the English captain, and he launched the ship's boat to come to their rescue.

All this caused considerable delay, a further party of women and children at this point were still on the shore awaiting transportation to the ship. The tide was falling, a storm was brewing, in fact one of the greatest storms ever recorded on the East Coast, not only that but the authorities had discovered their plan and were hastening to come for their arrest. The women and children on the shore were arrested by the authorities, the ship's captain was anxious to get out of the Humber before the storm broke and the tide left his ship aground and had reluctantly to sail.

Before they left the Humber they had the sight of many of their families rounded up, their baggage hoisted up onto a wagon and the whole party being escorted away.

Those on board in many cases now only possessing the clothes they stood up in, distressed in mind and body about the plight of their families, now had to endure 14 days of storm tossed ocean, the wind blowing them miles off course, even up to the coast of Norway, before they sighted land again, many miles from their destination in Amsterdam.

The plight of those left behind, was dire. There were passed from one court to another because nobody knew what to do with them. They were not put into prison because there was no local prison that could hold them. They were left outside to sleep on sand dunes or ditches. They were given no food and had to beg for food for themselves and their children from the local population. Some of them collapsed on the roadside from hunger, sickness and starvation. However, they gained the admiration and sympathy of the local populace and food began to be donated, and shelter offered in barns, cow sheds, derelict buildings and in some cases even within the homes of those who secretly held the same religious views as they did.

The local authorities embarrassed by the whole situation, and fearing the reaction of the local populace, actually quietly and in small groups had them shipped out to Amsterdam to join their desperately worried families.

Their destination Amsterdam was a city which had stood for Protestantism, or liberty of speech and thought through a long and desperate struggle with Spain which finally ended in the foundation of the Netherlands Republic in 1579, and in the Declaration of Independence on 26 July, 1581. The knights, nobles, and cities of Holland and Zeeland had called upon William the Silent to accept the entire authority as sovereign and chief of the land, directing him to maintain the freedom of the Reformed Evangelical religion, also forbidding that any inquiries be made into any man's belief or conscience, or that any injury or hindrance should be offered to any man on account of his religion". Thus

Amsterdam became an asylum of liberty, and consequently attracted, from many land those who valued their freedom. David Fountain commented:

This led to national prosperity, since the men driven from their own lands by the narrow – minded bigotry of their rulers were often the very flower of the nation's life.

The Mayflower Pilgrims and the Pastor. p. 20

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Their arrival in Holland and the desperate state of the immigrant Church in that city.

When John Robinson, Richard Clyfton, and William Brewster arrived in Amsterdam. They were shocked to find the state of the immigrant Church in that city.

As far back as 1593 English Separatists had begun to come to Amsterdam in search of liberty, on the advice of the martyr John Penry. The Church numbering about 300 had come under the joint pastor- ship of Francis Johnson and Henry Ainsworth. From the very beginning it seems to have been the target for the relief of the pent-up emotions of those who had served persecution at home. Though it began well, and gained a reputation for what was described as its beauty and order. It was not long before dissension arose, it seemed that almost any excuse was enough to trigger of the dispute. For an example of some of the petty arguments which arose amongst them was that some complained about the fashion sense of Mrs. Johnson who complained about her wearing "cork shoes" and a whalebone in her bodice.

Such was the bad humour within this church that the native population roundabout began to despise it.

Francis Johnson one of the joint pastors had fallen out with the other pastor Henry Ainsworth. Francis Johnson turned out to be such a fiery character that he even excommunicated his own father and his brother.

Needless to say the newly arrived Pilgrims did not stay long in this church. Perhaps the lesson of the Amsterdam Separatist Church, is that freedom is at first a very difficult thing to handle. Also that true freedom involves, a close management of ourselves. True liberty comes when we can keep ourselves in check and in order.

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The Pilgrims move to Leydon.

Seeking permission to settle in Leydon, John Robinson went to the burgomaster's and presented a formal petition to the city court on behalf of his congregation. It was dated

February 12, 1609.

It read:

To the honourable the burgomasters and court of the city of Leydon: with due submission and respect John Robinson, Minister of the divine Word, and some of the members of the Christian Reformed, Religion, born in the kingdom of Great Britain, to the number of 100 persons or thereabouts, men and women, represent that they desire to come to live in the city by the first day of May next, and to have freedom their off in carrying on their trades, without being a burden in the least to anyone. They therefore address themselves to your honours will be pleased to grant them free consent to betake themselves as aforesaid.

The reply from the Burgomasters was positive saying that they refused no honest person's free entrance to the city, provided that such persons behave themselves and submitted to the laws and ordinances.

The Pilgrims were essentially farmers and like their Dutch hosts were industrious and persevering people. They were very much prepared to work even if it meant taking on the least skilled and worst paid aspects of the various industrial processes developing in Holland at that time, such as in textiles, metal, leather and such trades. William Bradford apprenticed himself to a French silk master.

Before they left for the city of Leydon, the English ambassador protested to the Leydon authorities about their agreement with, as they described it, certain "Brownists", being given permission to settle in the city. The Dutch authorities in Leydon however ignored the ambassadors protest.

When the Pilgrims left Amsterdam for Leydon, their first pastor, Richard Clyfton, remained with the Amsterdam Church as he had now been made one of its joint pastors. However, others from the Amsterdam Church joined the pilgrims, because they were tired of the continual problems and squabbles within their own church. Significantly these included a deacon of the church, John Carver, who eventually became the first governor of the, "Plymouth Plantation," together with another deacon Samuel Fuller, who was a surgeon and physician.

Late in April, they went by road and cart to their new home.

Leydon was a University City, which became known as the "Athens of the West", but it also had a busy manufacturing sector as well in which the Pilgrims found work.

However Leydon was far inferior to Amsterdam in wealth and trade. The Pilgrims found work as felt- makers, drapers, tailors, hatters, glovers, cobblers, carpenters, barbers, masons and various other kinds of trades.

The younger men found work easier than the older men, William Brewster found it difficult to find work until he began to give English lessons to the students at the University.

In Leydon many of the younger Pilgrims married, and some became official citizens of the city. This meant that they could apply for membership in the various craft guilds which were open only to citizens.

The Pilgrims were happy in Leydon and premises were purchased to serve as a Chapel. The congregation grew to about 300. The Pilgrims practiced lay preaching on Sunday afternoons a practice which did not become generally acceptable in England until the 19th century.

A Scottish Presbyterian community also grew up in Leydon, and although disagreeing with the Separatists on various points, including that of lay preaching, an harmonious relationship developed between the two. Under Robinson the Pilgrims withheld fellowship only from opponents of Reformed teaching.

. By 1616 the Pilgrims were fairly well settled in Leydon, they were respected and well-liked by the Dutch. One thing that could perhaps be regarded as a mistake or neglect amongst the Pilgrims was that they did not learn the Dutch language, but kept themselves in many respects to themselves. There was also a clear difference between some of the Dutch attitudes and the attitudes of the Separatists in regard to the keeping of the Sabbath, and in the disciplining and upbringing of children. A bigger problem however began to emerge, and this was regarding a treaty signed between Holland and Spain that was due to lapse in 1619, here was a danger of a renewal of Spanish influence which also gave rise to the spectre of renewed persecution.

(Note. The southern part of Holland, including Belgium, in the days of the Holy Roman Empire, had been under the control of the Duke of Burgundy. These territories then passed to the House of Habsburg which split into an Austrian and Spanish branch. Thus this same southern part of Holland became part of the Spanish branch of the house of Habsburg and thus under the control of Spain.)

The Dutch had revolted in 1568, and in 1579 the seven Northern Provinces formed the Protestant Union of Utrecht and declared independence. The southern provinces (now mainly what is called Belgium) remained under the control of Spain but in 1598 the Spanish Netherlands passed to the control of the King Philip of Spain's daughter, Isabella Clara Eugenia who was married to Arch- Duke Albert the Seventh of Austria. This provided a period of peace and stability to the Southern Provinces, and a time of safety to the Northern Provinces when the Pilgrims were in Leydon. There was a period after this when the Southern Provinces were controlled by the French. However, we can

say that the Dutch Republic was formed in 1648 after what came to be known as the Eighty Years War.

For all these reasons the Pilgrim's began to form a decision to move to the newly formed colony on the eastern seaboard of North America.

It was John Robinson who first put forward the possibility and discussed the matter with William Brewster and the leaders of the church. It was a major decision; all were aware that of the 143 of those who first settled in that area only 38 survive to see the next year's harvest. Others were more positive about the idea. Fresh news of the forming of the Virginia Company of London and later the Plymouth Company gave them encouragement.

Eventually two men, Robert Cushman and William Brewster , were chosen to make their way in secret to London to sound out the directors of the Virginia Company of London if they could enter into a contract with them to purchase land on which to establish their settlement.

All these approaches came to nothing; the London Company would not accept that the Pilgrims were trustworthy or appropriate people to deal with. Various other avenues were sounded out, including an arrangement with the Dutch New Netherlands Company but all attempts failed. Eventually when they did sail they were funded by the setting up of a joint stock company, which cost the Pilgrims a great deal of money and left the majority of the debt on arrival in New England for many years.

- We need here also to say that that the two representatives also brought more discouraging news back from England. They had met with Captain Sir Samuel Argall who had just returned from the American colony. He told them how Sir Francis Blackwell had contracted to carry members of the Brownest Church in Amsterdam, (the church we mentioned earlier where there was so much dissension), crossed the Atlantic to Virginia. There were 180 of them on board the ship that was grossly overcrowded. This set out to cross the Atlantic in winter. The voyage began in September 1618 and as the ship left the Thames estuary it was noted that it was wallowing very low in the water. It passed down through the channel in the teeth of a rising gale. Out in the Atlantic the ship was driven miles off course. The cloudy weather meant that within a short time the master of the ship lost all sense of direction. Weeks turned into months, incessant gales put a severe strain drain upon the vessel, the crew were overworked and running short of food, in one week in these conditions the captain and master of the ship and six of his crew died. Shortly afterwards Francis Blackwell who had organized the trip also died. Scurvy shortage of food, lack of warmth and dry clothing took a terrible toll on all on board. Eventually it was March 1619 more than six months after the commencement of the voyage the ship cited

Chesapeake Bay, with only 50 survivors from the original 180 passengers.

Moreover, if this wasn't enough to discourage them, as we mentioned last time King James I would not guarantee them religious liberty even when they arrived in New England. All he would do would give them a verbal promise that he would not molest them as long as they did not disturb the peace.

The Pilgrims were disappointed by his refusal to give them a written guarantee but as their leaders pointed out the biggest seal on the finest parchment in the world meant little to a King who had made so very many promises in the past and kept so few of them.

The forming of the joint stock company now meant that humanly speaking the way was open to the Pilgrims to make the journey to settle in America – beyond that they were in the hands of God, and subject to the whims of King James I

The plan was that the Leyden group would acquire a ship, that would sail to Southampton, England, where they would join another group, which turned out to be a mixed group, some Separatists, and some merchant adventurers seeking new opportunities across the ocean, but all claiming to have Puritan sympathies. Some were known to the Leyden group, others were unknown. We might ask how it was that the Leyden Separatists could now feel safe if only for a while landing's back in an English port, the answer was that they now had friends in high places.

The ship purchased by the Leyden group was a British ship, the Speedwell, for a ship it was an old vessel, many claim that it was one of the ships that had fought against the Spanish Armada in 1588. It had been refitted but not very satisfactory. Essentially it was not seaworthy enough for Atlantic voyage. The Speedwell was of only 60 tons however the Pilgrims were prepared to sail in her.

They left the Dutch port of Delfthaven towards the end of July 1620. There was a touch of sadness in their departure, as John Robinson had decided to remain in Holland to minister to those who felt unable to make the June. He bid them farewell with a lengthy sermon based on the words from Ezra 8:21, 22, *"Then I proclaimed a fast there at the River Ahava, that we might afflict ourselves before our God, to seek of him a right way for us, and for our little ones, and for all our substance."*

He reminded them in conclusion that the Lord had more truth and light yet to bring forth out of his Holy Word. A saying and a truth that has come down through the centuries.

The Pilgrims had a good voyage to Southampton where the Mayflower was awaiting them. There was a delay, as repairs needed to be carried out on the Speedwell. Others joined the group and eventually out of the hundred and two passengers on the two

vessels only 41 were the original Pilgrims. The Mayflower Memorial stands near the spot where the Speedwell and the Mayflower sailed from Southampton on 15 August 1620, displaying a list of the names of those who sailed in the two vessels.

After the sailing however there were further delays, the two vessels having to put in at Dartmouth. After further inspection of the Speedwell they again set off.

For the first week of the voyage the two ships made good progress. Land's End disappeared from view and they were heading out into the Atlantic, however 300 miles or so out the captain of the Speedwell had to report to Captain Jones of the Mayflower that his ship was filling with water and his pumps could just not get rid of it.

The decision was that they would have to return to the port of Plymouth. There it was decided that the Speedwell would have to be sold, and all would have sail in the Mayflower. Some adventurers at this point decided to give up the whole project.

Eventually the Mayflower sailed on 6 September 1620, from the steps of the Barbican, Plymouth now known as the Mayflower steps. From these steps William Brewster, who had now succeeded John Robinson as the pastor of the flock, gave a farewell sermon before their departure

Much to the astonishment of the crew, only one passenger died on the voyage. He was William Butten, an indentured servant.

This William Butten was one of the seamen, and was described by the Pilgrims as a very proud and profane young man. He was strongly boasted of his strength, and had no sympathy for those who were seasick, or made ill by the voyage. He mocked the Pilgrims, and would often curse them, and said he looked forward to the day when he would be able to cast half of them overboard (on such voyages large numbers of passengers usually died and were buried at sea) and make merry with their possessions. In the Providence of God this proud young man died on the voyage, and was the only one on the ship, committed to the ocean for burial.

Usually such calamities such as storms, scurvy and fever claimed the lives of up to one third of any passenger list during the two or three months Atlantic crossing.

There was also a birth on the voyage, a boy who was named Oceanus Hopkirk. For the most part, however the main voyage must have been dreary and cold. The food was a monotonous diet of dried fish, salt beef and cheese and beer.

Below deck, there was not sufficient room for proper exercise. When the winds blew the sea became rough and the ship was tossed about like a dinghy. Her sails were torn and her timbers groaned.

During one particularly violent storm, one of the main beams in the hull of the ship cracked and slipped out of place. Some of the crew were sure that the ship was about to break up. However, one of the Pilgrims had brought from Holland what he described as a "a great iron screw: believed to have come from the printing press at Leyden which proved to be just the tool needed. Thus supported they were able to wrap iron bands around the beam and prevent it from snapping.

Other incidents on board were that a man called John Howland, the servant of one of the leading Pilgrims, John Culver, desperate to leave the claustrophobic atmosphere between the two decks, went up on deck for some fresh air, but was within a moment washed overboard. He managed to grasp the "topsail halyards", which were effectively ropes hanging over the side of the ship dangling in the water, and was eventually pulled back on deck using a boat hook.

p.66 The Pilgrim's Faith.

The First Sighting of Land.

At daybreak on November 9, they sighted The High Lands of Cape Cod. William Bradford recorded it in his Journal, "*they were not a little joyful.*"

It seems that the Pilgrims were intent on settling near to the Hudson River, as the master turned southward and the Mayflower follow the coastline for about seven hours. Then suddenly, "they fell amongst dangerous shoals and roaring breakers, and they were so far entangled that they conceive themselves in great danger". The helm was put hard over and they sailed back towards the open sea, where they spent the night.

The next day, the Mayflower rounded the curved tip of the Cape, and entered what is known as Providencetown Harbour. The journey from Plymouth had taken 65 days, and from Delft Haven in Holland four months.

"Being thus arrived in a good harbour, and brought safe to land, they fell upon their knees and blessed the God of heaven who had brought them over the vast and furious ocean, and delivered them from all the perils and miseries thereof off, again to set their feet on the firm and stable earth, their proper element".

The Pilgrims Faith p.67

While the Pilgrims thanked God for this covenant kept, some of the other travellers on the Mayflower were declaring that they could ignore that they had contracted to arrive in Virginia and not New England. There was threat of serious disagreement and trouble

even before anyone had stepped ashore.

Meeting this crisis, the Pilgrim leaders decided to draw up a document for all to sign. That is Pilgrims and none Pilgrim Travellers. Brewster and the others made full use of their knowledge of church covenants and constitutions to frame this document with clear statements and using the correct legal terminology.

As soon as the "Mayflower Compact", as it came to be called was drafted and adopted by the Leyden Saints, it was read publicly to all on board the ship.

In the name of God, Amen. We whose names are underwritten, the loyal subjects of our dread sovereign Lord, King James..... Do solemnly and mutually in the presence of God and one another, covenant and combine ourselves together into a civil body politic... To enact, constitutes and frame such just and equal Laws.... As shall before most meet and convenient for the general good of the Colony.

ibid p. 69.

Thus read the men were then invited to go out onto the poop deck and sign it.

Though they lacked modern day concepts of civil rights, it nevertheless was a revolutionary document for its day. There would be no nobility, such as ruled in England. Power and privilege for the few born into the right families was definitely out. The beginnings of modern democracy were enshrined in this document.

After this 16 volunteers, armed with muskets, set off in search of fresh water and food. On the sandy shore behind Cape Cod they found neither freshwater nor signs of human life. However, they did see in the distance a large inlet which they took to be a river mouth. There he turned with a boat load of Juniper wood, which when it burned, "smelled very sweet and strong".

The next day was the Lords Day, spent on board the ship, with the Pilgrim leaders taking services of worship. On Monday, the women were taken ashore, escorted by armed guards, to do the family washing. This was 22 December. 1620.

Winter was coming on, and there was no time to lose. Exploration parties found Indian corn buried under snow. Half- starved they took it vowing that they would repay it next year when they reaped their first harvest. What signs of human life they found soon revealed to them, that the whole area had been ravaged by disease. Human bones were found, and many burial mounds.

It was later discovered that bubonic plague had spread along the region some few years before their arrival and carried away with it something like 90% of the region's inhabitants. What remained of the Indian population were now locked in tribal

disputes. One of the first contacts with the indigenous people was a friendly Indian named Squanto who had escaped from the clutches of a warring tribe. This Indian showed them how to grow corn and when in springtime the corn began to grow and they took fresh heart.

With enormous difficulty they survived the first winter. Very little food was available. The winter was most severe. Sometimes a child would only have five pieces of corn for their dinner. Half of the pilgrims died that winter.

The 3rd March 1621 marked the first mild day since they had arrived. It was the herald of spring. The first harvest gathered in was 26th November 1621 which marked a great time of Thanksgiving, and of course is still a public holiday in the United States to this day, Thanksgiving Day.

What is the lasting influence the Pilgrim Fathers have left behind, what did they teach the world? They were amongst the followers of true democracy. They taught that the Christian faith is essential to the realization of true democracy.

They taught that the life and government of the Church should be the responsibility of all members. Everyone has a responsibility to fulfil and a part to play in the body of Christ. They believed in and found by experience that to accept their responsibilities was a means of grace provided for the believer in the Christian life. It was thus that men were to learn by practice the meaning and obligations of Christian love.

We can remind ourselves, and should remind others also that the modern world owes much of its democratic organization to the church of Christ. Puritanism in the 17th century to a great extent, and perhaps the more extreme sects of Puritanism to a still greater extent, of contributed much and become the seed and enforcing ground for true democratic ideas.

These movements curbed autocracy in the state. These principles are the antidote to excessive state control.

H.G. Wood in his *Ventures for the Kingdom* wrote:

Students of democratic origins sometimes forget that the modern democratic state is the child of the democratic church. They stressed the Renaissance, in which men rediscover grace, and make but little of the Reformation, in which men became aware of the small self-governing communities planted by primitive Christianity throughout the Roman Empire. And yet modern democracy owes more to Geneva than to Athens. Nor will the tradition of Greece suffice to guide and inspire democracy and the future. The witness of the Pilgrim Fathers is to the necessity of building democracy on the foundation of prophets and apostles. That is the Word of God. They remind us that for the realization of democracy we need, and the phrase of Dr. Forsyth, the grace

of Israel even more than the grace of Athens.

p.225.

The Pilgrim Fathers also teaches the lesson of rock like steadfastness when we know our cause is good. Though all the world should oppose us, if we are faithful to God, 10,000 hosts may arise against us we shall prevail, if we have the assurance that God is with us. If godly for us who can be against us.

The Landing of the Pilgrim Fathers.

*The breaking waves dash'd high
On a stern and rock-bound coast,
And the woods against a stormy sky
Their giant branches tost:*

*And the heavy night hung dark
And the Hills and waters o'er
When a band of exiles moored their bark
On the wild new England shore.*

*Not as the conqueror comes,
They, the true hearted, came,
Not with the roll of the stirring drums,
And the trumpet that sings of fame.*

*Not as the flying come,
in silence and in fear, –
They shook the depths of the deserts gloom
With their hymns of lofty cheer.*

*Amidst the storm they sang,
And the stars heard and the sea!
And the sounding aisles of the dim woods rang
To the anthem of the free.*

*The ocean eagle soar'd
From his nest by the white waves foam,
And the rocking pines of the forest roar'd-
This was their welcome home!*

*There were men with hoary hair,
Amidst that Pilgrim – band –*

*Why had they come to wither there?
Away from their childhoods land?*

*There was woman's fearless eye,
Lit by her deep loves truth;
There was manhood's brow serenely high,
And the fiery heart of youth.*

*What sought they thus afar?
Bright jewels of the mine?
The wealth of seas, the spoils of war? –
They sought a faith pure shrine!*

*Ay, call it holy ground,
The soil where first they trod!
They have left un-stained what there they found, –
Freedom to worship God!*

Felicia D. Hemans.