Beyond Bradford's Journal:

The Scrooby Puritans in Context

by

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores the claims, put forth by William Bradford in his journal *Of Plimoth Plantation*, that persecution was the primary motivation for removal from England to Holland by the Scrooby Puritans in 1608, and challenges the historiographical acceptance of those claims. The dissertation examines monarchical, ecclesiastical and historical records from 1590-1620 to determine if there was any evidence to support Bradford’s claims of persecution. Finding scant evidence of physical persecution at the hands of royal, civil, or ecclesiastical authorities, the dissertation turns to the socioeconomic factors which may have contributed to the Scrooby Puritans decision to leave England and take up residence in Holland for twelve years. Finding no significant socioeconomic push factors, attention is then turned to the theological underpinnings of the group to determine if theology may have driven their persecution narrative. It concludes that the Scrooby Puritans may not have been fleeing from authorities trying to confine them for their religious beliefs, but from the corruption of their very souls, had they remained in England and under the theological influences of the Church of England.
DEDICATION

To Bud and Nic for putting up with such a massive endeavor when life should have seemed much more settled. And, to Martha and Clarence who from the start gave me books to read that were always beyond my scope, but knew that if they did, I would strive to reach them. To Kim who encouraged me to make the final push to get this dissertation from almost there to done so that I could set the best example possible for Nic as he begins his graduate career.

And finally to “my boys” the men of the Scrooby Puritans (and the women who are without record) who strove to be “perfect as your Father in Heaven is perfect” and could not, would not settle for less than walking as saints.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

Testis unus, testis nullus, so goes the Roman dictum: ‘one witness [is] no witness.’

Since the mid-1600s, William Bradford’s journal, *Of Plimoth Plantation*, has served as the genesis chapter for the history of America. Bradford’s harrowing tale of the Pilgrims’ persecution and flight from England and their quest for religious freedom forms the basis of the Pilgrim story we first read as children. Academics and popular historians alike have relied heavily on Bradford’s journal as their primary (and in most cases only) source for evidence that America was founded on the search for religious freedom.

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2 The Scrooby Puritans were a group of religious dissenters from Scrooby, England. William Bradford was a key member of the group that migrated from Scrooby to Leyden, Holland between 1607 and 1609 and later to Plymouth, Massachusetts in 1620. The Scrooby Puritans are most often referred to as the Pilgrims who made the crossing to America on the *Mayflower*. For the purposes of this dissertation, the term Scrooby Puritans will be used to describe the small band of people who gathered in Scrooby at the home of the leader William Brewster. Those primarily associated with the group in addition to Brewster were William Bradford, John Robinson – who would become the group’s pastor, Robert Clifton, James Brewster – William’s brother. They are referred to as Puritans rather than separatists because for the period under discussion, they had not yet separated from either the Church of England or England.

3 Although the journal was held in private hands until the mid-1800s, it was accessible to early chroniclers of Massachusetts and New England history. Nathaniel Morton, William Bradford’s nephew, published large excerpts from Bradford’s journal in *New England Memorial*, in 1669. The journal was next heavily excerpted in Thomas Prince’s *A Chronological History of New England* in 1736. Thomas Hutchinson, who served briefly as governor of Massachusetts, relied extensively on the journal for *A History of New England* published in 1764. These early histories began a long traditional of citing Bradford as the source for the founding story that extends nearly 350 years. See Appendix A for a chronological bibliography of books from 1669 – 2011, that
There are three parts to Bradford’s narrative. Bradford begins with time spent in England (1602-1608) where the Scrooby Puritans, tempered by persecution, realized that to worship freely, they would have to flee. He then moves to the years spent in Leiden, Holland (1608-1620) where they struggled to find work and provide a future for their children. Finally, he recounts the hazardous journey to and early years spent in America (1620-1648).

Historians have scrutinized the last portion of Bradford’s narrative – the passage on the Mayflower and the beginning of the Pilgrims’ time in America. In recent years, the Pilgrim story has evolved from a simple tale told at Thanksgiving to a more complete narrative that has incorporated new evidence and new perspectives, and that includes the impact on the indigenous population whose lives were disrupted by the landing of the English on America’s shores.¹

More recently, historians have begun to show interest in the middle portion of Bradford’s narrative – the time spent in Leiden. In 2009, an extensive study of the Separatists’ communities in Leiden, Holland was released. Strangers and Pilgrims, Travelers and Sojourners, written by Jeremy Bangs, the director of the Pilgrim museum in Leiden, significantly expands our understanding of the decade the Scrooby Puritans rely on Bradford’s journal as their source for the founding story. The most recent books about the founding of Plymouth Colony – Nathaniel Philbrick’s award winning Mayflower (New York: Penguin Group, 2006) and Nick Bunkner’s Making Haste from Babylon (New York: Random House, 2011) continue this tradition.

spent in Holland before removing to America.\(^5\) Bangs provides detailed birth, death, marriage, rent, mortgage, loan, employment and citizenship records, allowing us to imagine how the Scrooby Puritans went about their lives in Leiden.

The first part of Bradford’s narrative about life in England, which recounts the persecution faced there, has remained less examined by scholars. However, a scholarly shift that began in the 1980s placed Bradford’s claims of religious persecution and the need to leave England to find religious freedom on less firm footing. Over the past two decades, scholars have questioned the claim that widespread persecution of Puritans and separatists existed in England under either Elizabeth or James.\(^6\) While at first, these theories boasted few supporters, extensive archival research and thoughtful reinterpretations of previously unexamined data have gained the adherence of numerous well-regarded Puritan scholars. Michael Braddick’s work reflects these changes, citing “the influence of local dissenters (Catholic and Protestant) and the wider obligations of neighborliness, [which] seem to have undercut the perception of threat” in most communities in England by the time James I ascended the throne.\(^7\) These factors – local dissent, neighborliness, and the powerless of the church to overcome conditions at the

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\(^6\) See for example the post 1980s scholarship on Puritans, the Reformation, and the Church particularly the work of Ian Atherton, Michael Braddick, David Como, Patrick Collinson, Christopher Haigh, Christopher Hill, Peter Lake, Muriel McClendon, Nicolas Tyacke, and Alexandra Walsham among others.

local level – made “uniformity impossible to achieve and relatively narrow conformity difficult to sustain.”

The loss of confidence in previous claims of widespread persecution led to a renewed examination of the power of the church to enforce total conformity and the influence of local community on the practice of nonconformity. Scholars found local conditions that stand in stark contrast to Bradford’s assertion that the Scrooby Puritans had been “hunted and persecuted on every side.”

What do these changes mean to our understanding of the founding story? By limiting the story of the Pilgrims to a narrative of religious persecution (especially when that narrative conflicts with updated scholarship) and a quest for religious freedom, important questions are ignored. This narrow view of the founding story leaves out the role that England’s complex monarchical past played in shaping a diverse religious environment and informing religious dissent both regionally and locally. It ignores the impact that ecclesiastical changes and evolving religious policy may have had on local communities and their ability to negotiate religious conformity at the local level. It ignores the economic and social conditions that may have contributed to the decision to leave England. And finally, it leaves out the complex theological understandings that may have driven the decision to break with their community, their church, and their country.

8 Braddick, 291.
This study argues that the pursuit of a narrow and exclusive religious theology championed by those we know as the Pilgrims, not persecution, was the primary motivation for their removal from England for Holland. It further questions Bradford’s use of persecution as the motivating factor when he wrote his journal, some twenty years after the decision to leave England as justification for the Scrooby Puritans’ decision to separate.

To make the shift from persecution to theological motivation, we need to reexamine the “Pilgrim” story by first placing them within the geographical, monarchical, political, social, economic and religious context of their times. This study examines the period before William Bradford, William Brewster and other prominent Pilgrims separated either from the Church of England or England itself. It examines the period between 1590 and 1610 when Brewster was reaching out to Puritan clergy to discuss reforming the church and it focuses on the impact that outside forces had on those who became a part of Brewster’s circle before they decided to leave their homes, employment and loved ones for an uncertain future. During the period studied, the members of the group that met regularly at Scrooby under the leadership first of William Brewster and later with John Robinson who would become their minister, had not separated formally from the Church of England, nor had they severed ties with their connections at court or given up their employment. They were still productive members of their community and appear on the church rolls at various times during the period examined. To highlight that we are dealing with the period before their separation, they will be referred to as the Scrooby Puritans for the remainder of this study. While most historians refer to members of this group as separatists, they called Scrooby Puritans here in order to make clear that this
This study explores their time in England, before the decision to separate from the church. This distinction is not intended to negate that they ultimately chose separation and thus are referred to as separatists to Puritan and early modern England scholars. Rather, it is to underscore that we are examining the events and mindset that led up to separation.

We begin this examination in this chapter with a brief biographical sketch of Bradford, a description of the journal, an examination of the part of the journal that supports Bradford’s claims of persecution, and an examination of the period in which Bradford began writing. This chapter also includes the relevant historiography showing how historians have relied on the journal to create Americans’ founding story as a flight from persecution and the search for religious freedom.

In Chapter Two, “A Brief History of Persecution in Early Modern England,” we examine Bradford’s claims of monarchical persecution. This chapter explores the climate of monarchical persecution that existed in early modern England leading up to the Scrooby Puritans’ decision to leave. This chapter refutes the notion that Elizabeth I and James I carried out a systematic program of persecution against Puritans. It also argues that neither Elizabeth nor James knowingly or through their policies was directly or indirectly responsible for persecuting the Scrooby Puritans.

The discussion of persecution at the ecclesiastical and local level is the focus of Chapter Three, “Negotiated Conformity in Early Modern England.” This chapter explores the tension between conformity and nonconformity to see how this tension affected policies and practices at the state, ecclesiastical, and local level. This chapter demonstrates that rather than living under a system of persecution mandated by state,
ecclesiastical and local authorities, the Scrooby Puritans were under the protection of both the church and the crown and enjoyed unprecedented freedom to worship.

In Chapter Four, “The Scrooby Puritans,” we trace the history of Scrooby and directly compare the archival records of the ecclesiastical courts to Bradford’s narrative, to determine whether there is evidence that the Scrooby Puritans personally suffered at the hands of the ecclesiastical authorities. This chapter argues there is little evidence to support claims of persecution or prosecution on the part of ecclesiastical authorities directed at the Scrooby Puritans. Rather, we will see that the Scrooby Puritans remained well within the confines of the church until they left England for Holland.

Chapter Five, “Alltaggeschichte,” describes the social and economic conditions in early modern England in the decades leading up to the Scrooby Puritans’ removal to Holland. This chapter posits that these conditions may have influenced the millennial underpinnings that informed the unique theological beliefs held by the Scrooby Puritans.

Chapter Six, “A Theology of Separation,” explores the theological beliefs of the Scrooby Puritans, illuminated through the original letters and sermons of their pastor John Robinson. This chapter argues that the theological beliefs of the Scrooby Puritans that fell far outside the beliefs of most Puritans and the Anglican Church were the primary motivation behind the decision to leave England for Holland. This chapter shows the isolation associated with holding such disparate beliefs and how that isolation may have contributed to the Scrooby Puritans’ perceptions of persecution and to their transformation from Puritans to separatists.
Finally, in Chapter Seven, “Conclusion,” we bring together all of the evidence and arguments examined and posit a new theory for the Scrooby Puritans’ decision to leave England for Holland.

In short, while historians have long accepted religious persecution as the primary motivation for the removal of the Scrooby Puritans to Holland, this study proposes to expand the story we learned as school children. It does this by going beyond Bradford and into the archives to discover how monarchical upheaval, ecclesiastical changes, and economic and social conditions intersected with individual religious beliefs and how those beliefs influenced the decision by Scrooby Puritans to leave England around 1609.

Who Was William Bradford?

Little is known of William Bradford’s early life. He does not write about his childhood in his journal. The most definitive work on Bradford’s youth was conducted by Joseph Hunter for *Collections Concerning The Early History of the Founders of New Plymouth.* The collection, published in 1854, includes a biographical sketch of William Bradford.

Hunter traces Bradford’s birth to the town of Austerfield, a hamlet less than four miles north of Scrooby situated halfway along the North Road between London, England and Edinburgh, Scotland. While no record of his exact date of birth exists, baptism

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10 Hunter was a Unitarian minister, a historian, and fellow of The Antiquaries Society of London. His papers reside in the British Museum. He published two works on the early New England colonists: *Collections Concerning The Early History of the Founders of New Plymouth* (London: John Russell Smith, 1849) and *Collections Concerning the Church or Congregation of Protestant Separatists formed at Scrooby in North Nottinghamshire in the time of King James I: The Founders of New Plymouth* (London: John Russell Smith, 1854).
records indicate he was baptized in March of 1589.\textsuperscript{11} Bradford’s father died in 1591. His mother remarried a few years later. After his father’s death, Bradford was placed in the care of his paternal grandfather, who along with his uncles raised him.\textsuperscript{12} Hunter reports that his mother died a few years later, leaving Bradford an orphan. We have no record of any schools attended by Bradford, but we do have evidence that he spoke Dutch and French, languages he most likely learned during his time in Holland, and that he read Latin, Greek and Hebrew.\textsuperscript{13}

How and when Bradford became associated with the church at Scrooby is uncertain. By his own account, he went to Holland with the Scrooby Puritans in 1608. He was eighteen years old when he left England. In 1620, he sailed aboard the Mayflower, signed the Mayflower Compact, and became one of the original members of Plymouth Colony. A year later, he became the Governor of Plymouth Colony leading the colony through its earliest days, from 1621-1632. He was reappointed in 1635 and 1637 and again for the periods of 1639-1642 and 1645-1656. He served a total of 28 years, longer than any other Governor of the colony. And, he is known as the author of \textit{Of Plimoth Plantation} a personal account of the history of Plymouth colony from its founding through 1646.

\textsuperscript{11} Children were baptized very close to the date of birth in the Church of England during this period, so we can assume that Bradford’s date of birth close to March 1589. See E. A. Wrigley, R. S. Schofield, and Roger Schofield \textit{The Population History of England 1541-1871} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) 96.

\textsuperscript{12} Hunter, \textit{Collections} (1849), 44.

\textsuperscript{13} Bradford and Deane, \textit{Of Plimoth Plantation}, xviii.
Bradford began writing his famous journal in 1630, when he was 41 years old, twenty-two years after he and the Scrooby Puritans left England. The project ends inexplicably with the year 1646, but Bradford picks it back up in 1651 to include a list of the Mayflower passengers and a brief description of their fate.

William Bradford died on May 9, 1657 after a long undetermined illness that lasted through the winter and into the spring. After Bradford's death, the journal he labored on for 21 years passed from father to son, until it ultimately ended up in the library of Thomas Prince in the mid-1700s. Upon Prince’s death his family donated his entire library, including the journal, to the New England Library. Some time between the Prince family donation to the library and the end of the Revolutionary War, Bradford’s journal went missing.

Historians have two theories on how the journal went missing. Some historians posit that during the Revolutionary War, British soldiers looted the New England library, housed at the time in the Old South Church in Boston; they theorize that one of the looters made off with the journal. Others believe that disgraced Governor Hutchinson, a Loyalist with a deep scholarly interest in early colonial history, absconded with the journal and perhaps Governor Bradford’s Letter-Book when he returned to England in 1774. Hutchinson expected to return to America one day and may have merely borrowed the journal for his research. Regardless of which theory is correct, Bradford’s journal was lost to historians for over 80 years.

14 Bradford wrote the starting year for the journal in a note on the back of page.

In 1855, the Reverend John S. Barry made a startling discovery in a book loaned to him by a friend. The book, *A History of the Protestant Episcopal Church*, written in 1846 by the Lord Bishop of Oxford, contained excerpts from the Bradford journal. Rather than citing previously known sources, the citations pointed to a "MS History of the Plantation of Plymouth, &c., in the Fulham Library." Feeling he had stumbled upon a huge historical find, Barry turned to his friend and colleague Charles Deane, a well-respected historian, for help. Deane contacted Joseph Hunter at The Antiquaries Society of London. Hunter agreed to examine the manuscript and in a letter to Deane dated March 19, 1855 stated that, “there is not the slightest doubt that the manuscript is Governor Bradford’s own autograph.”

Identifying the manuscript was the easy part. Bringing the journal back to America would take years of negotiations between British authorities and the state of Massachusetts. America's founding document would not return to Massachusetts until 1897.

**Bradford’s Journal**

While often referred to as William Bradford’s journal, *Of Plimoth Plantation* is not a journal or a diary in the sense that Bradford’s focus was not on recording his daily or weekly experiences and activities. Philippe Lejeune describes a journal as an “obscure” work that is often a “by-product, a residue” of a life as opposed to autobiography which

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attempts to reflect life.\textsuperscript{18} Others have characterized journals and diaries as “spontaneous reportages” that strike an uneasy balance between “selfhood and events, between subjectivity and objectivity, between private and public.”\textsuperscript{19} This definition fits Bradford’s text rather well.

The journal is laid out as a book, with clear chapter headings and subheadings, rather than relying on specific dates for its orientation. Bradford’s account begins twenty-five years in the past with the formation of the church in Scrooby, and then follows a chronological trajectory, intertwining the lives of Bradford, the Scrooby Puritans and later his fellow colonists with the political and social events occurring in England and in America. \textit{Of Plimoth Plantation} reflects back to us the seventeenth century Atlantic world as seen through Bradford’s unique perspective. To accomplish this, he positioned himself as the narrator, our guide through the previous twenty-five years. Bradford occasionally slipped into the first person I, but only to orient us to the material he was presenting. For example, before describing the letters that came from England aboard the \textit{Anne} in 1623, Bradford tells us that, “I shall here again take liberty to insert a few things out of such letters as came in this ship.”\textsuperscript{20}

His main focus was recounting the events related to the founding and development of Plymouth colony. The bulk of the 444 pages of the printed journal tell the story of life in the colonies. Only 73 pages are dedicated to life \textit{before} the colony. Of those 73 pages, 18

\textsuperscript{18} Phillippe Lejeune, \textit{On Diary} (Honolulu: Published for the Biographical Research Center by the University of Hawai‘i Press, 2009), 31.

\textsuperscript{19} Rachael Lanford and Russell West, Marginal Voices, Marginal Forms: Diaries in European Literature and History (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1999), 8.

\textsuperscript{20} Bradford and Deane, \textit{On Plimoth Plantation}, 143.
historians have primarily focused on the first 16 pages of the journal, where Bradford broadly relates the persecution that lead to the Scrooby Puritans removal from England to Holland.

David Henige cautions that while it is true that our knowledge of the past often begins with a single source, historians should have a “natural tendency to treat unique evidence with kid gloves.” The uniqueness of a source “should persuade the historian to apply every form of internal criticism possible.” 21 He cautions that while there are sources that “lay blame where the historians think it belongs, whose sense of which historical actors and factors reflect those of the historian, and whose chronological depth is appealing, there are many dangers in this embedded congeniality.” 22 The danger of using these types of sources is that they “may have been created precisely to satisfy the needs of historians or other groups.” It is with this advice in mind that we turn to a reexamination of Bradford’s journal.

When Bradford began writing Of Plimoth Plantation in 1630, ten years had elapsed since the landing at Plymouth and a full 22 years had lapsed since the group left England for Holland. At the time of the writing, five years after the death of James I, there was growing turmoil between the new king, Charles I, and Parliament. In 1629, after a tumultuous series of debates, the House of Commons refused to obey Charles’ order to dissolve Parliament and instead used the session to “denounce the innovations in both

21 Henige, Historical Evidence, 49.

22 Henige, Historical Evidence, 110.
church and state” put in place by Charles.\textsuperscript{23} Much like they had with James three decades earlier, Puritans hoped Charles would treat his Puritans subjects fairly. They soon saw that Charles’ view of Puritans and Parliament was much harsher than his father’s had been. He argued that both operated “under the ‘mask of zeal and counterfeit holiness,’ that had spread their ‘poisoned conceits’ among ‘the weaker sort who are prone to be misled by crafty seducers.’”\textsuperscript{24}

By the time Bradford began his journal in 1630, the news of widespread persecutions occurring in England had made its way across the Atlantic. An example is seen in a letter dated December 16, 1630 reprinted in Thomas Prince’s \textit{A Chronological History of New England}. In it, Thomas Shepard, a Puritan preacher at the diocese of London, tells of being confronted by Dr. William Laud, the newly appointed bishop of the diocese. After hearing Shepard had given a series of lectures unauthorized by the church, but supported by his patron, Laud requested he appear before him.

The confrontation began with a series of questions: What degree did he have and from what college? How long had he been at the diocese? To whom did he owe his maintenance?\textsuperscript{25} Shepard explained that he held the degree of Master of Arts from Emanuel College and he had been with the diocese for three years. When he asked if that


\textsuperscript{25} One of the changes that Laud desired to make within the church was to end patronage, lay support for clergy. Charles was in support of ending the practice, which had been an institution within the church for centuries.
would be all, the bishop “looked as though the blood would gush out of his face and did shake as if he had been haunted with an ague fit . . . [displaying] his extreme malice and secret venom.” To Shepard’s astonishment, the bishop then “pronounced sentence” on him, declaring he was to “neither preach, read, marry, bury, or exercise any ministerial function in any part of my dioceses, for if you do, and I hear of it, I will be upon your back and follow you wherever you go, in any part of the kingdom, and so everlastingly disenable you.”

This letter is significant because it offers proof that Bradford was aware of the deprivations and excommunications carried out by Laud and the Church of England occurring right around the time he began writing *Of Plimoth Plantation*. Laud was just beginning a long campaign to force nonconforming ministers to either conform completely or to give up their positions. This quest for total uniformity within the Church was a goal that Charles I shared. Laud convinced Charles I that what deterred him from reaching that goal was the Puritan “plot to overthrow the church government.” While Charles’ father James may have at times viewed the Puritans in his court and churches “annoying and vexatious” Charles wanted to “crush them completely.”

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27 Prince and Hale, *Chronological History*, 339.


Catholic priests,” his appointment of known Catholic sympathizer Richard Montague as bishop of Norwich, and his relaxation of the “laws punishing Catholics for practicing their religion” signaled an ominous change in England. Dissolution of Parliament by Charles in 1629 signaled an attempt to silence those aligning against him. Puritan ministers and members of their congregations felt growing aggression by Charles I toward their cause. Rather than wait to see how far the king’s censorship would extend, many decided to leave the country rather than wait for escalating hostilities.

Perhaps Bradford felt the Scrooby Puritans’ decision to leave England for Holland and later America could be positioned as a socially and religiously acceptable response to the abuses by the church when placed alongside the contexts of persecution resulting from Charles I and Laud’s harsh policies. Perhaps Bradford conflated the Scrooby Puritans’ decision to remove twenty years earlier as a harbinger of the persecution suffered under Charles and Laud.

Without examination of the archival records and historical corroboration of events occurring prior to their removal to Leiden, we cannot know if Bradford’s account of persecution accurately reflects the events he and the other Scrooby Puritans experienced or if his account “unwittingly bears the imprint” of the times in which it was written.  

This dissertation examines the monarchical, ecclesiastical, and parish evidence held in archives in England to see if Bradford’s claims of persecution are supported. It also draws on the original writings of John Robinson, who became the minister of the church in Holland and other Puritan clerics of the period who struggled with the idea of

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separation to determine whether the reasons for separation could be linked to the theological beliefs that influenced the Scrooby Puritans.

Bradford himself provides insight into the role theology may have played in the group’s decision making. Bradford’s narrative begins with a brief history of religious turmoil in sixteenth century England. In the first few pages, he leads us through the struggle for the soul of England that Satan waged on two distinct fronts. First, there was the battle between Satan, who took the form of Catholicism, and “true Christians,” which took place while Mary was on the throne. Alongside this larger battle, Satan fought a subtler but more insidious battle by “kindling the flames of contention and sowing the seeds of discord and bitter enmity amongst the professors and seemingly reformed themselves.” Although Catholicism was ultimately defeated, and Protestant rule returned to England under Elizabeth, “contention did not die with queen Mary”; those hoping for complete reform were left wanting. The godly seeking further reform were treated with contempt and had “imposed upon them, that name of Puritans, which . . . the Novatians out of pride did assume & take unto themselves.” According to Bradford, Puritan efforts to cleanse the church of “popish trash” during Elizabeth’s reign left the “godly greeved, afflicted, persecuted, and many exiled, sundrie lost their lives in prisons and other ways.” Perhaps even worse than the afflictions visited upon the godly, Bradford laments that, “the papists [had been] encouraged to hope againe for a day.”

31 Bradford and Deane, Of Plimoth Plantation, 2-4.
32 Bradford and Deane, Of Plimoth Plantation, 3.
33 Bradford and Deane, Of Plimoth Plantation, 5.
34 Bradford and Deane, Of Plimoth Plantation, 5.
Bradford recounts how for a brief time, the Puritans placed their hope for change in James I. But, the king’s failure to embrace a reformed church on the model of “Scotland, France, & the Netherlands whose reformation is cut or shapen much nearer the first Christian churches, as it was used in the Apostles times,” signaled Satan’s continuing influence in Church of England.35 The Scrooby Puritans “having been touched with heavenly zeal for [the Lord’s] truth” had no choice but to shake off the “yoke of antichristian bondage.”36 To do so meant to risk everything “by joining themselves (by covenant of the Lord) into a church estate, in fellowship of the gospel.”37

It is here that we find the two key passages repeated in hundreds of histories written about first Massachusetts, then New England, and finally America. First, Bradford describes what the “godly” in England were forced to endure under Elizabeth and James, writing that they had been:

both scoffed and scorned by the prophane multitude, [while] the ministers [were] urged with the yoak of subscription or else must be silenced; and the poore people were so vexed with apparators, and pursuants and the commissarie courts, as truly their afflictions were not small.38

In the next passage, Bradford shows us that as they formed the “true” church at Scrooby, pressure on his group escalated. He introduces the term persecuted to illustrate

how desperate times became. He writes that although they tried to carry on with their lives in England, they soon found they could not continue because:

they were hunted and persecuted on every side . . . some were taken and clapt up in prison, others had their houses beset and watched night and day and hardly escaped . . . most were faine to flie and leave their house and habitations, and the means of their livelihood. Being so molested with no hope for continuance there, by a joynte consente they resolved to go into the Low-Countries, wher they heard was freedome of Religion for all men.\textsuperscript{39}

In addition to often citing the passages shown above, historians turn to Bradford’s recounting of the thwarted attempts to leave England for Holland as direct proof of persecution by the James I. Bradford sadly recounts the failure of the first attempt, which ended at the hands of a hired ship captain who handed the group over to a band of “chatchpoule officers,” who after rounding them up presented them to the magistrates, who in turn committed them to the wards.\textsuperscript{40} While most of the people in the party were dismissed and returned to the “places from whence they came” Bradford asserts that

\textsuperscript{39} Bradford and Deane, \textit{Of Plimoth Plantation}, 10.

\textsuperscript{40} The \textit{Oxford English Dictionary} defines the catchpole as a “petty officer of justice; a sheriff’s officer . . . a warrant office who arrests for debt, a bum-baliff.” OED Online. November 2010. Oxford University Press. http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/28830?redirectedFrom=catchpole (accessed October 12, 2010). The practice of rounding up groups of people traveling without the proper immigration papers or permission by the King to leave the country was standard practice. This passage leaves open the question – Were they detained because for their religious beliefs? Or were they viewed as vagrants, which had become a growing problem in seventeenth century England? Or were they detained simply because they did not have the papers or permission needed to leave the country? These issues are explored in detail in later chapters.
seven were “still kept in prison, and bound over to the Assizes.”\textsuperscript{41} He does not elaborate on the outcome of their trial, but skips instead to the next attempt to leave England, which occurred the following spring.

He tells us that the second attempt met with only partial success. The party was divided when the women and children arrived to the ship late. The shipmaster, knowing they could be apprehended at any moment, urged the men to wait for the women aboard ship. Shortly after they boarded, the captain “espied a greate company, both horse and foote, with bills, and gunes and other weapons . . . raised to take them.”\textsuperscript{42} Unwilling to risk his ship and crew, he ordered a hasty departure, leaving the women and children behind.\textsuperscript{43}

Back on shore, the women and children were taken into custody. For weeks, they were ushered “from one place to another and from one justice to another, till in the end they knew not what to do with them.”\textsuperscript{44} Rather than be “tedious in these things” Bradford

\textsuperscript{41} Bradford and Deane, \textit{Of Plimoth Plantation}, 12. An exhaustive search of the Assizes and the Quarter Session records which are complete for this period shows no record of Brewster, Robinson, Clifton, Bradford or any person associated with Scrooby, Bawtry, or any of the surrounding parishes being taken before the Assize courts between 1607 and 1610. Other scholars have noted the lack of documentation to support Bradford’s claim including: Harold Kirk-Smith, \textit{William Brewster ‘The Father of New England:’ His Life and Times, 1567-1644} (Boston: Richard Kay, 1992) and Ronald Marchant, \textit{Puritans and the Church Courts in the Diocese of York} (London: Longman’s, 1960).


\textsuperscript{43} Kirk-Smith calls into question Bradford’s account of the second escape attempt. Bradford asserts that the men traveled overland and the women and children in a small boat. Kirk-Smith argues that tolls would have been required at numerous points along the route the women and children took. These tolls would have been impossible to avoid and stopping to pay they would have drawn the attention of the authorities. He offers a detailed account of river travel during this period, supported by archival evidence of the tolls required. See William Brewster, 86.

\textsuperscript{44} Bradford and Deane, \textit{Of Plimoth Plantation}, 14-15.
“omits the rest of their troubles” and concludes by telling the reader that “in the end, not
withstanding all these stormes of oppostion, they all got over at length, some at one time
and some at another” meeting together again “with no small rejoicing.”

Bradford’s account of their plight in England and escape to Holland offers a
compelling narrative of persecution, fear, oppression, and near and partial escapes, which
gets tidily resolved by the group’s eventual reunification in Holland. Once there,
Bradford dispenses with life in England before their removal and does not return to the
subject again, until he records the death of William Brewster, the group’s leader, on page
406.

By 1630, Bradford’s colony was quickly becoming overshadowed by Boston to the
north. Those who fled during the Great Migration certainly faced persecution, peril, and
hardship if they had stayed in England. Was Bradford concerned that the story of the
Scrooby Puritans would forever be subsumed into the events occurring around him? Did
he place the story of the Scrooby Puritans in greater relief than it had been?

We may never know Bradford’s motives. He showed very little interest in the
publication of the manuscript, instead choosing to pass it along to his son after he died.
When he prepared his will in 1657, shortly before his death, Bradford made no mention
of the manuscript he spent over twenty-five years working on, requesting only “‘speciall’
care be taken of his collection of poems.”

David D. Hall argues that writing without an

45 Bradford and Deane, Of Plimoth Plantation, 15.

New England Quarterly Vol. 65, No. 3 (Sep. 1992), 389-421), 390. See also Hall, Ways of
Writing, 73. Hall argues that “in its final form, Bradford’s manuscript could not have served a
printer well because it lacked a table of contents, an expansive title and did not have running
heads or marginal catchwords. In Worlds of Wonder, Days of Judgment, Hall reflects that lay
eye toward publication would not have been unusual for seventeenth century writers. For the colonists “it was not the commercial aspects of print that made it less appealing but the near-certain possibility that having something printed would ‘expose’ a writer to ‘censure’ if not ridicule.”

Additionally, Bradford may have feared that making his narrative public might have disrupted the preservation of the “peace” which “was among [one of] the most explicit priorities of the colonist.”

As a journal, rather than a book marked for publication, Bradford was free to write about events as he perceived them, perhaps even justifying the decision to leave for future generations who may have questioned their elders decision to leave England for the hardships of Holland and America.

When William Bradford passed away in 1657, “nothing of his had been printed on either side of the Atlantic.” Yet, he has become widely regarded by historians and literary critics alike as the “first in a long line of American writers . . . who grasped the imaginative possibilities of the essential American myth: the story of a people who set themselves apart from the rest of the world and pledged themselves to work together in self-sacrifice and love.”

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texts such as Bradford’s were intended to be handed down from one generation to the next and though they “revealed a heightened piety,” their aim was more “providential” (Hall, 129).

47 Hall, Ways of Writing, 50.

48 Hall, Ways of Writing, 50.

The Historiography

Most American historians have shown little interest in moving beyond “the essential myth” of the Pilgrims to develop a broader understanding of the social, cultural, economic, religious, and political framework surrounding their decision to migrate. A rare exception is found in the work of James Truslow Adams. In *The Founding of New England* (1921), Adams argues that the religious struggle in England was “for control” of the Church and the Court of High Commission. Adams lays out a plausible economic explanation for the struggle for control that occurred within the church. He points out that while this struggle occasionally led to censure or excommunication, in the early years of James’ reign, rarely were these punishments fully carried out. More specifically, in the case of the Scrooby congregation, Adams argues, “although they were known to be breaking the laws, apparently no justice or court could be found to punish them . . . neither the Privy Council nor the ecclesiastical authorities had taken notice of the matter.”\(^50\) He concludes that not only had there been “little or no religious persecution, but even when the refugees had obviously committed civil crimes these were officially condoned” or overlooked.\(^51\)

Although Adams’ *Founding* won the Pulitzer Prize for history in 1922, it was soon overshadowed by traditional histories championing the religious persecution narrative. Within four years, fellow Pulitzer Price winner Edward Channing had returned to Bradford’s journal for his account of the Scrooby congregation in *A History of the United States*. Ignoring Adams altogether, Channing argued that as persecution mounted under


\(^{51}\) Adams, *Founding*, 89.
James I, the “members of the [Scrooby] group began to feel insecure in their homes . . . Some of them were imprisoned, others had their houses beset night and day and they hardly escaped seizure [before] they resolved to leave their home . . . and go to the Low Countries.”

Two years later, in 1928, Vernon Parrington’s Pulitzer-winning *Main Currents in American Thought* began a new form of American history, focusing on the “American mind.” For Parrington, Puritan New England was the “native seat and germinal source of such ideals and institutions as have come to be regarded as traditionally American.”

Parrington’s intellectual model of the American mind had no room for the contributions of the Scrooby group. He dismissed them as Separatists on “the extreme left wing of the Puritan movement . . . [who] rejected the established ecclesiastical authority and laid rude hands on the Mother Church.” He characterizes them as isolationists who “during their years on the continent lived remote from the current of the events in England.” Having dispensed with the “Brownist-Separatists of plebian origins” Parrington quickly moves on to the Massachusetts Bay colony and one of its leading founders John Winthrop. Unlike the leaders who settled Plymouth, Massachusetts Bay colony had been settled by “capable leaders,” gentlemen who were “half-way between

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the aristocrat and the burgess, with the salient characteristics of both.” Perry Miller picked up Parrington’s class-based argument a decade later. By lowering the Plymouth colonists into the “plebian” class and making farmers of them, Parrington and Miller could ignore any intellectual contributions they may have made.

Perry Miller emerged in the late 1930s as the authority on Puritan thought and history in America. Miller has been widely revered for “historicizing the American past in a manner that served as both cathartic self-explanation and as a call to national destiny.” Miller followed Parrington’s lead, defining Puritanism as a movement visualized by the intellectual Puritan religious elite in England, and carried on by intellectuals in America. Miller writes that while Bradford’s *Of Plimoth Plantation* represented the “essence of the Puritan,” citing “the soaring passage in which he contemplates the plight of the settlers at the moment of landing . . . as a masterpiece of all Puritan eloquence,” Bradford and his fellow Pilgrims did not require further examination. For Miller, the true Puritan was a member of a “strong, wealthy, organized, and powerful interest led by important politicians and learned clergymen.” By contrast, Bradford and his congregation were made up of “simple souls, all of humble station, who were quite incapable of containing their religion within the fine distinctions” modeled by true Puritans. As such, Bradford, the leader of Plymouth Colony, was “not


quite a Puritan” under Miller’s definition. Additionally, according to Miller’s model, the “true” Puritan remained within the church and worked to “secure the mastery of it.” By separating from the church, Bradford and his fellow separatists had chosen a path away from true Puritanism.

Miller does not stop with religious differences, but makes a class-centered attack on the Scrooby congregation, asserting that the “Pilgrim company were home-spun, hard-working farmers from Nottinghamshire and Lincolnshire.” While he concedes that “John Robinson, was a university man and Elder Brewster had spent a couple of years at Cambridge,” he dismisses the accomplishments of the rest of the congregation who were “instructed only in the Bible and in simplicity of spirit.” To make this case, Miller compares Bradford to Winthrop. For Miller the salient point seems to be that Bradford, the poor farmer from Austerfield, had little to lose by coming to America, while Winthrop had been “a country squire, a justice of the peace, an attorney and a member of the Inner Temple.” Miller argues that when Winthrop left England, he “sacrificed a

60 Miller and Johnson, *The Puritans*, 11.
62 Miller and Johnson, *The Puritans*, 88. Unfortunately, Miller was laboring under a misconception. Most of the Scrooby Puritans including their leaders in Leiden, William Brewster and John Robinson, their first pastor in Scrooby Richard Clyfton, James Brewster (William Brewster’s brother who did not go to Leiden, but did worship with the group at Scrooby), Robert Cushman, and others who were widely influential on the initial decision to leave Scrooby for Leiden were Cambridge-trained clergy, *not* farmers. They were intellectual leaders who left behind pamphlets, manuscripts, and sermons that detailed their religious beliefs and convictions, their struggles within the church, and their remorse over leaving England. Ironically, the only member of the group with farming connections was William Bradford, the orphaned nephew of a wealthy farming family from Austerfield, England. There is no record of Bradford having received any formal education, although he knew Latin, French, and Spanish and was studying Greek at the end of his life.
63 Miller and Johnson, *The Puritans*, 89.
career already launched, a secure social position, a background of wealth, influence, and leisure.” Miller seems to be asserting that unlike Winthrop, Bradford could not have possibly come to America because he believed in an idea – a shining city on a hill – built on the foundation of true Puritanism and sacrifice. Winthrop called for individuals an communities alike, to live exemplary lives and witness to religious truth,” not withdraw from it. Winthrop’s metaphor signals a profound difference between Puritans and separatists.  

In order for Miller’s Puritan paradigm to work, he could not offer “even a glimpse of the actual world out of which the Great Puritan Migration arose.” To pull off this intellectual slight of hand, he had to completely sever Plymouth from the intellectual founding of America. To do this he adopts a brusque, nothing to see here attitude, arguing “Plymouth was a minute, relatively insignificant community, completely overshadowed by Massachusetts Bay from 1630 on.” To allay any challenges by those who might question his leaving Bradford out of his Puritan intellectual paradigm, Miller acknowledges that Bradford while “not [being] representative of the Puritan mind in its intellectualized and metaphorical form . . . is the essence of the Puritan.” What Miller’s tacit acknowledgement of Bradford leaves out are the group’s motivations for leaving


67 Miller and Johnson, *The Puritans*, 89.
first England and then Holland, which Bradford lists in *Plimoth Plantation*. His list includes the “great labor and hard fare” of living in Holland, the fear of persecution and being imprisoned if they returned to England, and:

lastly, (and which was not least,) a great hope and inward zeal they had of laying some good foundation, or at least to make some way thereunto, for the propagating and advancing of the gospel of the kingdom of Christ in those remote parts of the world; yes though they should be but even as stepping-stones unto others for the performing of so great a work.\(^{68}\)

Edmund Morgan, a student of Miller’s, published his treatise on the Puritans in 1963. In *Visible Saints*, Morgan presents a novel thesis, positing that the ideas we associate with the foundation for American freedom and government did not evolve from life in England, or from exposure to new concepts in self-governing that were engrained in political life in Holland, but from “membership in the [American Puritan] church.”\(^{69}\)

By focusing on the development of and membership in the American Puritan church, as the locus for Puritan beliefs and motivations in America, Morgan completed what Miller began, severing the link between the American Puritan church and the early Puritans Miller and Morgan did not feel were worthy of consideration.

His discussion of the Scrooby Puritans offers little more than a simple timeline: “Holland also became the refuge of the famous band of Separatists from Scrooby. Led by John Robinson, this group came to Amsterdam in 1607, settled in Leiden in 1609, and in 1620 furnished the founders the first permanent settlement in New England at

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Morgan’s discussion of separatism however veers closer to Adams than Miller. Morgan offers “that some Puritans who remained in the church were sometimes able in some localities to practice some of the doctrines they professed.” But he then quickly reverts to the status quo claiming, “none of these halfway measures could be practiced with any confidence or consistency.” This was in part due to the need of the Separatist to “defend themselves not only against Anglicans, but more particularly against their fellow Puritans who remained in the Church of England.”

While Miller and (to some extent) Morgan dominated American Puritan studies for nearly three decades, historians began to question Miller’s contention of a New England Puritan intellectualism in the 1970s. Social historians found fault with Miller’s monolithic New England mind, which focused on the elite members of the colony, and resulted in the severing of Plymouth from the larger New England intellectual topography. Francis Butt’s essay “The Myth of Perry Miller,” offers an example. Butts contends that Miller, “ignored the inchoate condition of Puritan ecclesiastical theory prior to the Great Migration and thus presented non-separating Congregationalism as a

70 Morgan, Visible Saints, 18.
71 Morgan, Visible Saints, 19.
72 Morgan, Visible Saints, 19
73 Morgan, Visible Saints, 20.
‘discrete system’ of church organization, worked out in detail by theoreticians in Old England and transplanted to Massachusetts intact, without significant alteration.”

David Hall and Sydney Ahlstrom brought Bradford back into the American story in 1972, by quoting heavily from On Plimoth Plantation. Hall and Ahlstrom argue that the Scrooby Puritans “consciously separated from the Church of England” because they were ‘hunted and persecuted on every side.’ They go on to write that with non-separating Puritans and strict Conformists allied against them, they had no choice but to “flee to the Netherlands.” For proof of persecution Hall offers Bradford’s journal. Hall continues the theme of persecution and escape in The Faithful Shepard. This theme is repeated in numerous manuscripts published from 1972 to today.

Bruce Daniels, Puritans at Play, brings us full circle. Rather than ignore Of Plimoth Plantation as Miller and others had because it did not fit within a tidy Puritan history, Daniels singles out Bradford’s journal as “the classic piece of literature from the Puritan era.” Daniels summarizes Bradford’s narrative thusly: “[He] begins with an account of Satan’s opposition to saints, then tells the tale of the persecution of the saints in England

76 Sydney Ahlstrom and David D. Hall, A Religious History of the American People (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), 137.
77 Ahlstrom and Hall, Religious History, 137.
and the Pilgrim’s voyages to Holland and America. Even though William Bradford’s own journal, *the* primary source used by American historians, hints that there were economic, cultural, and political causes for the move to Holland and later to America, religious persecution continues to be viewed as *the* reason, the Scrooby Puritans left England for Holland.

British historian Herbert Butterfield warns us that there can be dangers in upholding works such as Bradford’s as “the ratification if not the glorification of the present” rather than accurate depictions of the past. In 1931, he writes against Whiggish or Protestant version of history in which the historian simply adopt[s] the whig or Protestant view of the subject and very quickly busies himself with dividing the world into the friends and enemies of progress. It is true this tendency is corrected to some extent by the more concentrated labours of historical specialists, but . . . this whig tendency is so deep-rooted that even when piece-meal research has corrected the story in detail, we are slow in re-valuing the whole and reorganizing the broad outlines of the theme in light of these discoveries.

Butterfield argues that historians should be "grateful that the Puritans of 17th century England were for so long a minority and against the government; for this was the very condition of their utility." The history we have created for the Scrooby Puritans is one

80 Daniels, *Puritans at Play*, 34.
83 Butterfield, *Whig History*, 41.
of a group continually and perpetually at odds with the Church of England, and in some cases with England itself. It is a narrative created within a vacuum of religious conflict that ignores any other possibility for the decision to remove to Holland.

More recently, British historian Margo Todd has argued that to correct the whiggish interpretations Butterfield warned against, which were created by early historians and are still perpetuated today, historians need to “begin to reveal Puritans as people of their own times, rather than as the mythical creatures of modern academics.” For Todd, this would require examining “Puritanism within the context of broader, European intellectual developments in the early modern period.”

Bernard Bailyn offers a different but compatible suggestion for reintegrating Bradford and the pilgrims into modern historiography. He provides a way out of this conundrum suggesting we look at the “latent events” of the day. By observing the common practices engaged in throughout England during the early modern period and then more specifically between 1590 and 1610, the period associated with persecution endured by the Scrooby Puritans in England, we make them “part of, directly involved with, the manifest history of the surface world” in which they lived. And, in doing so, we open the history of the Scrooby Puritans to “a new landscape” of interpretation in which the prevailing religious, political, and socio-economic conditions in England help


85 Todd, Christian Humanism, 9.

us to better understand the motives of the Scrooby Puritans and their decision to leave England for Holland.

This dissertation takes up Bailyn’s call by placing the Scrooby Puritans within the sociological, economic, theological and monarchical context. Bradford’s claims have yet to be examined in this way.
Central to America’s founding myth, which is based on Bradford’s journal, is the belief that early modern England was a persecuting society. More specifically, the conventional wisdom is that Puritans, Separatists, and nonconformists were relentlessly persecuted under Elizabeth I and James I. Inextricably tied to claims of persecution are the laws and practices that governed heresy and heretics. To determine the efficacy of these claims – specifically that King James followed a pattern of persecuting those who dissented from the established Church of England – it is necessary to have an understanding of the history of heresy law and the persecution that resulted in early modern England. This chapter briefly examines that history. Before alternative reasons for the removal of the Puritans from Scrooby can be suggested, it is important to explore the foundation of alleged persecution on which Bradford’s claim rests.

As monarchs came and went in early modern England, one king or queen’s burned heretic quickly became another’s persecuted martyr. For most of us, the term persecution evokes strong images. For some, the leap is immediately made to images of the Inquisition or to the horrors suffered by Marian martyrs. Today, as it was in Bradford’s time, persecution is a loaded term. The Oxford English Dictionary offers a range of definitions for the term persecution in circulation in the 1600s when Bradford wrote his journal. Persecution during this period encompassed a broad range of actions including: “an injurious act,” a “difficulty, affliction, tribulation,” and at the extreme end a “particular course or period of systematic violent oppression, esp. one directed against the members of a particular religious or political group, race, etc.” The gap between an
“injurious act” against one person and “systematic oppression” of a people is difficult to convey in a simple word. For the purpose of this chapter, we will focus on the latter definition of persecution as “systematic violent oppression directed against the members of a particular religious group” and the link to the ultimate outcome of religious persecution, a conviction of heresy which led to being burned at the stake.

On April 11, 1612, Edward Wightman had the distinction of being the last person burned at the stake for heresy in England. If Wightman had limited his dissent to a simple rejection of specific Church doctrine, he would not have received such a harsh punishment. Unfortunately for Wightman, his beliefs threatened the entire foundation on which Christianity rested. He denied the Trinity, claimed the soul to be mortal, and committed the ultimate blasphemy by declaring himself to be the true incarnation of the Holy Ghost. Authorities called for the ultimate punishment for Wightman, death by burning, because they felt his beliefs were so dangerous they threatened England as well as the entire framework of Christian orthodoxy.

Wightman did not face the flames bravely. As soon as he began to feel the heat from the flames, his “courage failed him [and] he quickly cried out that he would recant, although by then he had been ‘well scorched.’” He was removed from the flames and allowed to recant. After convalescing for a few weeks, he was returned to the court to


89 Atherton and Como, “Edward Wightman,” 1215.
“repeat his recantation, but once more emboldened and no longer feeling the flames upon his back, he refused and ‘blasphemed more audaciously than before.’”⁹⁰ He was sent to the flames a second time and although he again begged to recant he was told he could not and he was burned to ashes.

In his Dialogue Concerning Heresies (1528), Thomas More elevated heresy above theft, murder, and treason, labeling it a crime “so horrible and so dangerous that church and society had the right to take the strongest measures against it.”⁹¹ He was convinced the only way to protect the realm against heretics was to allow the harshest possible measures against them which, at the time, meant being burned at the stake. For those like More, “heresy was perceived as a cancer on the body of society; if society was to be saved, the cancer had to be cut out and destroyed.”⁹²

Wightman’s case offers a window into the complexities that surrounded religious dissent in early modern England. Examining the heresy executions that occurred in early modern England places the persecution of specific religious groups into context. In this chapter, we trace the heresy executions – the ultimate punishment for religious dissention – carried out in England from, the beginning of Edward VI’s reign (1547) through the date of Wightman’s execution for heresy (1612). In early modern England, those charged with heresy were believed to have chosen an opinion that by all “human


perception [was] contrary to holy scripture, publicly avowed, and obstinately defended.”

As Christianity grew, the concept of heresy too transformed and soon the “errors” of heresy “required forms of correction and punishment, both temporal and spiritual.”

Throughout the sixteenth century and into the beginning of the seventeenth century, heresy laws would be repealed and then reinstated in order to quell religious dissent and punish those who erred against the established religious order. The Act of Six Articles passed under Henry VIII in 1539, referred to as the “Whip with Six Strings, conferred upon episcopal courts new powers to initiate inquisitions and trials for heresy.” These new articles were a reaction to the growth of Lollardry throughout England. The articles mandated the death sentence for those found guilty of denying transubstantiation, a major tenet of the Lollards.


96 Lollards were the “spiritual descendants” of John Wycliffe a fourteenth century English theologian. While there is no definitive doctrine associated with Lollardry, the movement is more easily defined by what Lollards were against rather than what they believed. They were against the Pope, the bishops, and any form of ecclesiastical hierarchy. They rejected pilgrimages, adoration of the saints, the reading of the scripture in English, and transubstantiation. Many Lollards advocated the election of lay priests and taxation of the church. Their denial of transubstantiation was frequently used to justify the harshest punishments against those convicted of heresy as Lollards. See Roger Lockyer, Tudor and Stuart Britain: 1471-1714 (New York: Longman, 1985) and A. G. Dickens, Lollards and Protestants in the Diocese of York: 1509-1558 (London: Hambledon Press, 1982).

When Edward VI assumed the throne in 1547, his Privy Council led by his Lord Protector, Sir Edward Seymour, Duke of Somerset, ordered the release of all those being held “at York and elsewhere in the north for offences against the Statute of the Six Articles.” Soon after, he petitioned parliament to abolish the heresy laws enacted under his father, which significantly inhibited ecclesiastical and lay courts from taking action against those accused of heresy.

Under Mary, heresy laws were wielded as the ultimate weapon to restore Catholic order. Mary and her council resurrected the harsher medieval heresy laws passed in 1382, 1401, and 1414 rather than relying on those passed under Henry. These older statutes, “re-enforced the church’s power to deal with heretics, and also closely involved secular authorities in the pursuit and execution of religious offenders.” The legal battle to restore the medieval statutes took almost two years and three sessions of parliament, yet, once passed, it provided the “legal framework in which diocesan bishops could act against heresy” and ensured that all the forces that could be mustered were “engaged in seeking out suspected heretics and presenting them to ecclesiastical officers.” These actions forever linked Mary directly to the hundreds of burnings that took place under her rule. Elizabeth I and James I preferred to try Catholics under the statutes for treason,

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100 Alexander, “Bonner,” 159.

rather than heresy, thus denying those sent to the gallows martyrdom status. On rare occasions, Elizabeth and James I used heresy to reign in fringe radicals such as the Anabaptists.

Figure 1. Abbreviated chart of Lineage and Succession Henry VIII to James I
**Edward VI (1547-1553)**

England’s transition away from the Catholic Church and toward the Church of England began with Henry VIII. (Figure 1. above, provides a chart of lineage and succession from Henry VII through James the first.) However, those hoping for significant religious reforms under Henry were gravely disappointed. Henry proved more focused on his own personal agenda than on making lasting religious reform. Comparing Henry to King Salomon, some contemporaries claimed that his motivation for reform “degenerated as lust clouded his judgment, preventing him from completing the Temple he had begun.”

Those disappointed by Henry turned to his son Edward, casting him as “the Old Testament King Josiah, who had destroyed idols and restored the true scripture to his people.” Although his reign lasted only six short years, Edward and his counselors lived up to the analogy. During his reign, Edward’s sweeping religious reforms “went beyond anything that Henry could have imagined.” Edward is credited with furthering

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102 Chris Skidmore, Edward VI: The Lost King of England (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2007), 4. See also, Ronald H. Worth, Church, Monarch, and Bible in the Sixteenth Century: The Political Context of Biblical Translation (London: McFarland, 2000). In his research, Worth determined that during Edward’s reign forty edition of the New Testament or the entire Bible were printed in England, making the Bible more accessible than it had ever been. In addition, the Book of Common Prayer first published in 1547, gave people access to worship in unprecedented ways.

103 Skidmore, Edward VI, 4.


105 Skidmore, Edward VI, 4.
the access to the Bible begun by his father, “abolishing the chantries and masses for the dead, destroying the images and shrines to the saints, introducing new services in English read by ministers forbidden to wear the traditional vestments, and introducing communion.”

While some of Edward’s proposals required extensive compromise and keen political maneuvering, most eventually made their way through Parliament. For example, the second Chantess Act, which called for the dissolution of the chantries, “had a stormy passage through parliament,” yet, “despite the unpopularity of the legislation in both houses of parliament, the implementation of the statue raised little commotion and virtually no resistance when the Augmentation commissioners set about dissolving the chantries.” In one sweeping effort, Edward cleared the Church of England of “2,374 perpetual chantries and many thousands of other intercessory endowments in churches” throughout the country.

Edward’s sister Mary, next in line for the throne, watched these changes with increasing despair. When masses were abolished, Mary, who “heard as many as four masses a day,” refused to yield. She went so far as to petition the king’s council, after

106 Skidmore, Edward VI, 4.


109 Skidmore, Edward VI, 131.
the passage of the Act of Uniformity in 1549, demanding “religion be left untouched until her brother obtained his majority.”

Her public refusal to give up the Latin mass, which she celebrated openly and in the “ancient manner,” made her court a “magnet for Catholics to hear mass according to the traditional rites secretly and without fear of persecution.” However, while Mary was not alone in her opposition to Edward’s religious reforms, most of the Catholics who sympathized with her were far less outspoken.

While it would seem that most of the religious conflict during Edward’s reign would focus primarily on the dissolution of English Catholicism, the two cases of heresy resulting in the ultimate punishment of burning during Edward VI’s reign were not tied to outspoken Catholics, but to those in the Anabaptist movement. In *The Acts and Monuments of John Foxe*, Foxe details the heresy cases of Joan of Kent and George van Parris, a Dutchman. The case of Joan Bocher, also known as Joan of Kent, was particularly compelling, because Joan was a “lady” and a member of court. As such,


12 The word heresy is Greek and means “choice.” In religious circles it came to mean “wrong choice” and “became attached to a set of unsavory concepts involving anti-social behavior and mental disease.” Heresy was seen as an “infection, which had to be cauterized or cut out of both the individual and society.” Hence, the use of burning as a catalyst for cleansing those infected. See John Edwards, *Mary I: England’s Catholic Queen* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2011), 255.

13 Anabaptists skirted along the fringe of the religious reform movement in the sixteenth century. Throughout Europe, Anabaptists were viewed as “the outlaws” of religious society. Their rejection of infant baptism in favor of “believer’s” baptism, the merging of religious, social, and economic grievances, and their complete rejection of all the institutional foundations of the church put them at odds with many other religious reform groups. In England, Anabaptists were arrested when they publicly denied that Jesus Christ was “of the flesh,” in favor of a theology that viewed Jesus to be of “heavenly flesh” having “passed through Mary’s body without receiving
she fell under the protection of Archbishop Cranmer until her “opinions [finally] became
too fantastic even for him to tolerate.” Joan’s most egregious position was her denial
of the “humanity of Christ by claiming that because his mother’s own flesh ‘was sinfully
begotten’ he did not get his body from her but passed through her as light through a
glass.” After sentencing, she was remanded to Newgate prison, where she remained
until her execution a year later. During this time, numerous members of the
Archbishop’s ecclesiastical court met with her, pleading for her to recant. After
exhausting every spiritual means to save her, the Archbishop eventually sought a writ for
her execution. Joan of Kent was burned at the stake for heresy on May 2, 1550.

Shortly after Joan’s execution, George Van Parris was tried for heresy. Van Parris
also “held that Christ was not divine and that calling the Father the only God could not be
heresy.” This was not Van Parris’ first time in court. At home in Flanders, he had
been “excommunicated by the congregation of his country men” before immigrating to
England. Although he spoke little English and was a surgeon, at the time an extremely

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114 Leonard Williams Levy, Blasphemy: Verbal Offense Against the Sacred, from Moses to

115 Levy, Blasphemy, 85.

116 John Strype, Ecclesiastical Memorials Relating Chiefly to Religion and the Reformation of It,
and the Emergencies of the Church of England Under K. Henry VIII., K. Edward VI., and Q.
Mary I., with Large Appendices Containing Original Papers (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1822),
334.

117 Levy, Blasphemy, 86.
valued skill, Van Parris was tried and sentenced to death in April of 1550. He remained in prison for a year, during which time he too was given numerous opportunities to recant his beliefs, but refused. Van Parris was burned at the stake on April 25, 1551.\textsuperscript{118}

Neither of these executions involved Catholics or more mainstream Protestants. Rather, they were aimed at two individuals whose renunciation of the fundamentals tenets of Christianity branded them “fanatical extremists” with ideas so dangerous they needed to be silenced.\textsuperscript{119}

When it became clear by the spring of 1553 that Edward was dying, he and his council began making plans for his succession. Edward’s final action as king was to change the line of succession set forth by Henry VIII by “disinheriting his sisters Mary and Elizabeth in favour of a new dynasty founded upon the Protestant faith.”\textsuperscript{120} Edward and those around him not only feared a return to Catholicism under Mary, but they also worried that placing an unmarried queen on the throne opened England up to foreign influence. Both proved true. As Retha Warnicke points out, Mary’s marriage contract

\textsuperscript{118} Andrew Pettegree, “Parris, George van (d.1551),” first published 2004, 615 words complete in the Oxford Dictionary of National Biographies.

\textsuperscript{119} One other death related to religious convictions occurred during the reign of Edward VI, although it is not directly attributed to him. Arrested by authorities when Edward’s father Henry was still on the throne Thomas Dobbe died in prison the year after Edward ascended to the throne, before his case was resolved. In addition to these deaths, a few prominent Catholic laypeople and a handful of bishops including John Bonner the Bishop of London, were deprived of their positions because they refused to renounce their ties to the Catholic Church and acknowledge Edward as their sovereign. Bonner was imprisoned after his deprivation for threats made to both the ecclesiastical court and the King’s council. When Mary ascended to the throne, Bonner was released and became instrumental in the prosecution of Protestants that occurred during Mary’s reign including the sentencing of Thomas Cranmer. See John Saward, John, J. S. Morrill, and Michael Tomko, Firmly I Believe and Truly: The Spiritual Tradition of Catholic England, 1483-1999 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 68.

\textsuperscript{120} Skidmore, Edward VI, 139.
with Philip of Spain and “fear of Spanish influence” led to numerous plots against her, beginning six months after she became queen.\textsuperscript{121}

The Third Succession Act, signed by Henry VIII in 1543, passed the crown from Edward and his heirs and then to his daughters, Mary and Elizabeth. Mary being the eldest daughter was next in line for the crown. Edward’s chief council John Dudley, duke of Northumberland devised a plan to keep the crown from passing to Mary.\textsuperscript{122} The plan, which relied on Letters of Patent signed by Edward, elevated Lady Jane Grey, the granddaughter of Henry VII, in the line of succession over Mary and Elizabeth, the daughters of Henry VIII.\textsuperscript{123}

Rather than successfully securing his religious reforms, the attempt to transfer the crown from Edward VI to Lady Jane Gray only postponed the inevitability of Mary’s accession. Edward’s decision to ignore his father’s will, which contained the only line of succession sanctioned by Parliament, and name Jane Grey as his successor, began a monarchical struggle for the crown that mirrored the religious struggle of England for the remainder of the century. On July 6, 1553, six years and six months after having become King of England, Edward VI died, leaving his kingdom in turmoil.

\textsuperscript{121} Retha Warnicke, Women of the English Renaissance and Reformation (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1983), 55.

\textsuperscript{122} Historians are divided over whether Edward’s decision to ignore his father Henry’s plan for succession and have Lady Jane Grey, a devout Protestant, succeed him was heavily influenced by his regent, the Duke of Northumberland or was of his own design. For more on this debate see Retha Warnicke, Christopher Haigh, Chris Skidmore, Diarmaid MacCulloch, and Dale Hoak.

\textsuperscript{123} Warnicke, Women of the English Renaissance, 54.
Northumberland and the Council “kept the news secret to aid the succession of Jane and her husband Lord Guildford Dudley.” Northumberland then assembled a troop of men to immediately secure Mary, but they failed to do so. One step ahead of her foes, Mary had already fled to East Anglia to rally her supporters. Mary would not give up her birthright without a fight. She sent a letter to the council demanding they accept her as queen. She offered pardons to those who would accept her as the true queen. The response she received was a letter, warning her to “show herself ‘quiet and obedient,’” signed by “twenty-three privy councilors headed by the Archbishop of Canterbury and all the great officers of state.”

Even with the entire all of Protestant England on Jane’s side and the Council aligned with her, Mary’s loyal forces in East Anglia proved formidable. An estimated troop of 3000 men led by the Duke of Northumberland, headed north to capture Mary and protect the new queen. Almost from the start, Northumberland’s troop was plagued by logistic problems, desertions, and the machinations of those loyal to Mary. Upon reaching Cambridge, Northumberland received reports that Mary had amassed an army of “10,000 men” and her force “had chosen to dig in” rather than retreat or surrender. Northumberland had thought of everything – the need to change the will, the best way to get Edward on board with his scheme, the marriage of Guildford to Jane – the one aspect

124 Warnicke, Women of the English Renaissance, 55.
126 Ives, Lady Jane, 192.
127 Ives, Lady Jane, 199.
128 Ives, Lady Jane, 199.
of his scheme he had failed to anticipate was Mary. Had he sent troops to detain her earlier or anticipated Mary’s ability to rally her troops and resist capture, Lady Jane would have remained queen. That would not be the case. Nine short days after she arrived at the Tower, “the majority of Jane’s councilors left the Tower” signaling a shift in their allegiance from Jane to Mary.\textsuperscript{129}

\textbf{Mary I (1553-1558)}

Mary considered her victory a “triumph of the principle of legitimism and an almost reverential trust” by her people.\textsuperscript{130} It could also be viewed as an indication of how determined the Catholics of England were to return their country to the Pope. Mary’s accession to the throne proved even her strongest supporters wrong, including “emperor Charles V, who had concluded . . . [it would] be so difficult as to be well-nigh impossible for her to become queen.\textsuperscript{131} It also bore out Edward’s worst fears. His religious changes and those his father had begun to put in place were quickly abolished. Mary was intent on returning England to the Pope. She showed little toleration for her Protestant subjects, calling, almost at once, for them to return to the one “true” church.

Her short tenure on the throne was marked by systematic religious persecution, the death of numerous heretics, and the exodus of Protestants ministers from England to locations throughout Europe. Those brave enough not to convert went into exile, or once convicted were imprisoned, tortured, or burned at the stake. More recent biographies of

\textsuperscript{129} Eric Ives, \textit{Lady Jane}, 214.

\textsuperscript{130} Warnicke, Women of the English Renaissance, 55.

\textsuperscript{131} Eric Ives, \textit{Lady Jane}, 2.
Mary have tempered Mary’s reputation as monarch with an insatiable lust for Protestant blood. Historians have uncovered early accounts of Mary that point to her religious adherence and obligations as explanations for the “cruelties that left an indelible stain on her memory.” Religion was at the “essential core of Mary’s character and life.” Her response to religious dissention represented “a specific response to a specific problem” by a woman that evidence shows in many other respects to have been a “kind and affectionate woman with strong familial and maternal instincts.”

These instincts were seen in Mary’s initial responses to the condemnation of Jane Grey. Early on, Mary had been “determined to pardon Jane” after having received a “long and dignified confession from her predecessor.” She told one of her advisors, Simon Renard, a man who held extraordinary sway with Mary, that her conscience would not permit her to have Jane put to death. She leaned toward setting Jane free, but was convinced otherwise by her advisors.

Lady Jane became one of Mary’s earliest victims. She refused on numerous occasions to recant her Protestant beliefs and acknowledge the Pope as the head of the church. She went to the axe proudly proclaiming her faith seven months after first

132 Susan Doran, and Thomas S. Freeman, Mary Tudor: Old and New Perspectives (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 147.


134 Edwards, Mary I. See also Susan Doran, and Thomas S. Freeman. Mary Tudor: Old and New Perspectives (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 9 and 93.

135 Edwards, Mary I.

136 Edwards, Mary I.
entering the Tower of London as queen. Her execution on February 12, 1554 signaled
the beginning of three years of intense religious persecution.137

Scholars argue that Mary’s attempts to moderate heretical punishment may have had
the opposite effect, unleashing “a set of mechanisms which would be hard to control and
which would lie as a cloud over the rest of her reign.” Her views were open to
interpretation rather than seen as firm edicts on how to handle heretics. The result was a
“patchy” geographical distribution of the trials and the burnings that suggest the pattern
of heretical punishment under Mary may represent “spasmodic settlement of grudges
with a religious pretext, common on the Continent, during this period.” However, John
Edwards, Mary’s recent biographer, points out that while ecclesiastical and secular
agencies were “clearly involved in the trial of numerous people for heresy” during her
reign, we must never forget the “sheer calculated horror of this kind of trial and
execution.”138

Between early 1555 and late 1558 nearly three hundred men and women were burned at
the stake for heresy. Hundreds more were imprisoned or forced to leave England. While
by today’s standards the punishment of death by burning might seem extreme as well as
cruel, Mary’s contemporaries lived in an:

age that knew nothing of anesthetics, a great deal of pain had to be
endured by everybody at one time or another, and the taste for public

137 Lady Jane was officially charged with high treason. Some speculate that her execution
coincided with the failure Wyatt’s Rebellion. The Queen and her council circulated rumors that
the plot was an attempt to “resurrect” Jane’s claim to the throne. Many viewed her a threat to the
crown as long as she was allowed to live. She went to her death a devout Protestant and although
given numerous opportunities, refused to convert. See Eric Ives, Lady Jane, 266-268.

138 Edwards, Mary I, 259.
executions, bear-baiting, and cockfighting suggests a callousness that blunted sensibilities.\textsuperscript{139}

It was not the violence of the burning that made them so unpopular. Rather, what made the Marian burnings such a force of resentment was that they often struck down the smallest offenders while those at higher levels of society got off seemingly “scot-free.” Although clerics were put to the stake, the vast majority of those burned were those from the lower ranks of society.

The burnings were used to great advantage. Both Mary and Cardinal Reginald Pole, the Archbishop of Canterbury under Mary, worried that the heretics would become martyrs. To prevent this, Mary and Pole wrote to the bishops “insisting on the presence of able preachers at all executions because, as Pole explained, heretics could harm the ignorant and rude multitude at least as much by their deaths as ever they did alive.”\textsuperscript{140}

Local authorities were given the lead in searching out heretics and “all too often the accused would find himself being judged by a man who had been an active propagator of protestant doctrines under Edward VI.”\textsuperscript{141} For example, when Thomas Watts, a linen draper of a small Essex town, was brought before a Justice of the Peace and asked where he learned of the Protestant religion, he replied, “You taught it me, and none more than you. For in King Edward’s days in open session you spoke against this religion now


\textsuperscript{140} Eamon Duffy, \textit{Fires of Faith Catholic England Under Mary Tudor} (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 35.

\textsuperscript{141} Lockyear, Tudor and Stuart Britain, 103.
It should not be surprising that much like modern day politicians, some sixteenth century Justices of the Peace were willing to change with the prevailing winds of politics in order to retain their positions.

Local prosecution ensured that the overwhelming majority of Marian martyrs came from the lower levels of English society and accounts of their trials showed those occupied as weavers, fullers, tailors, hosiers, cappers, husbandmen, brewers, and butchers. Indeed, one striking detail from the list of martyrs is the high proportion of rural laborers recorded. Of the roughly 280 people sentenced under Mary, only twenty-one were “clergymen courageous enough to face the flames.” Of the rest, only nine were gentry, while the remainder, were “overwhelming” made up of laborers, tradesmen or cloth workers.

In addition to laboring men, Mary and her advisors also sent at least fifty women to the stake. The lopsided conviction of men versus women may have been due to the belief by clerics that “women were weak and easily led” and intense pressure was placed on them to submit to the church, rather than the flame. However, while those in the

142 Lockyear, Tudor and Stuart Britain, 103.
144 Smith, Fools, Martyrs, and Traitor, 186. See also Elizabeth Evenden and Thomas S. Freeman, Religion and the Book in Early Modern England: The Making of John Foxe's 'Book of Martyrs', (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010). As Dr. Retha Warnicke points out, an additional factor in the lopsided makeup of those burned at the stake was the ability of those rich enough to leave “including the duchess of Suffolk and many clergy” to flee the country. The wealthy were not kept from fleeing, which may have saved them from the stake. Comment to this dissertation on 5/30/2015.
ministry may have viewed them as weak, women found strength in their faith. Becoming martyrs “provided [women] with the opportunity to testify to the strong and clear Christian beliefs for which they were prepared to die.”\textsuperscript{146} Take for example the heresy trial of Alice Benden of Kent. Benden came to the attention of the authorities after being reported by her own husband for refusing to attend church because she felt “much idolatry was committed there against the glory of God.”\textsuperscript{147} She was tried for heresy and along with six others was burned at Canterbury in June 1557. Alice’s actions would not have been entirely surprising to those in Kent. Kent, the seat of Wyatt’s Rebellion, had a long tradition of opposition to the crown.\textsuperscript{148}

Alice Benden and so many others like her represented the understanding that continuation of Protestantism in England “depended on a widespread refusal to compromise with Catholic authorities.”\textsuperscript{149} Rather than save themselves by feigning outward conformity, many Protestants living under Mary’s rule became convinced “that these were desperate times, if not end times, which necessitated intransigent resistance to

\textsuperscript{146} Crawford, Women and Religion, 67.


\textsuperscript{148} Wyatt’s Rebellion was one of a number of rebellions fomented against Mary during her reign. The rebellion led by Thomas Wyatt, the younger of Kent along with two of Jane Grey’s uncles Lord John Grey of Wilton and Lord Thomas Grey failed because word leaked out before all plans were in place. The court became aware of the rebellion and managed to quell it, using it to build the case for Jane Grey’s execution. Records show that the rebels never intended to restore Jane to the throne, but were instead intent on elevating Elizabeth to queen had they succeeded. See also Eamon Duffy and David Loades, \textit{The Church of Mary Tudor} (England: Ashgate, 2005), 310-321.

The widespread refusal of lay people to “save themselves by denying or even concealing their beliefs was unprecedented.” The same would not be true when Elizabeth took the throne. Rather than fight the return to Protestant rule, most laboring Catholics would be content to practice their faith quietly, rather than subject themselves to the flame.

The reliance on harsh and numerous executions does not seem to have advanced the Catholic cause in England under Mary. Her brother Edward successfully maintained order and orthodoxy by making an example of a few high profile heretics. Through the heresy burnings, Mary, on the other hand, unintentionally created a legion of martyrs who would later be immortalized by John Foxe in *The Book of Martyrs*, which recorded in gruesome detail the lives and deaths of those put to death during Mary’s reign and did much to shape perceptions of Protestant persecution and martyrdom for future generations. For Protestants and even some Catholics, “the courage of the martyrs stirred the admiration of many who saw them die.” That became become Mary’s fatal error. She had given the English Protestant church a legion of martyrs. For this reason, many


\[152\] It should also be pointed out that not all of those who suffered Mary’s wrath were “conventional” Protestants. In the area around Kent where Lollardy was still a strong oppositional force, much as it had been in Edward’s time, a few convictions of Antitrinitarians and Anabaptists were secured.


\[154\] Lockyear, *Tudor and Stuart Britain*, 103. See also Eamon Duffy and David Loades, *The Church of Mary Tudor* (England: Ashgate, 2005), 196.
view the ongoing and wide-spread persecution that occurred during Mary’s reign as a
“sign of failure: if thirty fires would not burn out heresy it [was] unlikely that three
hundred would do so.”\textsuperscript{155} Eamon Duffy points out that the “supply of martyrs did
actually diminish.”\textsuperscript{156} Yet, there is no way to know, had a rebellion risen up against her,
if the people would have rallied behind her or her sister Elizabeth. As Susan Doran and
Thomas Freeman point out, “early modern English monarchs were remarkably resilient,
well able to weather prolonged periods of severe unpopularity.”\textsuperscript{157}

Some argue that, “once begun, the burnings could not be stopped without the
government seeming to confess failure.”\textsuperscript{158} As long as they continued, the burnings
provided abundant material for anti-Catholic propagandists, which in turn, helped seed
the Protestant offensive against Mary. Protestants continued to meet in rural areas and
around London “on board ships, in taverns, in fields, in prisons, and in private homes.”\textsuperscript{159}
Those searching for the root of the Puritan movement may find it in the reaction to the
burnings, which helped to usher in the more radical forms of Protestantism under
Elizabeth I and James I.

The burnings were also a source of concern abroad. Simon Renard, Spain’s
ambassador in England who served as an advisor to Mary’s husband, Philip of Spain and
his father Charles V became increasingly alarmed about the burnings and the damage

\textsuperscript{155} Lockyear, Tudor and Stuart Britain, 103.

\textsuperscript{156} Doran and Freeman, \textit{Mary Tudor}, 2.

\textsuperscript{157} Doran and Freeman, \textit{Mary Tudor}, 2.

\textsuperscript{158} Williams, \textit{Later Tudors}, 103.

\textsuperscript{159} Williams, \textit{Later Tudors}, 116.
they could do politically. He wrote to Philip telling him it would be unwise for the executions to continue. He feared that if the reasons for future executions were not “overwhelmingly strong” Philip too, would be “held responsible by many for the burnings.”

If Mary had secured a high profile confession, the need for widespread executions might not have been necessary. Early on heavy pressure was exerted on a few high-level church officials to recant, chief among them, Thomas Cranmer the former Archbishop of Canterbury. Mary blamed Cranmer for “her father’s break with Rome . . . the invalidation of her mother, Katherine of Aragon’s marriage to Henry VIII . . . and the marriage of Henry VIII to Anne Boleyn.” For these reasons, she was determined to brand Cranmer as heretic and see him burn. She waited for justice for over two years until papal jurisdiction over England was restored. Her opportunity finally came in 1555. Cranmer’s trial for heresy began in September of that year. Cranmer faced 15 charges of heresy ranging from “repudiation of papal authority” to failing to “acknowledge papal supremacy and the Real Presence.”

Before Cranmer was executed, he was forced to watch two of his brethren -- Hugh Latimer, the former bishop of Worcester and Nicholas Ridley, the former bishop of London – burn. Both refused to give Catholicism any quarter. When faced with the


161 Anna Whitlock, Mary Tudor, 293. See also Duffy and Loades, Church of Mary Tudor, 29.

162 Anna Whitlock, Mary Tudor, 294.
flames, Latimer called to Ridley beseeching him to “be of good comfort” and to “play the
man . . . [for] we shall this day light such a candle by God’s grace in England as shall
never be put out.”

Cranmer soon found himself alone, faced with an ecclesiastical and moral crossroad. Cranmer’s dilemma was shared by many of his fellow Protestants. The early reformers in England and on the Continent had transferred to the sovereign the reverence that Roman Catholics gave to the Pope, and had elevated royal authority over the church because it seemed the best possible security against papal claims. Now Mary with the help of Pole, the new Archbishop of Canterbury, shifted the claim of royal supremacy back to the church, reversing the strategy once used by Protestant reformers to wrest control of the church from the Pope. After watching the burning of Latimer and Ridley and under pressure of interrogation, Cranmer signed a submission “accepting the supremacy of the pope because the king and queen had ordered him to do so and he would always obey his sovereigns.”

Mary however, refused to accept his recantation. Cranmer’s role in her parents’ divorce and Mary’s resulting illegitimacy had finally come full circle for them both. When he was led to the stake at Oxford in March 1556, he denounced the renouncement of his Protestant faith and acceptance of the Pope as:

‘things written with my hand, contrary to the truth which I thought in my heart, and written for fear of death and to save my life if it might be,’ he


then plunged his hand into the flames so that it might never betray him again.\textsuperscript{165}

While Mary had succeeded in branding Cranmer a heretic, in doing so, she also made him a martyr.

Mary I died on November 17, 1558. She may have succumbed to an influenza epidemic that also claimed the life of her chief spiritual advisor Reginald Pole that same day.\textsuperscript{166} Or she may have died from uterine cancer or the complications of ovarian cysts. However her death occurred, like her brother Edward before her, her reign was short. And as with Edward, shortly after her death, most of the religious reforms she made were overturned by her successor, England’s new Protestant queen.

\textbf{Elizabeth I (1558-1603)}

When Elizabeth I, the third of Henry VIII’s children in line for the throne, succeeded Mary in 1558, she reestablished the Protestant Church of England and adopted a position of relative toleration for her Catholic subjects.\textsuperscript{167} Unlike Mary, Elizabeth “wanted to be queen of the English, not queen of the Protestants.”\textsuperscript{168} She demonstrated this by retaining the more moderate of Mary’s Catholic councilors at court, those who were “willing to accept a royal supremacy,” after her accession.\textsuperscript{169}

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\textsuperscript{165} Lockyear, Tudor and Stuart Britain, 104.
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\textsuperscript{166} Anna Whitlock, \textit{Mary Tudor}, 330,
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\textsuperscript{168} Haigh, \textit{Elizabeth}, 49.
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\textsuperscript{169} Haigh, \textit{Elizabeth}, 49.
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G. W. Bernard argues that Elizabeth demonstrated equal moderation when shaping her ecclesiastical court. She chose Matthew Parker, as Archbishop of Canterbury, who although a committed Protestant, was not “so committed” that he would have been “unable to compromise” with those from the Marian regime.\(^ {170}\) She also took a moderate approach toward balancing the bishopric, removing only the “hardline Catholic bishops,” who outwardly opposed her and passing over “some of the more radical Protestants” proposed as their replacement.\(^ {171}\) Those who would not conform “were to remain indefinitely under house arrest.”\(^ {172}\) However, Elizabeth and her Council were “neither totally consistent or intransigent. Their policy was to convert all resistance to a moderate form of Protestantism.”\(^ {173}\)

The policy of “passive acceptance” extended to the clergy ranks as well. Less than one percent of the estimated 8000 clergy in place when Elizabeth assumed the throne were deprived of their livings.\(^ {174}\) Elizabeth was willing to accept “outward conformity,” much to the consternation of some of her Protestant bishops who, like the Dean of Durham, “complained that ‘many people enjoy liberty and livings who have [not] sworn obedience to the Queen.’”\(^ {175}\)


\(^{171}\) Haigh, *Elizabeth*, 43.


\(^{173}\) Dovey, *An Elizabethan Progress*, 107.

\(^{174}\) Lockyear, *Tudor Britain*, 149.

\(^{175}\) Haigh, *Elizabeth*, 149.
Christopher Haigh posits that Elizabeth followed a “deliberate policy of toleration towards Catholics, to draw them gradually into conformity to the Church of England.”\textsuperscript{176} Indeed, throughout much of the Elizabethan period, there were only brief periods of pressure for full conformity exerted on moderate Catholics or Protestant reformists. As we will see, efforts to enforce full conformity were often exerted in response to either events or by specific individuals and were, on the whole, rarely successful.

Passive acceptance was even extended to those who refused to take the oath of Supremacy. To avoid triggering automatic executions for those refusing to take the oath, Elizabeth “ordered her archbishop, Matthew Parker, to ensure that no one was asked to take the oath twice.”\textsuperscript{177} And, in 1570, she issued a proclamation promising there would be “no investigation of the beliefs of those whose conduct was ‘not manifestly repugnant and obstinate to the laws of the realm.’”\textsuperscript{178} To ensure this proclamation was carried out, she instructed the Lord Keeper to inform judges that the queen expressly wished no one be “‘molested by any inquisition or examination of their consciences in causes of religion’ provided they did not flout the law.”\textsuperscript{179} This proclamation and accompanying orders were a response to the papal bull issued in February of that year. The bull branded Elizabeth a heretic and declared her the “pretended” Queen of England. Jesuits and Catholic priests felt the bull, which was directed at Elizabeth’s subjects, encouraged them to:

\textsuperscript{176} Lockyear, \textit{Tudor Britain I}, 49.

\textsuperscript{177} Haigh, \textit{Elizabeth I}, 50.

\textsuperscript{178} Haigh, \textit{Elizabeth I}, 50.

\textsuperscript{179} Haigh, \textit{Elizabeth I}, 50.
corrupt and prevent her good and loving subjects in matters of conscience and religion, but also to draw them from loyalty and duty of obedience and to provoke them . . . to the disturbance of the present quiet . . . this realm hath these many years enjoyed."\textsuperscript{180}

After the release of the papal bull, Elizabeth no longer had the luxury of simply ignoring the “Catholic threat” or brushing vocal English Catholics off as “conservative recidivists who yearned for a return to the Mother Church of their medieval forbears,” as she had in the past.\textsuperscript{181} Rather the pope’s intervention into English affairs had to be viewed as what it was, a direct threat to the crown which incited internal conflict and “encourag[ed] foreign coalitions against” the queen.\textsuperscript{182}

Here again, Elizabeth did not follow Mary’s example. Rather than allow Catholics who aided and abetted the pope to be branded as heretics, they were arrested, tried, and executed as traitors to the realm under the existing and newly penned acts of treason. This was particularly true of the missionary priests whose numbers and influence expanded, largely in London, throughout the 1570s. In 1581, Elizabeth issued a proclamation “declar[ing] all seminary priests and Jesuits to be traitors” and making their


presence in the realm a crime. More statutes followed in 1585, making “the mere presence of seminary priests or Jesuits in the land a treasonable offense.” Those caught “harboring” or “secreting” Jesuits or priests were also convicted using these statutes.

In all, 131 priests and 60 lay Catholics were executed for treason during the last twenty years of Elizabeth’s reign. Bishop Joseph Hall provides the prevailing justification for trying Catholics for treason rather than heresy. For Hall, while it was clear that “blood should not be shed for ‘mere heresy’ where it was mixed with ‘preturbances’, ‘malicious plotting’, or ‘treacherous machination’, he ventured, ‘it tends to the setting of whole kingdoms on fire’” and it is then that it became worthy of the flames.

There was also a distinct difference between the Marian executions and those that took place under Elizabeth. As we have seen, those executed for heresy in Mary’s time were predominately members of the laboring class. While the majority of those executed for treason under Elizabeth were members of the clergy, they were also cast as foreign plotters sent by the pope to meddle in English affairs. By casting those executed as


185 Williams, *The Tudors*, 475.

186 Walsham, *Charitable Hatred*, 58. See also Michael Carrifello, “English Catholicism and the Jesuit Mission of 1580-1581,” *Historical Journal*, 37 (1994). Carrifello revises Robert Parker’s “holy war” claims, by arguing that the Jesuit pastoral purpose was a cover for the political purpose missionaries served, which was the reconversion of England to Catholicism. Tom McCoog echos Carrifello’s arguments positing that while the mission began as pastoral, it shifted to the political over time.
traitors rather than heretics and by focusing the executions on the pope rather than religion, Elizabeth strengthened the church’s role in upholding national unity.

While the missionaries may have appeared a formidable threat, John Bossy and Christopher Haigh argue that Catholic missionaries were only successful in “creating a ‘rump community’” in England.\(^{187}\) Alexandra Walsham posits this may have been because missionaries trained in Rome and the Low Countries “lacked the ties that bound many recusants and church papists to their Protestant neighbors.”\(^{188}\) However, Haigh argues rather than concentrating their efforts in the North where “two-fifths of detected recusants” lived over half of the missionaries remained in the south in or near London where there were far fewer recusants.\(^{189}\)

There is further agreement that while the Reformation may not have been the glowing success historians once thought it was, the post-reformation efforts of the Catholic missionaries did not result in an “enthusiastic revival of Catholicism, but a


\(^{188}\) Walsham, *Charitable Hatred*, 142.

litany of lost opportunities. Here we can give Elizabeth some of the credit for the failure of Catholicism to take root. Rather than focusing on the “inner belief” of her subjects, the Act of Uniformity “focused attention on the outward behavior of the laity by making failure to attend church, as opposed to adherence to heterodox opinions illegal.” By following a policy of “via media” Elizabeth elevated “political loyalty over strict religious orthodoxy.”

Not everyone was happy with the via media policy that emanated from London. The bishop of London, Richard Bancroft, decried the lack of enthusiasm for conformity that filtered down even to the laypeople, sighting the wretchedness of many of our bishops, on the one side, and their desire to be at ease and quietness to think only upon their own affairs and on the other side, such is the obstinacy and intolerable pride of that factious sort, as that betwixt both sides, either subscription is not at all required: or if it be, the bishops admit them so to qualify it, that it were better to be omitted altogether.

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191 Walsham, Charitable Hatred, 59. Also see


It would seem that only a select few, Bancroft and Archbishop of Canterbury, John Whitgift among them, were willing to show any enthusiasm for enforcing uniformity. Most were content to simply follow the queen’s example.

Normal Jones offers another possible explanation for the lack of uniformity during this period. He argues that rather than fall in line with the sweeping expectations for conformity driven by the royal and ecclesiastical courts in London, conformity was negotiated locally. There were certainly differences between the Anglo-Catholic north and more radical south, especially in the early years of Elizabeth’s reign. These differences required local authorities to respond to local conditions governing conformity, but at the same time, to “mitigate or ignore the deviation of their neighbors.”194 In many parishes, simply presenting oneself at public worship services was seen as a “sufficient guarantee of religious fidelity.”195

This lax pattern of conformity, especially in the northern dioceses, became further entrenched after the failure of Archbishop Whitgift’s drive for full conformity in 1583. Whitgift circulated twelve articles through which he intended to institute discipline and streamline the governance of the Church. While most of the articles were acceptable to the majority of the clergy, article six, which required strict uniformity, offended “all shades of nonconformist clergy, provoking a major crisis among their ranks.”196 In addition, article two, requiring “full assent to the ordering of bishops, priests, and

195 Walsham, Charitable Hatred, 59.
deacons and to the legality of the Prayer Book,” offended Presbyterians and the more moderate nonconformists and conformists alike.¹⁹⁷ The backlash to Whitgift’s articles led to a crisis among the clergy, which could only be contained through modified subscription. While a few ministers were deprived or suspended, “the majority, were not dragooned into conformity.”¹⁹⁸

In 1589 and the two years following it, Whitgift attempted to coerce conformity using the Star Chamber to suppress prominent Presbyterians, but little action was taken against other nonconformists.¹⁹⁹ Whitgift’s ineffective and short-lived efforts at conformity resulted in very limited suppression of nonconformity and only a handful of convictions. His original twelve articles were mainly forgotten, although the main three were sometimes employed to weed out curators who “the bishops favoured not.”²⁰⁰

Occasionally a bishop might, on his own, insist on full conformity for those within his own diocese; however, forced conformity was rarely if ever successful. Most nonconforming clerics could simply find another parish happy to overlook any ecclesiastical shortcomings. This was due in part to a huge gap between the number of parishes and the availability of ordained clergy. When confronted with the enormity of


¹⁹⁸ Fincham, “Clerical Conformity,” 130.

¹⁹⁹ While some nonconformity could be tolerated, Presbyterianism marked a direct threat to the crown. Elizabeth, as her father had before her, viewed the monarch as the head of the church, responsible for appointing bishops and determining doctrine. Presbyterians threatened the hierarchy the church rested upon, which in turn threatened the crown. This debate, quelled under Elizabeth would come back during the Hampton Court Conference under James. See Bernard, “The Church of England,” 187.

²⁰⁰ Fincham, “Clerical Conformity,” 130.
the gap between the number of trained clergy and England’s 13000 churches, Elizabeth responded:

Jesus, thirteen thousand! . . . My meaning is not you should make choice

of learned ministers only, for they are not to be found, but of honest,

sober, and wise men, and such as can read the scriptures and homilies well

unto the people.\textsuperscript{201}

The lack of available clergy held universal conformity “at bay by the hesitation to enforce

conformity by some and the willingness by others ignore a pattern of nonconformity in

those they accepted to vacant positions.”\textsuperscript{202} As we will see, this pattern continued well

into James’ reign.

While Elizabeth may have tolerated a wide range of Protestant beliefs, she shared

Edward’s frustration with and outward hostility toward Anabaptists. In 1575, she

“herself signed the warrants” for the execution of two Dutch Anabaptists at Smithfield

although a number of her councilors pleaded with her to reconsider.\textsuperscript{203} By choosing

Smithfield, a location that still bore the scorch marks left by the fires of Mary’s campaign

against Protestant heretics, Elizabeth sent a clear message. Although estimates vary,

Elizabeth may have sent as many as six heretics to the flames, showing that even her

expansive capacity for tolerance had its limits.\textsuperscript{204} She reinstated her position toward


\textsuperscript{202} Fincham, “Clerical Conformity,” 130.

\textsuperscript{203} Haigh, \textit{Elizabeth I}, 49.

\textsuperscript{204} See Coffey, \textit{Persecution and Tolerance}, 108. Coffey lists Hamont, Cole, Lewes, Kent, Terwoot, and Pieters as the six heretics burned under Elizabeth.
Protestant outliers in 1585, stating that while she would not allow “Romanists to animate her” nor would she “tolerate new-fangledness.” Puritanism may have fallen into the category of “new-fangled,” and yet, as John Coffey points out, “only Anabaptists and anti-Trinitarians were in danger of being burned as heretics.”

Protestants who detached themselves from the church tested Elizabeth’s tolerance with their “radical” ecclesiology. However, Presbyterians and Puritans were quick to differentiate themselves from radical factions “even though they shared similar intellectual priorities.” Although Puritan clergy divided themselves as radicals and moderates in the mid-1580s, events turned the tide in favor of the moderates, leaving the more radical Puritans weakened. These events, the defeat of the Spanish Armada and the subsequent reduction in the Catholic threat, made patriotism and Puritanism synonymous. By the 1590s, “Puritanism was well rooted in many urban as well as rural areas.” Far from persecuted, Lockyer points out that although Puritan clergy might occasionally be “summoned before the High Commission for non-conformity, locally they remained respected and popular figures.”

However, there were exceptions and along with them, executions. Claims of Protestant persecution in Elizabeth’s time are founded on the deaths of Henry Barrow,

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205 Haigh, *Elizabeth I*, 50.

206 Coffey, *Persecution and Toleration*, 100.

207 Walsham, *Charitable Hatred*, 23.

208 Lockyer, *Tudor and Stuart*, 165. See also Haigh, “Monopoly to Minority,” 147.

209 Lockyer, *Tudor and Stuart*, 165.

210 Lockyer, *Tudor and Stuart*, 165.
John Greenwood, and John Penry.\textsuperscript{211} Walsham argues that Elizabeth’s \textit{via media} was partially to blame for the reorganization of separatism in the late 1500s. The idea of the Church as an “all embracing institution” created tension with those in the Reformed Protestant movement who “felt bound to withdraw from a body which compelled the visibly unworthy to receive communion and pollute the holy sacraments.”\textsuperscript{212} A few brazen ministers went so far as to “expel the ignorant and sinful from communion [limiting] it solely to select groups of ‘saints’ and ‘scripture men.’”\textsuperscript{213} Barrow, Greenwood, and Penry’s public calls for separation from the national church became a dissenting force that had to be dealt with. However, during the months these three men waited in prison for their sentence and for months after their bodies were removed from the gallows, less publicly vocal Separatists lived quietly and unmolested in communities where authorities were content to simply let them be.

As we have seen, charges of heresy against “radical Protestants” were not the persistent norm, in Elizabethan England. The executions of Barrow, Greenwood, Penry did not represent normal way dissenters were treated, but a rare “rupture” in society. Nor were Catholics rooted out to make way for the one “true” church as Protestants were under Mary. The Catholics and Separatists who were hanged during this period were not punished as heretics who failed to accept the basic, fundamental, and accepted tenants of the Christian faith. They were sent to the gallows as traitors, because “their religious


\textsuperscript{212} Walsham, Charitable Hatred, 55.

\textsuperscript{213} Walsham, \textit{Charitable Hatred}, 55.
deviance was seen as a seditious” attempt to upend the national church and in turn, the monarchy. 

Given England’s past history of monarchical and religious change coupled with violence, the question of succession plagued Elizabeth from the beginning of her reign until her death four and a half decades later. She ignored the issue until late in her reign when age and illness forced her to name a successor. She was determined to avoid the religious upheavals of the past and vowed to pass her throne to a Protestant with a reputation for tolerance. In 1601, Elizabeth began a series of correspondence with James VI of Scotland that paved the way for his accession to the throne of England.

Sir John Harrington, a member of Elizabeth’s court and her godson, posited in his 1602 tract on succession that James’ accession to the throne would not cause a repeat of violence and upheaval that had accompanied successions in the past because James:

hath no particular cause to persecute any side for private displeasure, as the two last sisters may seem to have had [referring to Mary I and Elizabeth I], not to hope of gain by it as the father did [referring to Henry VIII], not to be led by others persuasions and directions as the son was [referring to Edward VI], but out of his own clear judgment and good conscience, to establish a unity and cease the strife among us. 

Elizabeth and members of her counsel hoped this prediction would come true and James truly embodied the principles they sought in their next monarch.

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214 Coffey, Persecution and Toleration, 103.

James I (1603-1625)

As a young man in Scotland, before becoming king of England, James was forced into an early distrust of Puritans. When he was thirteen years old, the Puritan leaders of the Kirk, the Church of Scotland, hatched a plot to kidnap James and keep him from the influence of Esme Stuart, a Catholic who had become an influential “favorite of the young king.”216 The plot was successful. James was held captive for four years until he escaped and reclaimed his independent authority.

The Puritan ministers who kidnapped him fled to England to avoid treason charges. After his return, he sought passage of the “Black Acts,” appointing himself the head of the Kirk. The act stated that the assemblies of the Kirk were not to meet without royal permission, nor would their decisions be valid without royal approval. Government of the church was to be in the hands of bishops appointed by the crown, and ministers were forbidden to discuss affairs of state from the pulpit.”217 It is from this experience James’ often quoted phrase “no bishop, no king” emanates.

James also faced threats from the Catholic earls of Scotland. Yet, despite the forces allied against him, James gradually gained full control over the Kirk by “encouraging the moderates and holding general assemblies away from Edinburgh . . . [and by appointing] bishops who were given seats in Parliament even though they had no clear role in the ecclesiastical government.”218

216 Lockyer, Tudor and Stuart Britain, 143. See also Lockyer, James VI & I (New York: Longman, 1998), 14-18.

217 Lockyer, James VI, 17 and Lockyer, Tudor and Stuart Britain, 143.

218 Lockyer, Tudor and Stuart Britain, 144. See also Lockyer, James.
As king of England, James adapted the policy of moderation he practiced in Scotland merging his views with Elizabeth’s *via media*. Religious policy during much of James’s reign reflected a delicate balance between his expectation of religious conformity and the reality of ruling over a Protestant country inhabited by Anglicans, Puritans, Separatists, moderate nonconformists, and Catholics.

Unlike Edward or Elizabeth before him, James was a seasoned king when he assumed the throne of England. His battles with Puritans and Catholics in Scotland had led him to a vision for a Council of Christendom, which emphasized “how much all Christian churches had in common,” rather than focusing on their differences.\(^{219}\) Pauline Croft argues that James “promoted reconciliation among the churches of Christendom, not least because he knew that religious divisions exacerbated volatile political situations.”\(^{220}\)

While James “detested extremism and searched for a middle way in both religion and politics” like Elizabeth and Edward before him, he could not find a middle ground for the Anabaptists.\(^{221}\) He wholly loathed their “contempt for ‘the civil magistrate’, an attitude, which he felt undermined orderly society, and intolerance towards those who did not agree with them on all minutiae of doctrine.” It would take the Anabaptists almost ten years to push James from the middle ground to take action against them. Two brothers from Essex would be the tipping point for James.


\(^{220}\) Croft, *King James*, 182.

\(^{221}\) Lockyer, *James VI*, 6.
Bartholomew and Thomas Legete have the distinction of being among the last people tried in England for heresy. They became “notorious for their ultra-separatist opinions” around the turn of the century.222 Bartholomew was active as a cloth merchant trading with the Netherlands in the 1590s. By 1603, probably through contact with a group of Dutch Seekers or Mennonite Baptists based in Middleburg, he and several of his brothers were converted anti-Trinitarians and who had rejected the Church of England and the doctrines of the Trinity and infant baptism.”223

The brothers moved to London and began sharing their views through the radical underground of the city. They believed that they “must be new Apostles, before there could be a true constituted Church” and that they were “entitled to be the new Apostles.”224 In 1611 Bartholomew and Thomas were arrested and charged with heresy for among things, “rejection of the outward structure of the church and rejection of its fundamental doctrines, most particularly the Trinitarian formulations of the early creeds.”225 Bartholomew was burned at the stake on March 18, 1612 after having spent almost a decade in prison. Thomas Wightman joined him shortly after. Ian Atherton and David Como argue that while the Legate brothers and Wightman’s views were extremely

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damaging, it was the “assumption of the mantle of a divinely appointed prophet” and apostle that was most destructive.\textsuperscript{226}

For nearly twenty-five years no one had been put to the stake for heresy in England. What had triggered the burnings in 1612? Atherton and Como posit that the extremist views of Wightman, who appeared in London earlier that year, coupled with the political battle James was waging over the appointment of Conrad Vorstius, an Remonstrant theologian, to a chair in divinity in Leiden provided James with the opportunity to “defend before the theatre of Europe his orthodoxy, his adherence to the three creeds and his reputation to be ‘a King that without mixture of glory or private design, taketh so much to heart the injury that is done to the blessed Trinity.”\textsuperscript{227} Legate and Wightman may have been, as Atherton and Como suppose, merely “caught up in web of international diplomacy.” Yet, had their views not been so extreme, so far from the middle ground James held to throughout his reign, they might have never have had the distinction of being the last two people burned at Smithfield.

\textbf{Conclusion}

Persecution is a matter of perception. Were the Marian martyrs persecuted? There is almost universal acceptance that they were. Were the Anabaptists put to the stake for their beliefs persecuted? Scholars are less certain on this point. Fewer were executed. Of those, the executions were limited to the most heinous (by early modern standards)

\textsuperscript{226} Atherton and Como, “Edward Wrightman,” 1234.

\textsuperscript{227} Atherton and Como, “Edward Wrightman,” 1233.
cases. Those convicted of heresy were often given numerous opportunities to recant. The same could be said of the Puritans hanged by Elizabeth. When compared to the Marian martyrs, it is difficult to make the case under then harshest definition of persecution – being burned for heresy – that Puritans were persecuted between 1547 and 1612.

If we simply look at the numbers, using the data associated with the most extreme cases of persecution recorded - those charged with heresy and then burned at the stake - the evidence is quite stark (See Figure 2).

Figure 2. Burnings for Heresy 1547-1612

If correct, these records show that the Marian persecutions accounted for almost 10 percent of the heresy executions in Latin Christendom between 1520 and 1562. In terms of
intensity Mary's campaign was almost un-paralleled. In few other cases were so many heretics legally executed in such a short span of time.\textsuperscript{228}

By comparison, James’ reign barely registers on the chart. So if a claim of persecution is not merited, what can we say about how the Puritans were treated under James I?

To find the answer to this question, we turn to the milder definition of persecution, that of “persistent annoyance, or injury or harassment.” That definition is taken up in the next chapter, which explores the tension between a politics of toleration and religious conformity under James I. It also examines the treatment of Puritans throughout England and more specifically in the York diocese, which included Scrooby and the surrounding areas from the accession of James I until the end of his reign (1603-1625).

\textsuperscript{228} Coffey, Persecution and Toleration, 81.
Chapter 3: Negotiated Conformity in Early Modern England

And to cast contempt the more upon the sincere servants of God, they opprobriously and most injuriously gave unto and imposed upon them, that name of Puritans, which it is said that the Novatians out of pride did assume and take unto themselves.  

*William Bradford*

By the time James became king of England in 1603, Puritanism was well rooted throughout England.  

While it is true that scholars of the late Elizabethan and early Stuart period once viewed Puritans as “dissidents pushing ever closer to conflict with established authorities,” this view has evolved significantly in the past decade. More recent scholarship posits that the vast majority of those who “can meaningfully be regarded as ‘Puritans’ were in fact integrated into the broader structure of power in the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods.” Puritans are no longer seen as radicals on the fringes of society as the quote above from Bradford would have us believe. Rather, extensive archival research and a broader understanding of Puritanism, places Puritans as mainstream participants in rural communities as well as larger towns. Indeed throughout England:


230 See the post 1980s scholarship on Puritans, the Reformation, and the Church particularly the work of Ian Atherton, David Como, Patrick Collinson, Christopher Haigh, Christopher Hill, Peter Lake, Muriel McClendon, Nicolas Tyacke, and Alexandra Walsham among others.

Puritan gentlemen and burghers often sat at the very pinnacle of local society, operating in tandem with an increasingly evangelical Protestant ministry to bring godly order and reformed orthodoxy to the countryside.\textsuperscript{232}

For our purposes, Puritanism is defined as a whole or partial rejection of the Church of England. This rejection could be total and sweeping or “at the simplest level, express a refusal to become implicated in the allegedly corrupt and corrupting elements in the settlement.”\textsuperscript{233} Puritanism became a movement centered around three main issues: pointing out the flaws in the Anglican church after the Elizabethan settlement; pressing for alternatives to existing church government that were mostly Presbyterian in nature; and opposing services and practices followed by the Elizabethan church that Puritans believed to be holdovers from the Catholic church.\textsuperscript{234}

The shift that has occurred in Puritan scholarship also led to changes in the scholarship focused on Puritan nonconformity. If Puritans were integrated into society, rather than occupying the margins, then what happens to the idea that persecution for nonconformity was widespread? When faced with this question, scholars began to


\textsuperscript{233} Peter Lake, Moderate Puritans and the Elizabethan Church, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 1.

acknowledge that arguments based entirely on evidence of nonconformity might limit the understanding of a broader religious environment that existed in early modern England. Indeed, a spate of parish studies published in the 1990s found that Protestants, Puritans, and Catholics alike struggled with their positions on church governance, prescribed ceremonies, and doctrine. How each community or parish dealt with these struggles often varied from diocese to diocese, town to town, and from parish to parish. As we will see, by the time James I ascended to the throne, opting out of certain prescribed ceremonies or occasionally ignoring ecclesiastical conventions – simply by choosing not to perform or observe them – had in many areas, become an acceptable practice.

These local practices took root under a complex mosaic of ecclesiastical and secular authorities that attempted to moderate the diverse array of beliefs that made up the English church shortly after Elizabeth assumed the throne. The Elizabethan settlement is widely viewed as the result of “negotiations between [Elizabeth] herself, her privy

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council, a small group of clergy, and the house of commons.”239 It was carried out by a surfeit of authority that included “bishops, deans, parish clergy, lay corporations, manorial lords, and wealthy individuals with varying degrees of influence and control.”240 Geographical differences also shaped local adherence to religious conformity after the settlement. At the beginning of Elizabeth’s reign, northern England was noted for its “sprawling parishes, burdened with high levels of impropriations, often staffed by poorly-educated curates . . . [and] a widespread attachment to Roman Catholicism.”241 The south was known for having “compact parishes, with fewer impropriations, better communication, and less entrenched resistance to Protestantism.”242 Differences between religious practices in the north and south continued well into the next century. Conformity and nonconformity were determined to some degree by the “influence of local dissenters, Catholic and Protestant, and the wider obligations of neighborliness,” which often diminished the ability of ecclesiastical authorities to enforce or sustain conformity.243

As a result, under both Elizabeth and James, ecclesiastical discipline was rarely consistent from one diocese to the next and at times even varied from one neighboring


243 Braddick, State Formation, 291.
parish to the next. The lack of ecclesiastical compliance was further complicated by a
dearth of trained Protestant clergy that continued into James’ reign, ensuring that
nonconformists “had little trouble securing employment elsewhere” even after having
been removed from other positions. Additionally, outspoken Puritan clerics often
enjoyed the backing of Puritan peers at the highest levels of the ecclesiastical system and
within the secular community.

For the remainder of this chapter, we set aside rigid notions of conformity and
nonconformity. In their place, we explore the theory that rather than actively taking on
the role of nonconformists, as previous scholarship suggests, many Protestants and
Catholics alike engaged in a practice of negotiated conformity in later years of
Elizabeth’s reign and in the first two decades of James’ rule. To further the
understanding of this theory, we explore how negotiated conformity was practiced in
three influential circles of early modern society – in James’ court, in the bishoprics, and
finally within local communities. For the purposes of this chapter, conformity is
discussed not as a standard set of practices everyone was required to accept and adhere
to, but as a set of prescribed practices that were open to interpretation and dependent on a

244 Fincham, “Clerical Conformity,” 128. See also Clair Cross, Patronage and Recruitment in the
Tudor and Early Stuart Church (York: Borthwick Publications, 1996).

245 Throughout this chapter the word practice is used to describe the intersection between action,
thought, and experience. Practices represent the understandings people have about their world
and the way they live in the world based on those understandings. Practices are the way we
consciously and subconsciously engage with the world. Negotiated conformity was a practice
that was both consciously and subconsciously engaged in. How individuals negotiated
conformity was determined by their experience with the church, their beliefs, and the actions they
chose to take or not to take on a daily basis. See Donald E. Polkinghorne, Practice and the
Logic of Practice (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1990), and Michael De Certeau, The Practice of
number of factors including location, communal interpretations, and ecclesiastical influence.

In Chapter Two, we explored the harshest form of persecution, being burned for heresy. As we have seen, few Puritans were burned at the stake for their beliefs. Those who were sent to the stake received the ultimate punishment not because their views threatened a young, fragile church, but because they were viewed as a direct threat to the monarchy and to society. In this chapter we take up the less harsh form of persecution – presentment for nonconformity, which may have resulted in excommunication or deprivation. We examine the many ways conformity was negotiated in early modern England. From this foundation, we take up the specific claims of ecclesiastical prosecution of the Scrooby Puritans that Bradford claims occurred in the next chapter.

Before we can fully vet the voracity of Bradford’s claim of persecution against the Scrooby Puritans or offer alternative reasons for their leaving England, it is necessary to fully understand the ecclesiastical environment in which they lived and worshiped and the extent to which persecution existed before their departure from England and in the decade following, before they left Holland for America.

**Negotiated Conformity at Court**

The accession of King James I of England began with the trip from Edinburgh, Scotland to London, England in the spring of 1603. Puritan ministers, hoping to open an early dialogue with the new king, wasted no time in making their case. They approached James while he was on route to London and presented him with the “Millenary Petition,” a document purportedly supported by a thousand Puritan ministers and signed by seven hundred and fifty of those, “Desiring Reformation of Certain Ceremonies and Abuses of
the Church.” The king, who had long viewed himself as a scholar of religion, graciously accepted the petition and promised to consider the Puritans’ concerns.

Those familiar with James’ interest in a united Christendom should not have been surprised at his eagerness to engage with his Puritans subject. Biographies of James suggest that he frequently debated with members of his court about the role of the church and government. His first book, *Daemonologie* (1597) explored the underworld and the existence of black magic, sorcery, and witchcraft in Scotland. His second book, *The True Laws of Free Monarchies*, (1598) set out, among other things, James’ theory on the divine right of kings. This philosophy is reiterated and expanded in this third book, the *Basilkon Doron* (1599) written as a gift for his son Henry, as a guide to ruling a Christian nation.

Having dedicated so much time to writing books about religion and politics, James naturally looked forward to meeting the Puritans on “equal terms.” He proposed a conference at Hampton Court to take place in the fall. Church leaders were less than

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246 The full title of the petition was “Humble of the Ministers of the Church of England Desiring Reformation of Certain Ceremonies and Abuses of the Church.”


248 Henry was James’ eldest son and at the time he wrote the *Basilkon Doron* he was the presumed heir to the throne of Scotland and later England. His death in 1612, at the age of 18 from fever, made James’ son Charles next in line for the throne. The *Basilkon Doron* was then passed to him.


250 The meeting was originally proposed for November, but did not take place until January because an outbreak of plague swept through London in the fall. One could argue that James’
enthusiastic about the proposed meeting. The very idea of a conference agitated them and they pleaded with James to renege on his promise.\textsuperscript{251} He refused, stating that the Puritans “were his subjects, and if he should refuse to hear them, they might justly give out against him that he was an unjust King.”\textsuperscript{252}

There are two views on the outcome of the Hampton Court Conference. Those who point to the conference as the turning point in the Puritans’ fortunes under James posit that the Hampton Court Conference was a “failure.” Some, such as Stephen Foster, cite the “restricted format” of the conference for limiting “the full Puritan case.”\textsuperscript{253} Although the Puritans and James reached numerous areas of accord, there was a significant point of disagreement at the Hampton Court Conference, which has been used to demonstrate conflict between James and the Puritan representatives at the conference.\textsuperscript{254}

The conflict arose when John Reynolds, the main speaker for the Puritans, used the term “presbytery.” Reynolds was no stranger to controversy. As the president of Corpus Christi College, Oxford and dean of the Lincoln diocese, he had a long and storied career as an outspoken Puritan. In 1592, Reynolds was publically “schooled” by Elizabeth

\footnotesize{willingness to reschedule the meeting showed his determination to give the Puritans an opportunity to present their views.}


\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{252} Alan Cromartie, “King James and the Hampton Court Conference,” in James VI and I: Ideas, Authority, and Government, ed. Ralph Houlbrooke, (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2006), 68.}


\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{254} Scholars who couch John Reynolds as merely the “Puritan representative” either overlook or downplay Reynolds’ long history of negotiated conformity, which continued after the Hampton Court Conference, despite his disagreement with the king during the conference.}
during a visit to Oxford “for his obstinate preciseness, [she then] willed him to follow her laws, and not run before them.”  

Believing Reynolds could be better managed as a member of the church leadership, rather than in opposition to it, Elizabeth offered him a bishopric in 1599. He graciously declined, choosing instead to remain at Oxford. Although pressured on numerous occasions to fully submit, first by Elizabeth and then by Whitgift and James I, Reynolds never did. Rather than submit, he engaged the king and Richard Bancroft, Whitgift’s predecessor in a letter writing campaign that began in 1604, through which he began an extended debate about the parameters of his proposed conformity. This strategy allowed him to draw out the call for his subscription until his death from consumption in 1607.

At the Hampton Court Conference, James briefly showed his displeasure with Reynolds’ reference to the presbytery, declaring that in his experience, “a Scottish presbytery as well agreeth with a monarchy as God and the Devil.” While this exchange is cited as the turning point against Puritans, James later rewarded Reynolds’ performance at the conference, not with excommunication or censure, but by choosing him to lead one of the groups charged with a new translation of the Bible.

Rather than being an outright failure, the conference resulted in agreements on private baptism, addressed complaints against excessive excommunication, and perhaps most importantly, obtained the King’s sanctioning of a new translation of the Bible.

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Once completed, the King James Bible reflected the *via media* established under Elizabeth. This was accomplished through the:

- heavy use of coordinating clauses, the imposition of a relatively weak impression of sequentiality, the placement of one thing after another, and leaving us to interpret for ourselves the degree to which things described are sequential or simultaneous . . . left the Authorized Version open to a range of meanings.  

The *via media* influence found in the rewriting of the King James Bible was necessary because Puritan and Catholic critics were ready to strike at any hint of partiality in either direction, making it crucial “that its rendering be capable of embracing differing, even apparently incompatible interpretations” arrived at by either side. Even in the revision of the Bible, under James’ direction, we see negotiations taking place to uphold the peace between Anglicans, Puritans, and Catholics.

Roger Lockyer, Mark Schwarz, Mark Curtis and others caution that labeling the entire conference a failure based on one exchange is simply too narrow a reading of the conference. It focuses almost exclusively on what was not accomplished, rather than adequately acknowledging what was. Indeed, with the exception of one or two points of contention, those present reported that the “first two days of the conference had produced

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a surprising degree of harmony.” In an exhaustive review of the written accounts of the conference itself and the policies that preceded it, Mark Curtis found that “the conference was characterized, as a whole, despite the opposition of the bishops, as an amicable meeting of the minds between James and the Puritans concerning a number of question relating to the discipline, liturgy and doctrine of the Church.” Although the bishops succeeded in sabotaging many of the reforms that came out of the Hampton Court meeting, “James was generally sympathetic to the Puritans and recognized them as a moderate and not radical party within the Church.” Bishops, hoping to use the Hampton Court Conference to push for conformity, did so only under the “benign eye of James I” and often with resistance from an uncommitted congregation.

While his official position was one of conformity, where prudent, James waffled when it came to pressing for full conformity and subscription. Officially James embraced the “Whitgiftian norm: full subscription was in general exacted, but ‘ceremonial conformity . . . ceased to be pressed.” However, soon after the conference he mediated on behalf of potential nonconformists, by urging the episcopate to “spare no pains through discussions ‘and all other ways of love and gentleness’ to win round refractory

260 Lockyer, James VI and I, 108.


264 Cromartie, “Hampton Court Conference,” 63.
To emphasize this point, Lord Cecil, the Earl of Salisbury and a member of James’ Council, wrote to Archbishop Bancroft at the king’s behest stating that “the King wishes that certain ministers, deprived for refusing subscription to some Christian ordinances, to be reasoned with, and to have a time of probation assigned.”

James also seems to have wavered on his view of subscription, much to the frustration of Bancroft. In a circular sent out by Bancroft in December of 1604, based on a letter from James, he instructed his bishops that the king had “laid down that conformity was now to take place over subscription.” Records show that James drafted a letter in 1605, which contemplated the enforced subscription to the three articles by “all graduated taking degrees at both universities” but the letter was never sent. Subscription was not formally imposed on the graduates until 1616 and even then, those wishing to avoid full subscription could find ways around it.

A more telling sign of James’ ambiguous position toward conformity was his willingness to “advance the careers of evangelical churchmen” – among them the Archbishop of York, Tobias Matthew, a Puritan sympathizer who fought for the nonconformists in his see, yet remained in his position for twenty-two years. Scrooby, which sits on the border of Yorkshire and Nottinghamshire, fell within Matthew’s jurisdiction. Under Matthew’s watch the “influence of Puritanism” expanded, unfettered


266 Great Britain, Robert Lemon, and Mary Anne Green. Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series, of the Reigns of Edward VI, Mary, Elizabeth and James I (London: Longman, Brown, Green, Longmans, & Roberts,1856), 86.

267 Cromartie, “Hampton Court Conference,” 68.

by ecclesiastical interference. As had been true of Archbishop of York, Matthew Hutton before him, Archbishop Matthew reportedly, “did little to disturb Puritan minded clergy and laity.”

Although James initially sanctioned Bancroft’s conformity push in 1604, before allowing Bancroft to move forward, James insisted on concessions for the clergy in certain areas, such as Lancashire, known for being more tolerant of nonconformity. When Bancroft continued to insist on full conformity, James held firm, suggesting that there was a distinction between the Puritan ideas and issues that were more scholarly and those that were more amenable to the public. He cautioned Bancroft that it would be “wrong to deliver in the Pulpit to the people, those things for ordinary Doctrine, which are the highest points of Schools.”

To fully understand James’ interest in achieving full conformity, we can look to the Calendar of State Papers for James I. A search of the official papers of state shows only two entries for nonconformity from 1603-1610, the first seven years of James’ reign. The first reference in September of 1603, five months after James’ accession to the throne and before the Hampton Court Conference, “details his proceedings since his accession in matters of religion.” Here, James reveals a rather harsh position towards Puritans and nonconformity. He states that it is his wish to “maintain the Church as he found it, in spite of the vain hopes of Papists.” He then makes reference to Puritans, stating that they

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270 Cromartie, “Hampton Court Conference,” 78.

271 CSPD James I, 40.
are “no less dangerous than the Papists, and therefore equal care can be taken for their suppression,” noting that the “Judges have decided that it is lawful for Bishops to deprive ministers for nonconformity.”

Perhaps the Hampton Court Conference changed James’ views on Puritans, because by 1605, the record indicates that nonconformity could be negotiated, if one was willing to submit, if only to avoid a steep fine. In May of that year, a royal warrant discharging Robert Travell and his heirs from payment of the first fruits of the parsonage of Weston, Northampton was ordered. The record indicates that he had been deprived for nonconformity, but having submitted, the payment was no longer required.

While these are the only two references to nonconformity found in the official state papers for the period of 1603-1610, the issue of religious conformity appears eight times in seven years. Of these eight references, three concern Bancroft’s push for subscription and conformity. The first reference appears in July of 1604, but it took the Privy Council six months to approve Bancroft’s subscription scheme. An entry in December gives Bancroft permission to proceed, but the very next entry exempts the “ministers of Lancashire who have long and usefully laboured among them.”

By way of contrast, wine licensing appears eight times in the state papers; hunting is referenced forty-seven times and references to Spain appear in the papers one hundred and forty times. Demands for conformity or subscription among his clergy or his people were clearly not a major priority of James or the members of his Privy Council, ranking it

272 CSPD James I, 40.
273 CSPD James I, 217.
274 CSPD James I, 217.
on par with wine licensing, but significantly less important topically than the hunt and well behind concerns about Spain.

Historians have long argued that persecution in the first two decades of James’ rule contributed to the decision by the Scrooby Puritans to leave England. Often these arguments center on portrayals of James I as a “tyrannical” king who loathed Puritans. For example, in *Historical Memoir of New Plymouth Colony* published in 1830, Frances Baylies argued that:

> When James I came to the throne of England . . . Puritans experienced all the terrors of persecution some were imprisoned and all were harassed by oppressive laws many were compelled to abandon their occupations and to confine themselves to their houses. Wearied at last with these continual persecutions Robinson's church determined to abandon their country and to seek some other in which they might enjoy their worship and their opinions unmolested.²⁷⁵

Two centuries later this view remains ingrained in the American Puritan historiography. In *American Colonies*, Alan Taylor sums up James’ view of the Puritans thusly, “James declared that Puritanism, ‘as well agreeth with a monarchy as God with the devil’ . . . If the Puritans did not conform to his authority and church, he threatened to ‘harry them out of the land.’”²⁷⁶

²⁷⁵ Francis Baylies, *An Historical Memoir of New Plymouth Colony from 1620 to 1641* (Boston: Hilliard, Gray, Little, and Wilkins, 1830), 10.

Conference out of frustration. Scholars have consistently portrayed the Hampton Court Conference as the beginning of James’ persecution of the Puritans. However, as we have seen, James’ actions during the proceedings and after the conference more accurately reflect those of a scholar king who dabbled in religious issues, preferred to negotiate issues of conformity rather than demand it and ultimately left the day-to-day operations of the church up to his bishops.

**Negotiated Conformity in the Bishopric**

By 1603, the Church of England had become a complex ecclesiastical organization based in Canterbury and York, “consisting of an uneasy partnership of court bishops, prominent politicians, civil lawyers, divines, university heads [all] working directly or indirectly” on behalf of the monarch.\(^{277}\) This assembly “rarely spoke with one voice on issues of clerical conformity,” though, by the beginning of James’ reign, disagreements between these factions had diminished.\(^{278}\) This was due in part to the growing Calvinist influence, which by the beginning of the seventeenth century, held sway over “a majority of the clergy from the Archbishop of Canterbury and most of the more educated laity.”\(^{279}\) By the time James took the throne, “Puritanism, in the Calvinist sense was no longer seen as a political threat” within the bishopric.\(^{280}\) Or, to put it another way, the first decades of

\(^{277}\) Fincham, “Clerical Conformity,” 126.

\(^{278}\) Fincham, “Clerical Conformity,” 126.

\(^{279}\) Tyacke, “Counter-Revolution,” 55.

\(^{280}\) Tyacke, “Counter-Revolution,” 55.
the seventeenth century, “did not witness any straightforward contest between the
'Anglican' hierarchy on the one hand the serried ranks of Puritanism on the other.”²⁸¹

Over time, Anglican and Puritan bishops came to the uneasy realization that
conformity in Protestant England could be negotiated, but could not be forced. On,
ocasion, a bishop would test that theory by attempting to exert pressure for full
conformity.²⁸² More often that not, he was met with resistance not only from the clergy
he pressed but also from his fellow bishops. In 1611, after becoming Archbishop of
Canterbury, colleagues roundly criticized then bishop George Abbot’s push for
conformity because of the “harsh punishments he handed down against clerical
miscreants in High Commission.”²⁸³ They showed their disapproval by directing the
courts under their control to “show compassion rather than severity.”²⁸⁴

This compassion can be seen in the presentment records of clergy who, over months
and in many cases even years, were cajoled into accepting a moderate or negotiated
conformity. Many presented were simply ignored, and allowed to continue in their
positions with no further actions taken. In the most extreme cases, a minister might be
deprived and then reinstated a few days or weeks later. The presentment records for Hull
(1559-1598) provide us with an example of how the practice worked at one parish in
northern England.

²⁸¹ Tyacke, “Counter-Revolution,” 56.

²⁸² John Coffey, Persecution and Toleration in Protestant England, 1558-1689 (London:
Longman, 2000), 112.


Hull is located in the Archbishop of York’s bishopric, along the eastern coast of England, a little under fifty miles northeast of Scrooby (see figure 3.1). In 1559, shortly after Elizabeth’s accession, Thomas Fugall, a holdover from the Marian vicars, was pronounced “contumacious” after willfully defying ecclesiastical authorities and failing to attend the Royal Visitation held in honor of Elizabeth’s accession. Although a pronouncement of contumacy should have resulted in his excommunication, records show that Fugall continued as a vicar in Hull for two more years.

However, by 1561 authorities had reached their limit. The litany of charges listed in Fugall’s presentment included: refusing to bury a Protestant parishioner until he was ordered to do so by the corporation, slashing an English Bible with a knife in front of numerous witnesses, immorality, a continuing attachment to popish ceremonies and use of Catholic service books, and refusing to use the new Protestant Prayer Book.

The Hull Corporation hired Fugall’s replacement with assistance from the bishop. The new vicar, Melchior Smith, was a known Puritan from Boston, sixty miles to the south of Hull. Within a few years of being appointed, Smith too, found himself before the High Commission, accused of neglecting his duties as a minister by not administering the sacraments to his parishioners, of not receiving the communion himself, of walking and talking in the church during service time and not removing his hat in church or wearing proper clerical dress. [It was also] alleged that Smith

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was living with a woman, as man and wife, but had never married her and treated her cruelly . . . and that that he never prayed for the queen in his sermons, but called for equality for all and railed against the bishops, likening them to damn dogs and thieves.\textsuperscript{287}

Smith appeared before the ecclesiastical courts on numerous occasions over the next thirty years. His presentment charges ranged from failing to wear the vestments to causing strife among the people of Hull. Yet records show that even after repeatedly appearing before the High Commission, he remained the vicar until his death around 1591.\textsuperscript{288} Smith was in turn replaced by a Cambridge-trained lecturer. He too was “summoned before the High Commission for non-conformity” and like Smith he remained in his position “until his untimely death in 1598.”\textsuperscript{289}

To prove the case for persecution, scholars have often tallied the number of presentments, rather than examining the resulting actions. When the history of individual clerical presentment is traced, we find the presentment books replete with examples of negotiated conformity throughout England.

\textsuperscript{287} See Borthwick Institute High Commission Cause Papers, 1563/4.


\textsuperscript{289} Lockyer, \textit{Tudor and Stuart Britain}, 165. For another well documented case of outspoken Puritan resistance and negotiated conformity in this period, see Bettie Anne Doebler and Retha Warnicke, “Samuel Hieron’s ‘Worlding:’ A Funeral Sermon, 1618 and the Controversy over Eulogies,” \textit{Omega: Journal of Death and Dying}, 17 (1995), 309-325.
The clerical history of Anthony Lapthorne, an unswerving nonconformist, provides clear evidence of the willingness of some parishes to overlook a record of nonconformity. Lapthorne served in no less than eight dioceses between 1605 and 1623, including “Devon, Gloucester, Chichester, Coventry, Litchfield, Hereford, London, and Durham.” After being excommunicated in one diocese, he soon found a position in another.

The clerical history of Thomas Sutton provides us with an example of negotiated conformity in Chichester. Sutton was presented for nonconformity numerous times between 1601 and 1609. At his presentment in 1608 he boldly admitted that he “preached without a license, omitted parts of the liturgy, only occasionally used the cross in baptism and did not wear the surplice when administering the sacrament.” The charges were dismissed after Sutton “promised to perform all the rites and services in accordance with the Book of Common Prayer.” Sutton did not uphold his promise, because a year later he was back in front of the bishop. He was dismissed with a warning. Despite his serial nonconformity, no action against Sutton was taken. He was presented again two years later on the same charges. It is clear from an examination of

291 Kenneth Fincham, “Ramifications of the Hampton Court Conference,” Journal of Ecclesiastical History, 36 (April, 1985), 225. In this article, Fincham provides case after case of Puritan clerics, too numerous to list here, who were presented and only to have their charges dismissed often merely a warning. He also cites numerous dioceses that, after the Bancroft’s campaign for subscription and conformity, “did not remove a single minister from his living.”
Sutton’s entire clerical history that his “diocesan authorities thought the better of direct confrontation and concentrated instead on pacifying Puritans’ opinions.”

Scholars frequently cite examples such as these as evidence of a program of systematic persecution used against Puritans. Another example often used to bolster claims of persecution of the Scrooby Puritans in this period, is the push for full conformity by Richard Bancroft shortly after he was appointed Archbishop of Canterbury in 1604. Told one way, “eighty to ninety clerics lost their benefices to the most systematic purge of the clergy before 1662.” However, Marc Schwarz offers an alternative reading of this same data based on a view of negotiated conformity. Schwarz posits that the “results of [Bancroft’s] effort was not severe by any standard . . . many who did not either subscribe or conform were allowed to remain” in their positions. Of those who lost their positions, an examination of the records shows that “the bishops

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293 Fincham, “Hampton Court Conference,” 226.


295 Foster, The Long Argument, 99. Emphasis mine. As quoted from the research of Stuart B. Babbage, Puritanism and Richard Bancroft (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan, 1962), vii. In a footnote to his article on the aftermath of the Hampton Court Conference, Kenneth Fincham questions at least three of the ministers included in Babbage’s count. His research shows that at least three were deprived for reasons other than nonconformity including: drunkenness, non-residency and simony. For others included on the list, there is “no clear evidence” of the charges presented against them. Footnote 81, page 226.

296 Schwarz, “James I and Historians,” 121.
appear to have made genuine attempts to reason the recalcitrant ninety into making some
gesture which would prevent their deprivation.**297

Not reflected in a cursory reading of the deprivations is that some of those who lost
their positions in one church soon found another church willing to overlook their
nonconformist views. For example, when Richard Stainforth was forced to resign his
benefice for nonconformity during Bancroft’s purge, he was “instituted to a living in
Derbyshire by Bishop Overton of Coventry and Litchfield, even though his
nonconformity continued.”**298 Bancroft’s attempt to press for full conformity proved that
while many of the nonconforming Puritans and recusants living in England during
James’s reign might submit to partial conformity, many refused to fully conform.299

Bancroft also had to contend with bishops appointed by James, who were less than
enthusiastic supporters of his campaign for full conformity. Richard Vaughan, who
served under Bancroft as Bishop of London from 1604 to 1607, was “well known for his
tolerance of Puritan deviation.”**300 The Bishop of Winchester, James Montagu, was also a
stanch supporter of Puritan theology. Trained at Cambridge, he later served as “the first
master of Cambridge’s newest Sidney Sussex College, where he refused to enforce

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297 Schwarz, “James I and Historians,” 121. See also Kenneth Fincham in Prelate as Pastor: The
that earlier estimates of deprivations under Bancroft need to be revised downward and that James
was a strong supporter of negotiated conformity over forced subscription and Fincham,
“Hampton Court Conference,” 208-227.


conformity.” Montagu went on to become the editor of King James’ collected works, a Privy Councilor, and “swiftly became James’ most trusted clerical confidante.” Montagu viewed the first few decades of James’ reign as a period that had “on the whole been one of ‘harmony’ with the Puritans.” The same was true in the north under Tobias Matthew who was appointed the Archbishop of York by James in 1606, a year or so before the Scrooby Puritans decided to leave England for Holland.

Given that Archbishop Matthew’s bishopric included Scrooby and the surrounding parishes, a bit more time will be devoted to his career. Matthew was a recognized Puritan sympathizer and supporter. Although there was evidence of “many potential offenders in his bishopric, citations for nonconformity were rare.” Thomas Toller’s consistent presentment represents one of the rare cases of nonconformity Matthew reluctantly pursued. Soon after Toller was installed as the Vicar of Sheffield in 1595, he was presented for nonconformity. Toller was a regular on the presentment rolls from 1594-1597. Opponents of Toller’s outspoken Puritanism, hoping for support from the new


302 McCullough, *Sermons at Court*, 108.


Archbishop, brought presentment proceedings against him to the High Commission court in York in 1607, shortly after Matthew was installed.\textsuperscript{306}

Toller’s nonconformity exceeded even the bounds of Matthew’s tolerance and he was ordered to conform. Although threatened with deprivation, as he had been many times before, Toller refused yet again to submit. The case continued to pop up in the presentment records for two and a half years, during which time Matthew and Toller’s bishop renewed their appeals for at least partial conformity. The case was eventually dropped. Toller does not appear on the presentment records again until 1615 for refusing to wear the surplice. That case was also deferred. Toller’s nonconformity survived six Archbishops of York and three monarchs. Toller’s case shows that under Archbishop Matthew’s watch, “the gradual extension of Puritanism was possible because of [his] policy of toleration.”\textsuperscript{307}

Even Archbishop Bancroft, at times, showed sympathy toward nonconformists. Although he fought diligently for full subscription and conformity within the Church and attacked nonconformity publicly, privately he “displayed exemplary patience with nonconformists,” providing many under his control with extensions, allowances, and reinstatement after deprivation.\textsuperscript{308} While advocating for universal subscription across

\textsuperscript{306} Toller was no stranger to presentment. His first presentment occurred in Nottingham in 1590, after which his name appears on the presentment rolls at least 25 times. He continued to appear on the rolls until he retired in 1635. His presentment history is provided in full detail in Marchant, \textit{Puritans and Church Courts}, 285-288.

\textsuperscript{307} Marchant, Puritans and Church Courts, 38.

\textsuperscript{308} Cromartie, “Hampton Court Conference,” 68 and Fincham, “Clerical Conformity,” 144.
England, Bancroft was far more lenient closer to home. In his own diocese, only three incumbents were evicted over a three-year period.309

How is it then, that when viewing the Bancroft deprivation reports, some saw a “systematic purge” by Bancroft which they equate to persecution, while in the same records, others argue we find examples of negotiated nonconformity? One possible explanation is that American historians may have relied on the foundation of persecution built into the historiography of the founding myth. As we have seen and will continue to explore more thoroughly later in this chapter and throughout the next chapter, while that historiography has long been accepted, it rests on scant evidentiary support for its claims of persecution.

Another possible explanation for the different conclusions reached by those analyzing presentment data may lie in their understanding of how ecclesiastical terms were employed in the seventeenth century. For example, a British historian schooled in the workings of seventeenth century ecclesiastical courts may view the terms “excommunication” and “deprivation” through a prism of toleration and compromise. Those less familiar with the workings of the court might read these terms more literally. Why? Perhaps the familiarity of those scholars immersed in the workings of the courts allows them to move beyond individual presentments and view the court records for this period in their totality. In doing so, they provide a deeper understanding of the role negotiation and compromise played in the religious settlement still underway during the Jacobean period.

309 Fincham, “Clerical Conformity,” 144.
Inherent in a literal reading of these terms is the assumption that people in the early modern period lacked agency. However, while some chose to be passive acceptors of religious change during this period, others made a conscious and on rare occasions, a life threatening choice, to stand up to authority. Chapter Two provided numerous examples of agency displayed by the Marian martyrs who refused to accept Catholicism. As we have seen, while those burned for heresy had a narrow range of possible action “as long as they retained the lucidity of consciousness, they could still exercise their freedom” by choosing not to recant and accept death. Agency can also be seen in the actions of Catholics who privately refused to renounce the Catholic Church under Elizabeth and James yet, at the same time chose to attend the Church of England to avoid arrest. Rarely were Catholics who did not pose a direct threat to the crown arrested. Rather, through negotiated conformity, they were allowed to practice their religion while outwardly conforming to the laws.

Paul Seaver’s work on Puritan lectureships shows that rather than finding widespread excommunication or deprivation “after 1584, some measure of compromise, some degree of conformity, became inevitable.” He found that between 1604 and 1606 “only six [lecturers] came before the church courts, and of these six only one was permanently suspended from preaching.” His examination from 1607 to 1609 found “the pattern was much the same.” Rather than showing systematic persecution, this pattern gives the “impression of comparative calm” for outspoken Puritan clergy during the early years of

310 Polkinghorne, Practice, 50.
311 Seaver, Puritan Lectureships, 191.
312 Nicolas Tyacke, Reformation to Revolution, 59.
James’ reign. This period of calm continued into the second decade of James’ reign, which was “a time when controversy was at a minimum . . . and puritanically inclined ministers might have found little cause for militancy.”\textsuperscript{313}

Indeed, we find many instances of Puritan ministers who negotiated their conformity. For example, the campaign for conformity and subscription that took place in the Bath and Wells dioceses the summer of 1604, “did not end in the removal of a single minister from his living” even though the bishop, John Stills, had been pressing for subscription since 1594.\textsuperscript{314} Although the bishop of the two diocese continued to examine the “zealous” ministers in his diocese “month by month during 1605 and 1606” he was finally forced to conclude that the “scruples of both sides seem to have been satisfied without resorting to deprivation.”\textsuperscript{315}

While nonconforming Protestants clergy found agency by negotiating their conformity during James’ reign, the power to negotiate was often limited by the religious geography in which they operated.\textsuperscript{316} When employed in a community with a history of nurturing or at the very least ignoring nonconformity, the terms excommunication and deprivation might be viewed as first, second, or third warnings, or as the carrot rather than the final stick used to encourage conformity. Even when faced with

\textsuperscript{313} Seaver, Puritan Lectureships, 229.

\textsuperscript{314} Fincham, “Hampton Court Conference,” 211.

\textsuperscript{315} Fincham, “Hampton Court Conference,” 212.

excommunication in a strictly conforming community, nonconforming clergy could generally be assured they would find positions elsewhere in a less conforming diocese or parish, often with the help of a bishop or wealthy patron.

A third explanation for the differences in the way scholars perceived archival evidence concerning excommunication and deprivation is that writing about toleration was simply not fashionable in early modern scholarly circles. Ole Peter Grell and Bob Scribner argue that “if you simply focus on the academic writings in the early modern period, there is little evidence of tolerance.” However, the lack of attention to tolerance may stem from a reliance on the writings of the period itself. In 1589, a leading post-reformation scholar at Leiden University wrote that toleration of religious plurality would “lead to civil strife and encourage religious fanatics who would, in turn, destabilize society.” Those who championed intolerance and persecution believed that religious dissenters should be “shown no clemency, but burned, since it was better to sacrifice one member rather than risk the collapse of the whole commonwealth.”

Although the harshest versions of these views were often dismissed, less offensive arguments for intolerance in the name of protecting the commonwealth or the crown dominated seventeenth century scholarship. Dutch exile Hugo Grotius wrote, prior to

317 Toleration in this context is defined as “the patient forbearance towards that which is not approved,” Roger Scruton, *A Dictionary of Political Thought* (New York: Harper & Row, 1982), 464; see also Coffey, *Persecution and Toleration*, 10.


fleeing Holland, that for the sake of the state and overall unity, religious tolerance should be limited. He maintained this position even after becoming an exile himself. For Grotius, a national church should be “inclusive, yet based on a minimum of doctrine.”

However, Grotius argued that the monarchy should show little tolerance for those who could not fit into this model.

Even though calls for tolerance appear to be missing from the books, lectures, and pamphlets of the period, that does not mean a practice of negotiated conformity, based in toleration, did not exist. Toleration existed not in the writings of scholars or clerics, but in everyday practices. We see it in the negotiation of conformity at court and within the bishoprics. Negotiated conformity also existed at the local level. To find it there, we have to move beyond claims of persecution that rest on scant individual evidence and look at the interplay of conformity, nonconformity, toleration, and persecution across the local religious landscape in the first two decades of the seventeenth century.

**Negotiated Conformity Locally**

The borders between the English north and south were not hard borders defined by walls or gates, guarding one from the other. Scholars who study the north/south divide in England are themselves divided on its true nature, arguing either that:

- It captures a real and substantive boundary in the geographies of wealth, wellbeing, and welfare across England and across Britain as a whole, [or]

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that the divide is a grossly simplified and generalized representation of reality, little more than a misleading caricature.\footnote{322}

The same can be said of the borders scholars long argued exist locally between conformity and nonconformity. However, as Lake, Marsh, and others now maintain, this border is eroding. Where scholars once saw only rigid nonconformity, they now view the line dividing one set of [religious] attitudes or actions from another as an arbitrary one, for the borders between ‘inside’ and ‘alongside’, or ‘compulsory’ and ‘voluntary’, are not marked by clear fences. People could pass freely across them without realizing that they were entering another zone.\footnote{323}

What allowed people to pass freely from one zone to the other was the level of toleration practiced in many communities during this period.\footnote{324} Once we incorporate toleration into the possibilities for religious action, religion can be seen “in terms of a broad spectrum containing many shades of belief [rather] than of black and white alternatives situated in sharp opposition.”\footnote{325}


\footnote{325}{Walsham, \textit{Church Papists}, xvi.}
“neither tolerance nor intolerance can properly be presented as the ‘norm’, since both were continually present” and constantly under negotiation.326

Rather than focusing on presentment rolls as evidence of only persecution, scholars eventually began to see in presentments evidence of wiggle room, accommodations, and negotiation of conformity designed to preserve the local peace. Chris Marsh’s study of popular religion posits that “common compliance” in the Elizabethan era reflects that religious practices were more than “merely a shallow, follow-my-leader attitude.” Without using the term “negotiated conformity,” Marsh argues that religious compliance was reached because of the “degree of flexibility and accommodation, which itself owed a great deal to a powerful instinct for the preservation of harmony within the locality.”327

When we look exclusively at presentment records as evidence that early modern England was a persecuting society, rather than a society that practiced toleration, we overlook the vast majority of those living through the religious upheaval of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries who could not easily be classified as martyrs, recusants, Anabaptists, Separatists, and Puritans. When we neglect those who never appeared on the rolls in favor of the minority who were, we have allowed our “perspective on sixteenth-century religious change to become distorted.” This distortion has led us to essentially ignore the majority of “reformist clergy and laity who were prepared, in

326 Marsh, Popular Religion, 96.
327 Marsh, Popular Religion, 213.
practice, to allow compromises with the wider population” in favor of the few who were not.\textsuperscript{328}

These broader findings have only begun to be explored. Recent studies focusing on a wider view of the late Elizabethan and early Jacobean religious society, rather than merely on its dissenters, find “a synthesis of positions, opinions and modes of affect, constructed by a variety of contemporary groups [who were] always in polemical struggle the one with the other.”\textsuperscript{329} These “styles of divinity or piety” were all at their core Christian. However, what made them different from one another was the “relative stress or value” each group placed on each part of the Christian experience.\textsuperscript{330} For many of those who lived through the myriad religious shifts that occurred from Edward to James, the Christian experience was not static. Rather, it was continuously “open for contest, negotiation, and renegotiation.”\textsuperscript{331}

Indeed, rather than being limited to “either meek submission or violent resistance” during this period, people had “far more choices available and their choices formed an extended dialogue” with those in power. These choices evolved into

the rhetorical strategies employed in appeals to the royal courts, the political strategies used in local power struggles, and the economic

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item \textsuperscript{329} Lake, Conformity and Orthodoxy, xix.
\item \textsuperscript{330} Lake, Conformity and Orthodoxy, xix.
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\end{footnotesize}
strategies that allowed for the acquisition of ecclesiastical wealth and at
the local level, the coping strategies for making sense of the frightening
implications of national schism.  

Many scholars agree that these “strategies all contributed to a process of negotiation
through which new ideas and practices took root in England.”

Everyone, from James
to the bishops to the local clerics and the laypeople they served, “played an important role
in choosing what sort of Reformation they experienced and constructing meanings of that
Reformation in their communities.”

These new understandings of religious life in early modern England reveal an acceptance of religious innovation not as major change
“forced on the population by an all-powerful government” but rather as a practice that
was negotiated locally and in concert with those who may have believed differently.

The necessity for negotiation emerged at the beginning of Elizabeth’s reign, which
saw a “deeply conservative Protestant rul[ing] over a basically Catholic people.”
Unlike her sister Mary, rather than forcing immediate and complete acceptance of
“something innovative and alien,” Elizabeth settled for a “negotiated modification of

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popular piety.”\textsuperscript{337} Elizabeth and her advisors understood that to endure, their settlement had to move beyond “an unequal contest between a rigorist and doomed puritan or perfect protestant evangelism on the one hand and a statically conservative and ‘Catholic’ people on the other.”\textsuperscript{338} By the time the Elizabethan settlement reached the people, they understood religious policies and practices could and would change with the accession of a new monarch. To survive monarchical religious pendulum swings, people learned to negotiate their understanding of these changes locally.

Rather than the deep division we previously thought existed between Protestants and Catholics, when we look at specific communities, it is possible to find examples of Catholic recusants and their Protestant neighbors banding together against ecclesiastical authority. For example, in Childwall, Lancashire, Protestants, and Catholics joined together to fight the “heavy-handed implementation of recusancy fines imposed in the 1590s.”\textsuperscript{339} A round of visitations revealed a “sizeable” Catholic presence in the area, leading to the first recusant presentments in decades. However, when authorities attempted to arrest recusant Ralph Hitchmough for the non-payment of a fine for recusancy while he attended the funeral of another recusant, his Protestant neighbors came to his aid. Ultimately, with the help of Protestant supporters, “Hitchmough’s

\textsuperscript{337} Marsh, “Piety and Persuasion,” 141.

\textsuperscript{338} Lake and Questier, \textit{The Anti-Christ’s Lewd Hat}, 279. See also Bernard, “Church of England,” 188.

\textsuperscript{339} Braddick, \textit{State Formation}, 305.
charges were excused.” Protestant and Catholic supporters of Hitchmough then took out their frustrations on his persecutor, William Brettergh, by “maiming his cattle.”

Brettegh’s problems did not end there. He pressed changes against those he thought responsible for his cattle only to suffer “further reprisals along with another actively anti-Catholic officeholder.” Braddick argues that this example “represents as much an expression of neighborly resistance to strict and divisive administration as it does Catholic resistance to persecution.”

What would lead Protestants to come to the aid of Catholics? Alexandra Walsham’s work offers insight. She argues that many Catholics “gradually absorbed Protestant precepts and slid imperceptibly from negative to positive adherence to the official religion.” While still identifying themselves as Catholic, the gradual acceptance of certain practices offers an example of “creative negotiation and compromise, which is becoming a hallmark of new assessments of the reaction of the majority of the English populace to the Reformation.

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341 Braddick, *State Formation*, 305.

342 Braddick, *State Formation*, 305.

343 Braddick, *State Formation*, 305.


345 Walsham, *Church Papists*, xvi.
Scholars of the late Elizabethan and early Jacobean period have also drawn hard lines between Brownists and society.\textsuperscript{346} However, Muriel McClendon’s research has cast doubt that that all those identified as Brownist were treated as societal outliers. Her research shows that the “Brownist” church in Norwich, founded by Robert Browne, “outlasted Browne’s hasty departure to the continent” and was still “in existence in Norwich after the death of Elizabeth.”\textsuperscript{347} McClendon argues that if the Brownists in Norwich suffered persecution, it was not locally at the hands of the Norwich city governors. Rather, throughout the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century, “diversity of religious opinion was implicitly tolerated by magistrates.”\textsuperscript{348} By looking at those who were \textit{not} charged with religious violations, rather than those who were, McClendon found that:

Norwich magistrates in the sixteenth century accepted that communal harmony was more important than religious uniformity and that religious unity need not be the most important criterion for the successful conduct of civic life, a principle that continued to inform city politics into the seventeenth century.”\textsuperscript{349}

\textsuperscript{346} Brownist was the term originally given to the followers of Robert Browne who established a Separatist church in Norwich. Although he was arrested, he was later released and allowed to migrate to the Netherlands. Brownist later became a term associated with Separatists. British and American historians often refer to the Scrooby Puritans as “Brownists.”


\textsuperscript{348} McClendon, “Religious toleration,” 107.

\textsuperscript{349} McClendon, “Religious toleration,”108.
Her examination of the records for Norwich, do not indicate a less “godly” population lived there. Indeed, she contends, “there is nothing to suggest that religious feelings among city magistrates was not as deep as it was elsewhere in England or that religious differences among them were trivial.”

McClendon and others have argued that although religious toleration does not appear in the scholarly or political writings of the sixteenth century, “that does not mean that toleration was absent from English society.” McClendon found toleration by looking beyond the presentment pages and focusing on the actions of the Norwich magistrates. If she had relied solely on ecclesiastical presentments, she would have found an “acceptable public version of the relationship between domination and subordination [that is] largely the work of the politically dominant elites.” However, by looking beyond presentments to the records of the Norwich magistrates, McClendon found that the community was willing to “permit a measure of diversity” in order to maintain “civic autonomy and authority.”

McClendon also delineates between official policies of toleration by the Church or the town and de facto toleration. For McClendon, toleration was often simply a practical


353 McClendon, “Religious Toleration,” 88
stance. In some instances, it was simply “better to overlook religious differences among
[one’s] neighbors than to risk the dislocation of the community that would result from
unbridled religious conflict.” The social order in Norwich “was experienced and
created through everyday interactions” that required a level of religion toleration. The
magistrates and the community they oversaw resisted outside pressure to enforce
conformity. By doing so, they demonstrated that “people had an innate capacity to rise
above the pressure of culture and become agents of their own actions” in early modern
England.

These findings coupled with those present in the next chapter, redefine the
“possibilities for different measures of religious tolerance and coexistence in the
sixteenth century point to the need to reevaluate received notions about the Reformation
era simply as ‘the age of a persecuting society.’” Scribner has argued that persecution
was often a matter of short-term conjunctures or expedience, rather than a permanent
feature of European social, political, and religious life.” Rather than finding ongoing and
systematic persecution running through the church courts, we find that throughout much
of the sixteenth and into the early seventeenth century, England was punctuated by
moments of prosecutorial activity.

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354 McClendon, “Religious Toleration, 88; Grell and Scribner, Tolerance and Intolerance, 10.
355 Braddick, Negotiating Power, 38.
356 Polkinghorne, Practice, 50.
357 Muriel McClendon, Protestant Identities: Religion, Society, and Self-Fashioning in post-
358 McClendon, Protestant Identities, 196.
Why then did it take scholars so long make the shift from persecution to toleration? Perhaps, scholars feared that “if the evidence of prosecution in the church courts could not be used as a measure of nonconformity, the problem of historical detection [would] become insurmountable.” Yet, we can overcome this seemingly “insurmountable” hurdle by taking the focus away from nonconformity and placing it on the inherent “diversity of religious styles and attitudes and on the influence of religious difference and nonconformity on social cohesion” at the local level.

When we shift away from looking exclusively for nonconformity, what we begin to find is that for those living within tight knit parishes, social cohesion may have been more important than religious conformity. At the local level civil and religious issues had to be balanced. In uncertain religious times, during which fringe Protestants, Puritans, conforming Protestants, reformed and recusant Catholics all lived within the same parish boundaries, social and economic life had to be balanced with religious life. For several generations after the Reformation occurred, communities continued to experience “local reformations [that] went on apace, and . . . touched the lives of most Englishmen, constituting for many, the only true reformation.”

As we saw in the previous chapter, the intensity of the Marian persecutions relied on local support. The willingness of local participants to accuse or prosecute neighbors and in some cases even family members, created pockets of persecution throughout England,


360 Beaver, Parish Communities, 144.

361 Seaver, Puritan Lectureships, 292.
while other areas escaped the Marian persecutions virtually unscathed. In the
Elizabethan and Jacobean era, Protestant and Catholic persecution represented occasional
ruptures focusing on a specific diocese, often driven by a bishop’s agenda, rather than a
systematic purging of nonconformists throughout the nation. Systematic purges could
not be sustained without local commitment to persecution. When extensive persecution
did occur – as in the case of the Marian persecutions or during the Spanish Inquisition –
local “tribunes played an essential part.”362 For systematic persecution to succeed, it
required local participants willing to apply “social pressure,” willing to organize against
the accused, and willing to accept the “supplied mythology” that supported their
actions.363 By the late Elizabethan period, “sporadic persecution gave way to a limited
toleration of forms of dissent which were not thought to be corrosive of social and
political disorder.”364 This attention to “local sensitivities” influenced the way religious
difference was negotiated at the community level. Rather than simply following the
policies set out at the monarchical or ecclesiastic level, “religious identity, orthodoxy, and
conformity were all subject to contemporary contest and negotiation.”365

When we move beyond the presentment records and focus on the larger populace,
what we find is that “one of the well-remarked features of the Elizabethan and early


363 Trever-Roper, Crisis, 105.

364 Braddick, State Formation, 292.

365 Peter Lake, Conformity and Orthodoxy in the English Church, c. 1550 – c. 1660 (Woodbridge, UK: Boydell Press, 2000), xviii.
Stuart church was the scope for lay initiative."\textsuperscript{366} When we look at the range of beliefs and practices that were tolerated after the Elizabethan settlement, we find that lay acceptance for diversity coupled with the hesitancy of bishops to enforce full conformity, made it “difficult to achieve and uniformity a very distant prospect indeed.”\textsuperscript{367} The role that lay initiative played in the religious reform in England “remains among the least explored and most significant elements in the process of the Reformation.”\textsuperscript{368} We will examine the role local influence and toleration played in Scrooby in the next chapter.

Prior to 1980, the scholarly view of religious attitudes about late Elizabethan and early Jacobean England was based on the accepted notion of the period as a persecuting society.\textsuperscript{369} What does it take to be a persecuting society? R. I. Moore, Peter Grell, and Robert Scribner argue that persecuting societies develop in three stages: \textit{classification}, \textit{stigmatization}, and \textit{persecution}. While we have seen evidence of classification in early modern England, with the labeling of some Protestants as Puritans, Brownists, and Anabaptists, we have not seen evidence of widespread \textit{stigmatization} of Puritans in this period.

Quite the opposite is true. Puritans were integrated into society at every level, including James’ court. Puritan and Puritan supporters occupied key positions in the bishoprics. And there is no evidence of widespread Puritan persecution in lay society.

\textsuperscript{366} Braddick, \textit{State Formation}, 291.

\textsuperscript{367} Braddick, \textit{State Formation}, 302.

\textsuperscript{368} Beaver, Parish Communities, 143.

There is very little evidence that any of these groups, with the exception of the Anabaptists, experienced the final stage of persecution, which is marked by the “pursuit, denunciation, and interrogation, exclusion from the community, deprivation of civil rights, and the loss of property, liberty, and on occasion, life itself.”

What then does this evidence say about Bradford’s claims of persecution in *Of Plimoth Plantation*? In the next chapter, those claims are examined in detail. While this chapter has placed the notion of Puritan persecution into its early modern context, the next chapter looks specifically for evidence of persecution aimed directly at the Scrooby Puritans.

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370 Moore, Persecuting Society, 93.
Chapter 4: The Scrooby Puritans

“They ordinarily met at [William Brewster’s] house on the Lord’s day, (which was a manor of the bishops) and with great love he entertained them when they came, making provisions for them to his great charge.”

William Bradford

The earliest known reference to Scrooby, Nottinghamshire is a brief entry in the 1066 Domesday Book that describes Scrooby as a manor owned by the Archbishop of York. Supported by only fourteen villagers and six smallholders, the Domesday Book indicated that the total population in 1066 as “quite small” and the tax-assessed value of 0.6 gelds units was considered “very small.” The overall value of the property in 1066,

371 Bradford and Deane, Of Plymouth Plantation, 411.

372 The Domesday Book was compiled for William the Conqueror to provide a survey of all the lands and stock holdings of England so that a tax value (geld) could be affixed to each parcel of land and the king would know the value of his holdings. The name of the book was a reference to Judgment Day because “its decisions, like those of the Judgment are unalterable.” For more on the Domesday Book, see David Roffe, Decoding Domesday (Rochester, NY: Boydell & Brewer, 2007).

373 The geld was a land tax based on the unit of assessments known as hides which was used to determine the number of armed men it would take to defend the land per 100 hides or hundreds. The public holdings of Scrooby at the time of the Domesday assessment were quite meager and not worth defending. For more on this system of assessment see W. L. Warren, The Governance of Norman and Angevin England, 1086-1272 (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1987).
which included 7 acres of meadow, 0.5 leagues of woodlands, and 8 by 8.5 furloughs of mixed measure, was assessed to be £8.374

For the next six centuries Scrooby Manor, St. Wilfred the attached church, and its accompanying lands passed from archbishop to archbishop. As the archbishops came and went, improvements were made to the manor. By the beginning of the sixteenth century, Scrooby had transitioned from a manor to a “palace” and was recognized by both archbishops and monarchs as a place of comfort, sport, and refuge along the Great Road between London and Edinburgh.

In 1501, Archbishop Thomas Savage chose Scrooby over a myriad of other ecclesiastical properties available to him, “for the sake of hunting to which he was most immoderately addicted.”375 Manorial records show that Savage “laid out much on his palace” at Scrooby.376 His love of hunting ensured that his improvements were not confined to the interior of the palace. He took full advantage of the right of the demesne bestowed upon him by the king to seize surrounding land. On one occasion, he seized “eighty acres of pasture land” to create a park for the “rearing of wild animals.”377 Savage’s successor, Cardinal Thomas Wolsey, sought a different kind of refuge at Scrooby. Wolsey retreated to Scrooby after his fall from grace in 1529 even though the


376 Francis Drake, Eboracum: Or the History and Antiquities of the City of York, from Its Original to the Present Times (London: Printed by William Bowyer for the author, 1736), 448.

377 Thoroton Society, Transactions of the Thoroton Society of Nottinghamshire (Nottingham: Thoroton Society, 1897), 5.
palace there was not nearly as lavish as his palace at Hampton Court. However, the position of Scrooby, situated as it was in the North, allowed Wolsey to distance himself from his detractors for a short time. A report prepared in 1535 for Thomas Cromwell after Wolsey’s ouster detailed the richness that surrounded him at Scrooby Manor, which was recorded to have “a large dining chamber ceiled and dressed with wainscot . . . thirty-nine chambers and apartments . . . including all the furnishing for such” and a well-appointed kitchen. The value of the rents for lands associated with Scrooby Manor in 1535 totaled £167.

In 1538, Scrooby was under the control of Archbishop Edward Lee. The image of the manor during this period was captured in John Leland’s Itinerary, which provided a rare and detailed geographical account of Yorkshire penned in celebration of Henry VIII’s birthday. Leland describes Scrooby as “a great Manor, standing within a mote” containing two courts. The outer court Leland tells us, was constructed of timber, “save the front of the Hall, that is of Brick” and was reached by an “ascenditūr per gradus lapidoes” which translates to by ascending a stone staircase.

Under the protection of each successive Archbishop of York, Scrooby Manor weathered the ecclesiastical storms of the sixteenth century as the crown passed from

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380 Leland and Hearne, Itinerary of John Leland, 35.

381 Leland and Hearne, Itinerary of John Leland, 35.
Protestant Edward to Catholic Mary, into the hands of Elizabeth who created a hybrid of both for her Church of England and then on to James I (see table 4.1).

Table 1. Archbishops during Elizabeth and James’ reign

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEARS SERVED</th>
<th>ARCHBISHOP OF YORK</th>
<th>APPOINTED BY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1545 – 1554</td>
<td>Robert Holgate</td>
<td>Henry VIII/Edward VI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1555 – 1559</td>
<td>Nicholas Heath</td>
<td>Mary I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1561 – 1568</td>
<td>Thomas Young</td>
<td>Elizabeth I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1570 – 1576</td>
<td>Edmund Grindal</td>
<td>Elizabeth I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1577 – 1588</td>
<td>Edwin Sandys</td>
<td>Elizabeth I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1589 – 1594</td>
<td>John Piers</td>
<td>Elizabeth I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1595 – 1606</td>
<td>Matthew Hutton</td>
<td>Elizabeth I / James I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1606 – 1628</td>
<td>Tobias Matthew</td>
<td>James I</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While Scrooby Manor survived the ecclesiastical upheavals and the succession of archbishops that accompanied the religious uncertainty of sixteenth century England, it would not weather the economic storm wrought by Archbishop Edwin Sandys and his family.

For a time, Sandys, Elizabeth’s third Archbishop of York, favored Scrooby Manor as many of his predecessors before him had. He elected to move his family to the large and “commodious” property after his appointment in 1576. Sandys needed a large property to accommodate his expansive family, which included seven sons and two daughters all under the age of 16. When his sons reached maturity, Sandys’ view of Scrooby Manor and its attachments shifted from viewing it as a home to a much needed revenue stream.
As the Archbishop of York, Sandys was the second most powerful ecclesiastical figure in England. Members of the queen’s Privy Council such as William Cecil, a close friend of Archbishop Sandys, frequently made Scrooby their home when traveling in the North.\textsuperscript{382} In addition to influence in both the ecclesiastical and royal courts, Sandys and his sons accumulated immense wealth during his tenure as Archbishop. The combined leases of the Archbishop’s holdings in the 1580s, was nearly £2000, placing the income he received from land and leases “constant with the chief gentry families of Yorkshire.”\textsuperscript{383} Ian Gentles and William Sheils’ study of the ecclesiastical holdings prior to and after the Restoration shows that members of the Sandys family retained the leases granted to them by the Archbishop including Scrooby and the surrounding lands until well into the seventeenth century.\textsuperscript{384}

After Sandys’ appointment to the archbishopric, the eldest of Sandys’ sons quickly rose to prominence as members of a “rich and powerful” family who would continue to exercise influence at court throughout the reigns of Elizabeth, James, and Charles I.\textsuperscript{385} Sandys’ three eldest sons – Samuel, Edwin, and Miles – were all knighted by James as he made his way from Edinburgh to London in 1603. The second eldest son, Edwin, accompanied James along the route from Edinburgh to Nottingham. Records show that

\begin{footnotes}
\item[382] Calendar of State Papers show letters written by William Cecil, Elizabeth’s secretary of state with Scrooby postmarks throughout the mid to late 1500s.
\item[384] Gentles and Sheils, Confiscation, 2.
\end{footnotes}
Sandys’ descendants held seats in Parliament from the beginning of James’ reign in 1603, until the death of Edwin Sandys, the great, great, great grandson of the Archbishop in 1797. There is no doubt that the Sandys family had substantial influence with both the ecclesiastical and royal courts. Edwin Sandys would later become a prominent financial backer of the Mayflower voyage in 1620. As such, he used his money and influence to help the Scrooby Puritans, living in Holland, obtain a patent from James I for the Plymouth settlement.

The leases Sandys conferred upon his sons were often at rates well below market value. In the *Calendar of State Papers Domestic* for Elizabeth I under “Remembrances for the Archbishop of York,” there is an entry in 1593 that states that the lease for Scrooby Manor is £40 per year, “whereas it is worth £170 per year.” While leases were traditionally written for twenty-one years, the Sandys family maintained their hold on Scrooby for six decades after their father passed, well after the leases should have reverted back to the see of York. Members of the Sandys family held the leases for Scrooby from 1580 until at least 1662.

Located halfway between London and Edinburgh on the Great North Road, Scrooby was an extremely valuable property. Both Elizabeth and James I recognized the geographical advantage of Scrooby and attempted to purchase the property. However,

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the Sandys family’s position and influence allowed them to brush aside attempts by Elizabeth and James to obtain Scrooby Manor for use as a royal resting place midway between Edinburgh and London.

As James made his way through Nottinghamshire on his way from Edinburgh, Scrooby Manor and the surrounding lands, caught his attention. An avid hunter, James decided the ecclesiastical holdings at Scrooby were an ideal location for sport and a stop mid-way along the Great North road. Shortly after James arrived in London, he wrote to then Archbishop of York, Matthew Hutton, requesting he sell him Scrooby Manor and the attached lands. In the letter James explained travel between his two realms of Scotland and England required him to find a suitable place to break his journey along the way. Located as it was on the border of Nottinghamshire and Yorkshire, and near the excellent hunting grounds of Sherwood Forest, Scrooby was well suited to his purposes.

To bolster his case, the king detailed the appalling state of disrepair in which he found Scrooby Manor. He stated that as he found the properties at Scrooby and nearby Southwell “exceedingly decayed” it appeared unlikely that the Archbishop “or any successor be willing to be a charge of repairs there as we intend.”389 The king went on to argue that since “neither yourself or any of your predecessor have used to reside there” the property would be of “little use to you nor shall be to your predecessor” especially given the state that it was in.390 James offered to pay, “as much rent of impropriation or tithes within your own demesne or within the Duchy of York as shall amount to the

389 Lemon and Green, CSPD, 34.
390 Lemon and Green, CSPD, 34.
yearly rent of Scrooby and Southwell and the land to them belonging."391 This account provides the only official mention by James I of Scrooby in the Calendar of State Papers Domestic for James I before 1618.

The state of disrepair James alluded to in his letter to the Archbishop would not have been a surprise to those familiar with Archbishop Sandys’ handling of the ecclesiastical properties entrusted to him. Sandys had a history of running church properties in his care into the ground. The Calendar of State Papers of May 1581 contains eleven entries concerning the “dilapidation of the See of London to prove the decays left by Edwin Sandys at his translation to York.”392 After his appointment to York, Sandys was sued by the incoming Bishop of London, for compensation for the damages and state of disrepair to St. Paul’s church and for the money he expended in the “necessary charges of housekeeping and other incidents from the time of his translation from Worcester during his incumbency of the See of London.”393

While Archbishop Hutton’s reply to James’ inquiry about Scrooby has not survived, we can speculate that the king was made aware that the property was under lease to the

391 While there is no record of a reply to the king by the Archbishop, it appears the Archbishop did not accept the king’s proposal. The next official mention of the holdings at Scrooby appears in a petition to the Charles I by Samuel Harsnet, executor for the estate of the Archbishop of Harsnet of York, which request that the Archbishop’s estate be released from responsibility for the “dilapidations to the value of 7000l. where in the decay of Ripon and Scrooby house are rated at 4,020l. being more than the whole personal estate of the Archbishop.” The petition goes on to state that the properties had been leased for the previous forty to fifty years and building upon them are in such a state of “utter decay” that it is the petitioner’s hope that his Majesty will “grant letters patent for demolishing those houses and freeing the petitioner . . . from the charge of repairing them.” John Bruce, William Douglas Hamilton and C. Sophia Lomas, Calendar of State Papers / Domestic Series / Reign of Charles I. (London: H. M. Stationery Office, 1858), 418.

392 Lemon and Green, CSPD, 686.

393 Lemon and Green, CSPD, 686.
Sandys family, three of whom he had recently knighted. Scrooby Manor was a large bulk of their estate, providing a significant income. Given that the property remained in the hands of the Sandys family, we can surmise that James either withdrew his request or was satisfied with the reasons Hutton and the Sandys sons provided for not selling the property.

In 1603, when James I made his way from Edinburgh to London, Scrooby Manor was under the control of Samuel Sandys, the Archbishop’s eldest son. Samuel, who had accompanied James along a portion of his ride to London, chose not to live at Scrooby. Instead, he made his home first in Ripon and later three counties away in Worcestershire, where he became master of Ombersley manor and where he served as sheriff and later as a member of Parliament for the area. Samuel left the day-to-day management of Scrooby in the care of William Brewster.

**William Brewster**

Although only scant documentation remains, historians speculate that William Brewster was born around 1565 at Scrooby. A contemporary of the Sandys brothers, he spent his early life at Scrooby Manor, where his father worked as bailiff and postmaster, both honored and appointed positions. It is likely that it was through Archbishop Sandys’ influence that young William Brewster found his way to Cambridge in 1580, where he remained a student until 1583. There is no record of Brewster having graduated.

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from Cambridge. He left school to become secretary to William Davison, who was the Queen’s ambassador and who later became a prominent member of Elizabeth I’s Privy Council.

In 1585, Brewster traveled with Davison, the queen’s envoy to the Netherlands. This would be Brewster’s first trip to the Netherlands, but not his last. Elizabeth charged Davison with securing a treaty with the Low Countries by ensuring Dutch authorities that the queen was determined “to assist them in their resolution of defending their freedom by force of arms.” The mission was a great success. Davison and Brewster returned to London in 1586 and soon after, Davison was appointed to the queen’s Privy Council, becoming her Secretary of State and one of her most trusted advisors. Brewster remained at court, serving as Davison’s private secretary until his mentor fell out of Elizabeth’s favor.

Davison’s removal from court is surrounded by controversy. There are those such as Retha Warnicke and Paul Hammer who suggest that Davison became a scapegoat, allowing Elizabeth “to distance herself from the execution” of Mary, the Catholic contender for her throne. Others argue Davison took it upon himself to give the order for Mary’s execution in order to save Elizabeth from ordering her own cousin and a fellow queen’s execution. Either way, the outcome for Davison was the same. After

395 Brewster, D.N.B.
396 Nicholas Harris, Life of William Davison, Secretary of State and Privy Counselor to Queen Elizabeth (London: J. Nichols, 1823), 15.
Mary’s execution, his days at court were over. Shunned by the queen he had faithfully served for over thirty years, Davison endured a grueling trial and an extended stint in the Tower, after which he was allowed to return home to his wife and family. Davison lived out the remainder of his life in relative peace. The position of Secretary of State under Elizabeth remained unfilled, leading to speculation that Davison was “suspended rather than dismissed.” Further evidence for this assertion was the pension that Davison continued to receive until his death in 1608.

Brewster remained loyal to his mentor attending to him throughout his trial and his stay in the Tower, but after Davison’s retirement, Brewster had no choice but to return home to Scrooby. Ten years had passed since he left for Cambridge and while he may have returned home for brief visits, what greeted him upon his arrival in 1590 was a very different Scrooby Manor. The Sandys family had long since abandoned Scrooby as a place of residence. Shortly after his return, Brewster’s father passed away. As was customary, young Brewster assumed the position of postmaster formerly held by his father, which typically passed directly from father to son.

Despite his connections, Brewster’s new life did not get off to an easy start. There was some initial confusion as to whether he had simply failed to officially petition the newly appointed Postmaster-General, Sir John Stanhope, about his intentions to take over his father’s post or had just assumed the post was his for the taking. Unfortunately, Stanhope viewed Brewster’s actions as a snub and felt his failure to properly petition for the position “wronged both himself and the respect [Stanhope] would have had for

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398 Harris, William Davison, 178.
Fortunately for Brewster, he had powerful friends such as Davison who were willing to intervene on his behalf. Below are the letters exchanged between Stanhope and Davison concerning Brewster’s appointment to the post at Scrooby. The first letter is written by Stanhope to Davison, in response we can assume, to a query by Davison about Stanhope’s reasons for not accepting Brewster right to assume the post at Scrooby.

Sir,

How willingly I would yield to any your request and how readily do you the best service I could. I hope if ever you please to employ me you shall not then need to doubt; and I protest I am heartily sorry that the party you wrote for hath wronged both himself and the respect I would have had to him, for your sake in estranging himself from me and indirectly seeking either his continuance or preferment to the place.

It is most true that when old Bruster [Brewster] died, a kinsmen near cousin to me, Samuell Bevercotes by name, a lawyer of Grays Inn, one I love, and owe a better turn to wrote ernestly unto me, praying me, for that he dwelt near in those parts and that the post of Scroby was newly dead, that I would give hym the credit to recommend one to the place, fit and sufficient, of good behavior, and such a one as would give for it as any other should. Sir, I assure you I was glad I had any means to pleasure him and presently returned him aunswer that if the place were void, I was willing to accept one from him fit for that service. Within a day or two Mr. Mills, whom I use still as Mr Randall [Randolph] did in this Office, coming to me, I told hym of old Bruster's death and of my grant. He answered me

399 References to the letter and reply are found in the Calendar State Papers Domestic. The original letters are housed in the British Museum.
he heard nothing thereof, and yet his son was then presently in town and had been with him the day before, but said he would enquire; and returning to me the next day said the younge man was gone down, but he remembered Mr Randall [Randolph] had accepted of him in his life time to exerce the place for default of his fathers weakness.

Presently I sent one to my cousin Bevercotes to acquaint him herewith, who going into the country wrote unto me again, that most certanly I was abused in there part, young Bruster had never used it in his father's, life nor had any hope now to have it, but by Mr. Mills his means. He wrote further that Mr Mills had written, as he was credibly advertised, to the post of Doncaster aud Tawxforde, to win them to say that he had admittance and use of the place in his father's time, which they refused to do, as a thing untrue. Further, that he had lately given money to him for the place.

All this while, nor to this ower, I never heard one word from young Bruster, he neither came to me being in towne nor sent to me being absent; but, as though I were to be overruled by others, made his way according to his liking. When my cousin, whom I trusted, did advise me of this manner of delaying, and instantly required the admittance of him whom he nominated I granted thereto, and have written my letters accordingly, which went away unto him three days since.

Now Sir, in whom the faulte is, or how to redresse my error committed herein, I praye you help me. First, I know my interest such, as whether he had the place or no, I can displace him and think him worthily displaced for his contempt of me in not seeking me at all. But if it be true,
as I protest two three besides my cousin have advised me, that he never used the room in his father’s life, besides, such gentlemen as went down with my Lord of Worcester into Scotland told me the old man furnished them of horses as they went and in their return, finding him dead, the widow told them her son was gone up to sue for the place, then have I done but like a kinsman to pleasure my cousin with out just offence to any.

Of Mr. Randalls [Randolph’s] promise to you for your man I nothing doubt because your self writes it, but that he was not placed presently upon that promise, that seems by their report. Sir, in regarde of you, I will seek to be better satisfied in the matter, and if I find cause and may without disgracing my cousin and touch to my self, I will revoke my grant if you shall not rest satisfied that he have any other that shall void with the first.

And so Sir, sorry I have troubled you with such circumstance, and with so ill a hand, being in bed for sloth, and yet willing to dispatch your man, I pray you believe of me as I have written and you shall hear and see long what I will do to satisfy you and so humbly recommending you to the Almighty I take my leave.

Yours most assured,

Jon Stanhope

This 22nd of August, 1590. Otlands

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References to the letter and reply are found in the Calendar State Papers Domestic. The original letters are housed in the British Museum.
Davison responded to Stanhope on the back of the original letter. His reply states that:

_Brewster ought not be displaced more than the rest of the Posts. If he were possessed for the place by Mr. Randolph long before his father's death, and no good cause now to expect against him, the ought he not more to be displaced than the rest of the Posts._

_But he was possessed of the place by Mr. Randolph long before his father's death as may appear by the testimonies of record of his name in the rolls amongst the other posts; by receipt of the fee the year and a half; his Mr. Mills that recommended him thereunto; Mr. Mills that was privy to the gift, and did both register his name and pay him the wages; his exercise of the place now above a year and a half, which may be testified by the Posts his next neighbors._

_Neither is there any just cause now to except against him either in respect of his honesty, sufficiency for the service, discharge thereof hitherto, or other reasons whatsoever._

_Therefore, he ought to be no more displaced then the rest of the posts. Other reasons -- The change he hath been at for provision this hard year for the service; the loss he should sustain for rather utter undoing by being suddenly disposed._

The letter written by Stanhope to Davison is quite remarkable. Stanhope lays out a compelling case for displacing Brewster from the post at Scrooby. He cites Brewster’s absence from the area at the time of the inquiry and the fact there was no evidence he had ever assisted his father at the post as he claimed he had. Perhaps most important,
Brewster had not done the gentlemanly thing required of him and officially petitioned Stanhope for the position. The letter also reflects the respect and influence Davison maintained after leaving court. The deference of Stanhope to Davison and the respect he has for him is obvious throughout his letter. Stanhope was, as he makes clear, well within his right as Postmaster-General to appoint anyone to the post. However, despite his misgivings and obvious dislike for the way Brewster handled the affair, he deferred to Davison. Brewster was officially appointed to the position of postmaster at Scrooby in 1590, where he remained until 1607.

A full eight years elapsed before Brewster enters the public record again. On June 15, 1598, William Brewster, Anthony Bentham, and Edward Bentham, were presented for “absenting themselves from their parish church.” Brewster was presented separately for repeating sermons publicly in church without authority. In answer to both presentments, Brewster, speaking for all three men argued that

Scroobie and Bawtrie being not far distant one from the other have joined together to maynetaine one preacher betweene them, who preacheth at one Towne one Sundaye and at the other Towne on the next sundaie by a continuall course, so that if their preacher preach at Bawtrie he with other of the parishe of Scroobie go thither to hears him, and otherwyse he doth not absent himselfe from his parish Churche on the Sabothe daye. 

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401 10, 17 June, 1598 – Act Book for the Archdeaconry of Nottingham. 10 is the court journal of the day. The Act Book was the official transcript for ‘ex officio’ cases brought before the ecclesiastical courts. See, University of Nottingham, Catalogue of Presentment Bills - Archdeaconry of Nottingham, Retford Deanery, AN/PB 292/7/46, 5/17/1598.

402 Archdeaconry of Nottingham, Retford Deanery, AN/PB 292/7/46, 5/17/1598
The charges against them were completely dismissed.

That Brewster had powerful connections with influence locally as well as at court is apparent. Not only was William Brewster in the employ of the archbishop as a bailiff and the crown as postmaster at Scrooby, Brewster’s brother James was the vicar of the parish at Sutton-cum-Lound a few miles up the road. As vicar, James was responsible for appointing the curate at Scrooby. He used this position to appoint a string of stanchly Puritan ministers who would have supported Brewster’s Puritan beliefs.

James’ character was not without blemishes. He too spent time before the ecclesiastical courts answering charges. Historians have cited James Brewster’s appearance before the ecclesiastical courts as further evidence of persecution. However, a close reading of the case demonstrates restraint by the courts rather than persecution.

In 1591, James Brewster was presented to the High Commission on charges of neglect of office as Master of Bawtry Hospital. James was elevated to this position by Archbishop Sandys in 1584. Church records provide an unusually detailed account of the state of the hospital under Brewster’s care. The records claim that prior to Brewster’s appointment, “the poor were relieved . . . divine services and prayers were weekly said in the chapel” but after Brewster’s appointment “the building were let to decay, the dovecot and part of the mansion house was pulled down, the chapel defaced, ornaments and furniture were carried away, along with the stall, books, and alter table, and the very lead from the roof. The chapel itself was converted into a pigsty.” It seems that Brewster

403 A bailiff was an agent of the lord of a manor, who collects his rents, etc.; the steward of a landholder, who manages his estate; one who superintends the husbandry of a farm for its owner or tenant.

404 Exchequer Depositions, 34 and 35 Elizabeth, Michelmas. 33.
learned from his mentor the Archbishop and following his example, he left desecration and destruction in his wake. Although James Brewster was removed from his position at Bawtry Hospital, he remained the vicar at Sutton and later at Gringley on the Hill until his death in 1617.  

Cases similar to those of the Brewsters are sprinkled throughout the ecclesiastical records of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Read collectively, with the intention of proving persecution, it is possible to make a case that Puritans were systematically persecuted. However, read individually, the case for toleration becomes more evident. Let’s pause briefly in our examination of Scrooby for a moment and look at the case of Richard Barton, Vicar of Edwinstone located 18 miles south of Scrooby. Both were within in the Commissary of Southwell. Barton was presented in Consistory Court in Nottingham, “the archbishop’s ordinary court for discipline and administration.” Barton was “the only Puritan minister presented” during Archbishop


406 Roland Marchant, church court historian suggests that comprehensive study of the Visitation court books can yield “the amount of opposition to any ecclesiastical law, and the way in which the authorities dealt with it and if the law was actually enforced, as distinct from the ideal condition suggested by Visitation articles.” Much personal history is recoverable from these volumes. The records of the High Commission and Chancery Courts give us most of the necessary acts of court, with many files of papers of various causes. From these can be learnt not only how the cause progressed through the court and the names of witnesses, but also the precise accusation, the defendant’s reply and the evidence of witnesses. These documents are official and reliable as documents, although the evidence may often be suspected of personal bias and incompleteness. From them the story of much of the official history of the Church can be reconstructed, but they do not recount what went on out of court, negotiations often as significant as the court action, particularly in an age when personal influence was so important. Also, the records themselves are incomplete, though fortunately the gaps in the story are not large. The greatest lacuna in our information is what was occurring undetected by the official eye” (Marchant Puritans and Court Church Courts, 9).

407 Ronald Marchant, Church Courts, 8.
Piers’ primary Visitation in 1590.\textsuperscript{408} Church court historian Ronald Marchant argues this singular case represents a “new determination to secure conformity.” The charges against Barton are vast, ranging from a typical refusal to wear the surplice to allowing an excommunicated person to hear services. But a closer reading of the charges brought against Barton, may signal causes other than nonconformity. Barton is also accused of “reading the Prayer Book only on alternate Sundays and then only at undue and unfit times . . . reading morning prayer at noon and evening prayer either within a hour or two after or late at night as if he has no devotion to the service.”\textsuperscript{409} Additionally he is accused of “refusing to minister Holy Communion privately to the sick and from absenting himself from his parish for up to ten consecutive weeks,” leaving in his place no minister but only readers.\textsuperscript{410} While Marchant is quick to argue for nonconformity as the reason for Barton’s presentment, another explanation might be simpler: laziness and dereliction of duty. Barton swore to reply to the articles against him on July 1, 1590 and that is the end of his case. No additional action was taken. Barton was presented again in 1592 for not wearing the surplice, which he vowed “never to wear in that Chapel,” only providing Holy Communion at Christmas and Easter and failing to distribute funds from the Dean of Lincoln’s charity. Barton did not appear for his presentment and no action was taken against him. Barton remained in the position of Vicar of Edwinstone until his

\begin{footnotes}
\item[408] Marchant, \textit{Church Courts}, 137.
\end{footnotes}

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death in 1625.\textsuperscript{411} If the purpose of Barton’s presentation was to secure a new conformity, it seems Piers would have made a firmer example of Barton. Rather, this supposedly stanch example of Puritan nonconformity was allowed to continue undisturbed by ecclesiastical authority for 35 years.

\textbf{The Church at Scrooby}

Disgruntled Puritans who felt the church did not go far enough were on occasion presented, but as we saw in the previous chapter clergy and laypeople alike used numerous strategies to avoid monetary and ecclesiastical punishment and forced compliance. Given the influence the Brewsters enjoyed at home and at court, we can assume most of the members of the Scrooby community would have continued a life relatively free of harassment.

In fact, the remoteness of Scrooby’s location and the size of the village and the church at Scrooby resulted in very little attention ecclesiastically or historically. The only historical accounts of Scrooby are the scant accounts cited at the beginning of this chapter. The ecclesiastical court records for Scrooby parish are just as meager. This is not because the records do not exist, but because there was little or no activity in the church courts concerning Scrooby. The table below shows the presentments for Scrooby between 1598 and 1610. This period has often been cited as the period the church at Scrooby was formed and later removed to Holland.

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{411} Richard Barton (CCEd Person ID 115208), \textit{The Clergy of the Church of England Database 1540–1835} <http://www.theclergydatabase.org.uk>, accessed 29 Apr. 2013.}
Table 2. Presentments for Scrooby 1598-1610

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>PRESENTMENT</th>
<th>ACTION TAKEN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1598</td>
<td>Curate Scrooby - Mr Henrie Jones - not wearing surplice. William Bruster (Brewster) - repeating sermons publicly in the church without authority. Mr Rowland Stringer and his wife and family, William Bruster (Brewster) and his wife and family, Richard Jackson and his wife and family, Anthonie Bentam, Edward Bentam, William Bradley and John Bett - resorting to other churches in service and sermon time. Rowland Stringer and his wife and John Bett for not receiving communion at Scrooby.</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1599</td>
<td>Nothing to present.</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1600</td>
<td>Nothing to present.</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1601</td>
<td>Nothing to present.</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1602</td>
<td>Nothing to present.</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1603</td>
<td><strong>July and August 1603</strong> Churchwardens present the following: Robert Markham, M'r of Artes, minister of Scrooby, [is a] preacher; his living is £6 18s 4d; no recusants; there are about 131 communicants and none that refuse to communicate.</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1604</td>
<td>Nothing to present.</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1605</td>
<td>Nothing to present.</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1606</td>
<td>Nothing to present.</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1607/1608</td>
<td>One churchwarden presents the following: Ellyzabeth Marche alias Marshall for fornication with one Edward, servant to Ryc. Tore, whose surname we do not know; Wm Hydes for a 'charmer of to the ache and other things'. Petition of various inhabitants of Scroby [Scrooby] to Mr Thomas Pettye at Retford. They want a minister amongst them, and while they have found too many abuses in their church, having now met the bearer hereof, who is commended to them</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
for an honest, decent and quiet man, jointly crave recipient's favour to admit him to their place, now void.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Incident</th>
<th>Payment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1608</td>
<td>Churchwardens present the following: Georg Bowear for not repairing the parish church; Cattarn Hove for the like; Elizabeth, whose other name we do not know, servant to Mr Jackson [offence not specified].</td>
<td>Payment of 6d recorded.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1609/1610</td>
<td>Churchwardens present the following: Prudence Hanly for having a base gotten child, and as it was reported, by one of Edward Drue's sons of Harworth, but what his name is we do not know; Thomas Ouldanne for profaning the Sabbath day in bearing hay out of the field.</td>
<td>Payment of 6d recorded.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If we widen the search for persecution and prosecution out to include all of Nottinghamshire, we find that in the nineteen years that William Brewster was in residence in Scrooby, from 1590 through 1607/08, thirty-one clerics were presented for all of Nottinghamshire’s 364 parishes. During that eighteen-year period, there were a total of 79 presentments. The vast majority of the presentments were for failing to wear the surplice. In some cases, the reason given for not wearing the surplice was because, churchwardens had “failed to provide one.” Most parishes had only one or two surplices, which had to be worn every day. Keeping the surplice in good repair and clean would have taken considerable time. The failure to wear the surplice may have been more a lack of time and less the act of resistance historians have attributed to the frequent appearance in the record. The surplice had, for a few clergy, become a symbol of the changes that still needed to be made to completely rid the Church of England of its “popish influences.” For others, the absence of the surplice sprang not from theological

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412 From the Archbishop of Nottingham Act books housed at Nottingham University Library AN/PB 292/7/46 - AN/PB 294/2/208
or doctrinal disputes, but from material lack. For example, John Heaton was presented in 1591 for failing to wear the surplice. The record shows that he stated he was “willing to wear one,” but the surplice at his parish was “insufficient.” Churchwardens were ordered to produce a new surplice and the case was suspended until a new surplice could be produced. Heaton was never presented again. The chart below shows the Nottinghamshire clergy presented, the year presented, a summary of the charges and the actions taken for all of the presentments that occurred between 1590 and 1608.

Table 3. Nottinghamshire Clergy Presentments 1590-1608

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CLERGY/NUMBER OF PRESENTMENTS</th>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>PRESENTMENT SUMMARY</th>
<th>ACTION TAKEN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>William Alred - 1</td>
<td>1591</td>
<td>Not wearing surplice, not reading service on Wednesday and Friday.</td>
<td>Absolved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brian Barton413 - 5</td>
<td>1590</td>
<td>Not wearing surplice, not following the Book of Common Prayer (B.C.P.)</td>
<td>Certified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1591</td>
<td>Not wearing surplice, not following the Book of Common Prayer (B.C.P.)</td>
<td>Case Dismissed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1595</td>
<td>Not following the Book of Common Prayer (B.C.P.), using ring in marriage, using cross in Baptism.</td>
<td>Excommunicated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1605</td>
<td>Contempt of the canons.</td>
<td>Subscribed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1608</td>
<td>Not wearing the surplice, using cross in Baptism.</td>
<td>Excommunicated</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although twice excommunicated, Barton continued in his position as vicar of South Collingwood until his death in 1627.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CLERGY/ NUMBER OF PRESENTMENTS</th>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>PRESENTMENT SUMMARY</th>
<th>ACTION TAKEN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Richard Barton - 3</td>
<td>1590</td>
<td>Not wearing surplice, allowing an excommunicated person to service.</td>
<td>No action taken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1592</td>
<td>Not wearing surplice, failing to distribute charity.</td>
<td>No action taken</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1596</td>
<td>Not wearing surplice.</td>
<td>Admonished</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas Beckingham - 1</td>
<td>1590</td>
<td>Not wearing surplice.</td>
<td>Certified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard Bernard - 2</td>
<td>1604</td>
<td>Failure to subscribe.</td>
<td>Deprived/suspended ab officio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1608</td>
<td>“All is well” except his using the cross in baptism.</td>
<td>No action taken</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James Brewster - 3</td>
<td>1594</td>
<td>Intruding himself on a benefice, burying a corpse without using the sign of a cross.</td>
<td>No action taken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1596</td>
<td>Presented for “various offenses.”</td>
<td>Absolved</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1597</td>
<td>Charged with non-residence and neglect of his benefice.</td>
<td>Relieved of secondary benefice</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard Clifton - 4</td>
<td>1591</td>
<td>Not wearing the surplice, not reading the Injunctions, not ministering the sacraments to a sick person.</td>
<td>Certified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1596</td>
<td>Not announcing Holy and fasting days, not wearing the surplice all the time, omitting to use the cross in Baptism.</td>
<td>Dismissed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1604</td>
<td>Not subscribing to the canons</td>
<td>Deprived and suspended ab officio</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1607</td>
<td>Presented as a “pretend minister.”</td>
<td>Excommunicated</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLERGY/ NUMBER OF PRESENTMENTS</td>
<td>YEAR</td>
<td>PRESENTMENT SUMMARY</td>
<td>ACTION TAKEN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samuel Cottesford - 2</td>
<td>1601</td>
<td>Not wearing the surplice.</td>
<td>No action taken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1607</td>
<td>Not wearing the surplice at all times, omitting to use the cross in baptism.</td>
<td>Continued/no action taken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Deacon - 1</td>
<td>1594</td>
<td>Preaching without a license.</td>
<td>Absolved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henry Ducket - 1</td>
<td>1596</td>
<td>Preaching without a licence.</td>
<td>No action taken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1601</td>
<td>Not wearing the surplice.</td>
<td>No action taken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roger Edward - 2</td>
<td>1608</td>
<td>Preaching without a license.</td>
<td>Admonished/case suspended</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1609</td>
<td>Preaching without a license.</td>
<td>Absolved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert Evington - 6</td>
<td>1591</td>
<td>Not wearing surplice, not reading service on Wednesday and Friday, not reading Injunctions.</td>
<td>Dismissed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1595</td>
<td>Not wearing surplice.</td>
<td>Admonished</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1596</td>
<td>Not reading service on Wednesday or Friday.</td>
<td>No action taken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1598</td>
<td>Not wearing surplice, not announcing Holy and fasting days, not visiting the sick.</td>
<td>No action taken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1600</td>
<td>Not exhibiting his letters of orders</td>
<td>Inhibited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1604</td>
<td>Not subscribing to the canons</td>
<td>No action taken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William Feilde - 2</td>
<td>1591</td>
<td>Not wearing the surplice</td>
<td>Dismissed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1600</td>
<td>Not wearing the surplice</td>
<td>Admonished</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLERGY/NUMBER OF PRESENTMENTS</td>
<td>YEAR</td>
<td>PRESENTMENT SUMMARY</td>
<td>ACTION TAKEN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henry Gray - 2</td>
<td>1604</td>
<td>Not subscribing to the canons</td>
<td>Suspended <em>ab officio</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1606</td>
<td>Not subscribing to the canons</td>
<td>Excommunicated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicholas Hallam - 1</td>
<td>1591</td>
<td>Not wearing the surplice, not providing churchwardens dinner at Visitations.</td>
<td>Absolved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas Hancock - 5</td>
<td>1591</td>
<td>Not wearing the surplice, not reading prayers according to the B.C.P.</td>
<td>Absolved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1592</td>
<td>Not wearing the surplice, marrying a couple without banns.</td>
<td>Examined/No action taken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1593</td>
<td>Not wearing the surplice, Not using the cross in baptism</td>
<td>Excommunicated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1601</td>
<td>Allowing an excommunicated person in church.</td>
<td>Dismissed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1602</td>
<td>Getting married without banns</td>
<td>No action taken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Heaton - 1</td>
<td>1591</td>
<td>Not wearing the surplice.</td>
<td>Case suspended</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Herring - 1</td>
<td>1605</td>
<td>Allowing an unlicensed minister to preach in his church.</td>
<td>Admonished</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George Higgin - 5</td>
<td>1592</td>
<td>Not wearing the surplice.</td>
<td>No action taken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1595</td>
<td>Not wearing the surplice.</td>
<td>Excommunicated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1596</td>
<td>Not wearing the surplice.</td>
<td>Dismissed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1599</td>
<td>Adultery</td>
<td>Dismissed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1600</td>
<td>No surplice, no cross in baptism</td>
<td>Admonished</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1602</td>
<td>Not providing adequate services or studying the word of God.</td>
<td>No action taken</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

414 Although Henry Gray was excommunicated, he continued to be the curate at Headon until 1614.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CLERGY/ NUMBER OF PRESENTMENTS</th>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>PRESENTMENT SUMMARY</th>
<th>ACTION TAKEN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thomas Hunt - 3</td>
<td>1596</td>
<td>Conducting services as a non-resident</td>
<td>Dismissed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1601</td>
<td>Not wearing the surplice.</td>
<td>No action taken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1603</td>
<td>Using force to eject bell-ringers</td>
<td>Absolved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henry Jones - 1</td>
<td>1598</td>
<td>Wearing the surplice “for the most part, but not for the sacraments.”</td>
<td>No action taken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas Langdon 415 - 1</td>
<td>1604</td>
<td>Not subscribing to the canons.</td>
<td>No action taken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anthony Major - 1</td>
<td>1600</td>
<td>Not wearing the surplice, occasionally omitting the Epistle and the Gospels</td>
<td>Admonished</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Mylward - 2</td>
<td>1592</td>
<td>Failing to exhibit his letters of orders.</td>
<td>Absolved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1595</td>
<td>Not wearing the surplice.</td>
<td>Penalty respited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Nayler - 1</td>
<td>1591</td>
<td>Making a clandestine marriage.</td>
<td>Cause transferred/no action taken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Rayner - 1</td>
<td>1596</td>
<td>Not using the cross in baptism.</td>
<td>Dismissed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Savage - 3</td>
<td>1593</td>
<td>Not wearing the surplice other than at Holy Communion.</td>
<td>No action taken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1596</td>
<td>Not wearing the surplice</td>
<td>No action taken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1603</td>
<td>Not wearing the surplice</td>
<td>No action taken</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

415 Even though there is no record of Thomas Langdon’s subscription, he remained as the vicar of Tythby until 1630.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CLERGY/ NUMBER OF PRESENTMENTS</th>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>PRESENTMENT SUMMARY</th>
<th>ACTION TAKEN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Robert Southworth - 9</td>
<td>1590</td>
<td>Not wearing the surplice, not using the B.C.P, and unlicensed preaching.</td>
<td>No action taken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1591</td>
<td>No surplice, not reading the Epistle and Gospel.</td>
<td>No action taken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1592</td>
<td>Not wearing the surplice, not conducting service according to the B.C.P, refusing to give communion to sick people, and for being married without banns.</td>
<td>Certified/ Dismissed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1593</td>
<td>Not displaying letters of orders.</td>
<td>No action taken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1595</td>
<td>Not wearing the surplice</td>
<td>Admonition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1601</td>
<td>Not wearing the surplice, not conducting Wednesday or Friday services</td>
<td>Continued/no action taken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1602</td>
<td>Not wearing the surplice, conducting Wednesday, Friday, or Saturday services, following the B.C.P., or saying prayers at Lent.</td>
<td>Admonished</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1604</td>
<td>Not subscribing to the canons.</td>
<td>Case respited/ Deprived ab officio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1607</td>
<td>Cited for unspecified charges.</td>
<td>Excommunicated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georges Turvin - 5</td>
<td>1592</td>
<td>Not wearing the surplice, allowing others to say service.</td>
<td>Dismissed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1592</td>
<td>Conducting service in front of an excommunicated person.</td>
<td>No action taken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1593</td>
<td>Not making perambulation on appropriate Holy Days.</td>
<td>Admonished</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1595</td>
<td>Not wearing the surplice.</td>
<td>Admonished</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1601</td>
<td>Not wearing the surplice.</td>
<td>No action taken.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLERGY/NUMBER OF PRESENTMENTS</td>
<td>YEAR</td>
<td>PRESENTMENT SUMMARY</td>
<td>ACTION TAKEN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
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<td>--------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicholas Watkins416 - 1</td>
<td>1604</td>
<td>Not subscribing to the canons.</td>
<td>Case continued</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark Wiersdale - 3417</td>
<td>1602</td>
<td>Not wearing the surplice when administering the sacraments.</td>
<td>No action taken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1604</td>
<td>Not subscribing to the canons.</td>
<td>Order to resign</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1608</td>
<td>Not wearing the surplice, omitting services on Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday because parishioners “do not much attend on those days.”</td>
<td>Admonished</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the thirty-one clergy presented over the eighteen-year period, thirteen were presented once. Six were presented twice. Five were presented three times. And only seven were presented four or more times. Topping the list was Robert Southworth, vicar at Headon, who was presented nine times between 1590 and 1607. Historians often point to Southworth as an example of Puritan persecution.418

In 1590, Southworth was presented for not wearing the surplice, for “being notorious for not observing the Book of Common Prayer,” and for preaching without a license. No

416 There is no record of Nicholas Watkins’ subscription, yet he remained vicar of Clarborough until his death in 1618.

417 Mark Wiersdale was ordered to resign his benefice in 1604, the record was later erased and he continued to preach and was presented again in 1608.

action was taken after the presentment. He was presented again in 1591 for similar
charges and again, no actions were taken. The presentment in 1592 shows his continued
refusal to wear the surplice, failure to conduct services using the Book of Common
Prayer, neglect of the sick at Easter, and for being married without posting banns. After
certifying he had indeed posted banns and hearing Southworth’s promise to wear the
surplice “more regularly” and that he would give “any of them in sickness who desire to
have the communion, he would come to them with all his heart” the case was dismissed.
When he was presented in 1593, Southworth did not bother to appear in court, and no
further action was taken on his presentment. Somehow, he managed to escape
presentment in 1594 but appears again in the presentments for 1595 for failing to wear
the surplice. After once again “showing he [was] willing to wear it,” the charges are
“dismissed with an admonition” and his court fees were excused. Six years lapsed
between presentments. In June of 1601, Southworth was presented yet again for failing
to wear the surplice since Christmas. The case was “continued” but no further action was
taken. Southworth was presented again in 1602 for failing to wear the surplice, for not
observing the Book of Common Prayer and for not having services on Wednesday,
Friday, or Saturday unless the services fall on a Festival days. He appeared in court and
was absolved with an admonition. In 1604, he was presented along with Richard Clifton
as a non-subscriber to the 1604 canons. They were both ordered to confer with William
Palmer, the Chancellor of York Minster. Their case was “respited” for a month. After a
meeting with the archbishop, they were “deprived and suspended ab officio. This should
have been the end of Southworth’s clerical career, however the records show that
Southworth was presented yet again in 1607. After he failed to appear, the case was
continued. The case was called again a month later, and after failing to appear in court and testing the patience of ecclesiastical authorities for nearly two decades, Southworth was merely excommunicated.\(^{419}\)

Presentments were made at the local parish level, by the churchwardens who bore the “primary responsibility for presenting sinners to the bishop, both lay people and clerics.”\(^{420}\) Churchwardens were expected to present only those offenses that were “observed.” Not presenting an observed offense could cause the churchwarden to be presented. Because maintaining the moral and local structure of the church relied on what Daniel Beaver refers to as the “public voice,” churchwardens were duty bound to present infractions, but it was up to the church courts to determine the outcome.\(^{421}\) This did not stop churchwardens, who would still live in the parish long after their term was up, from delivering *Omnia bene* or all is well presentments.\(^{422}\) This was in fact the case for Scrooby during many years after 1598 through 1608. Only the 1604 presentment for the failure to wear the surplice indicates any concern on the part of churchwardens. In fact, in the same presentment, churchwardens confidently state that there are “no recusants among the 131 communicants and none that refuse to communicate.”\(^{423}\)

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\(^{419}\) No records for Robert Southworth are available after 1607.


\(^{421}\) Daniel C. Beaver, *Parish Communities*, 122.


\(^{423}\) Archdeconry Presentment Bills, Churchwarden Presentment, Scrooby, Retford deanery, 1603 AN/PB 294/1/255 at the University of Nottingham.
Once a presentment reached the courts, court officials were expected to use church law, the canons to “maintain morale standards within his diocese.” They were the judges, but their sentences were restricted to limitations set by the canons; they could not make up the law or apply remedies outside those established by canon law. The canon of 1604 places the court within a “supervisory” role over what occurred at the parish level.

Much has been made of the “persecution” of the Scrooby Puritans by the church courts. Following from Bradford’s journal through the last 400 years, we have read how they were “excommunicated” and “deprived of their ministry.” But this was not true in the case of the Scrooby ministers. They were not deprived because none other than Henrie Jones was ever presented and no action was taken in his case. The record simply does not support these claims.

If we broaden the examination out to include the presentments for Nottinghamshire between 1590 and 1609, we see that only four ministers were deprived during this period – Richard Bernard, Richard Clifton, Robert Southworth, and Mark Wiersdale. Richard Bernard subscribed after he was deprived. But his “nonconformity” continued. He was presented again in 1608 for failing to use the cross in baptism, yet no action was taken against him. Richard Clifton too was deprived, but continued to preach for three years. He was presented again in 1607, but had already left England for Holland by the time his presentment was filed. Robert Southward was presented again three years after his deprivation. We have no record of his subscription. And Mark Wiersdale was deprived in 1604 and is presented again in 1608 for failing to wear the surplice and for omitting services.

Arthur, Law Liberty and Church, 118.
If we stop searching once a ministerial record reads deprived, it is possible to conclude that there was widespread persecution and prosecution of “nonconforming” clergy during this period. However, how then do we account for the subsequent presentments that resulted in little or no punitive results? A possible explanation lies with the practices of the archbishops who were responsible for meting out punishments.

The Act of Supremacy empowered the establishment of the High Commissioner for Causes Ecclesiastical.\textsuperscript{425} The High Commission enforced “any ecclesiastical discipline that might be required.”\textsuperscript{426} This Archbishop of Canterbury and the Archbishop of York established courts to carry out this commission. As Ronald Marchant points out in \textit{The Church Under the Law}, “the High Commission court was not only the longest of the long arm in church law, it was also the administrative agency which issued orders and expected the bishops to obey them.”\textsuperscript{427}

Three archbishops reigned over the York courts during the period we are examining – John Piers (1589-1594), Matthew Hutton (1595-1606), and Tobias Matthew (1606-1628). Matthew Hutton “favored religious toleration” and suspended the relatively benign measures taken by his predecessor John Piers to root out nonconformity.\textsuperscript{428} Hutton was prodded to take some action against nonconformity after the ascension of James I. He limited his action enforcing subscription of the three articles in the canons of 1603. The

\textsuperscript{425} 1 Elizabeth c.1.
\textsuperscript{426} Ronald Marchant, \textit{The Church Under the Law: Justice, Administration, and Discipline in the Diocese of York, 1560-1640} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 34.
\textsuperscript{427} Marchant, \textit{Church Law}, 34.
\textsuperscript{428} Marchant, \textit{Puritans and Court Church Courts}, 23.
result of his enforcement was the deprivation of only one incumbent in Yorkshire and a
handful of clerics in Nottinghamshire who refused to subscribe.\textsuperscript{429} But as we have seen,
although deprived, all continued to preach and went on to be presented a few years later.
When Hutton’s term in office ended in 1606, his diocese was “outwardly conforming.”
The only marks on the diocese record were the few cases presented in 1604.

When Tobias Matthew took over in 1606, he continued Hutton’s policies of
toleration. Matthew was not an advocate of persecution. Quite the opposite “he took no
extreme measures to remove or discipline nonconformists, except in very exceptional
circumstances.”\textsuperscript{430} Rather than discourage Puritan preaching, Matthew’s toleration
allowed Puritan ministers to “obtain a hold over very considerable numbers of people,
and to consolidate their position in the Church of England.”\textsuperscript{431}

In 1607, an attachment was issued to apprehend William Brewster of Scrooby,
gentlemen, for “being disobedient in matters of religion.”\textsuperscript{432} Brewster could not be found.
A note attached to the order states that “he cannot be found, nor understood where they
are.” We can assume that by the time Brewster was presented for “being disobedient in
matters of religion” he had been absent from his home and his parish church for an
extended period. The case was extended until 1608 when Brewster and two others were

\begin{footnotes}
\item \textsuperscript{429} Marchant, Puritans and Court Church Courts, 24.
\item \textsuperscript{430} Marchant, Puritans and Court Church Courts, 29.
\item \textsuperscript{431} Marchant, Puritans and Court Church Courts, 30.
\item \textsuperscript{432} 1607 Act Book in York Registry
\end{footnotes}
fined £20 apiece not for a crime, but for not appearing upon lawful summons at the Collegiate Church of Southwell, the 22 day of April.”

By the Visitation of 1608, the Scrooby congregation was petitioning for a new minister requesting the licensing of a visiting minister who is “honest, decent, and quiet.” The presentments for 1609 reflect a child born outside marriage and a man profaning the Sabbath day while gathering wheat outside a field. In 1612, a tailor was presented for not taking communion at Easter. The pattern of an occasional presentment followed by a series of “nothing to present” years continues for the next few decades.

This chapter began with a quote from Bradford’s journal. He wrote about a time when the Scrooby Puritans “ordinarily met” at William Brewster’s house on Sundays. On those days, Bradford tells us Brewster loved to entertain them. He enjoyed the social aspects of these meetings so much that he made provisions for them “to his great charge.” These – entertaining, meeting on a regular basis, Sunday after Sunday – do not seem the actions of those in hiding or fearing persecution. They are the actions of those who are comfortable in both their station and in the protection they felt around them. For the Scrooby Puritans those protections came from their connections within the church, through James, William Brewster’s brother and through his families long standing connection to Archbishop Sandys. Their protections extended through the Sandys family

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433 1607 Act Book in York Registry

434 AN/PB/294/2/4 (Easter, 1608).

435 AN/PB 294/2/269 (Easter, 1609).

436 AN/PB 295/3/18 (Easter, 1612).
through the Sandys sons who were connected to the court of James I and provided both counsel and funds for their trip from Holland to America years later. And, their protections came from Brewster’s position in the community as both a postmaster and bailiff in the employ of the Archbishop.

On one side of the ocean the Scrooby Puritans’ life in England could be viewed as an experience of protection and connection, while on the other side after years of introspection and the trials faced by the group in Holland and in America it became for Bradford a persecution tale. To understand how Bradford’s experience morphed from protection to persecution, we need to examine the complete context in which the Scrooby Puritans lived in, not just their religious life. The next chapter looks at the “alltagageschichte” or the history of everyday life in early modern England during the period before the Scrooby Puritans made their decision to leave England for Holland.
Chapter 5: ALLTAGAGESCHICHTE

There is nothing more dangerous for the estate of commonwealth, then when the people do increase to a greater multitude and number then may justly parallel with the largeness of the place and country; for hereupon comes oppression and diverse kinder of wrongs, mutinies, sedition, commotion, and rebellion, scarcities, dearth, poverty, and sundry sorts of calamities, which either breed the conversion, or erosion of cities and commonwealths.\textsuperscript{437}

Robert Gray

In the previous chapters, we ruled out a widespread program of persecution by the royal court from Henry VIII through James I. Even accounting for the period that Mary sat on the throne, persecution was limited, and it became even more limited during the reign of Elizabeth and James. We ruled out persecution by the church after the ascension of Elizabeth to the throne. Rather, what the record shows, when viewed in its entirety, is that the Church practiced toleration, often choosing to ignore, table, or continue cases to avoid depriving a minister or force subscription. This was especially true of the Archbishops of York during the period surrounding the move by William Brewster back to Scrooby and the development of the covenanted church he led at Scrooby. We ruled out evidence that persecution occurred at the neighborhood or parish level especially in view of the favor that William Brewster enjoyed as an employee of both the Church and the crown. In this chapter, we turn to the social and economic conditions in England during this period.

\textsuperscript{437} Robert Gray and John Payne Collier, \textit{A Good Speed to Virginia: 1609} (London: Privately printed, 1863), 12.
Although highly educated, William Brewster left no known personal papers behind. To illuminate his state of mind and that of the members of the Scrooby congregation he persuaded to join him abroad, we will widen the lens and examine the cultural, social, and economic factors in play during Brewster’s time that might have influenced the decision to remove to Holland. We turn to what Alf Ludtke calls alltagageschichte, the history of everyday life. The notion of alltagageschichte is particularly useful for examining “people who left behind few if any source materials.” When this is the case, alltagageschichte can help us to “reevaluate the testimonies that have already been interpreted elsewhere from a different perspective.”

Late sixteenth century England was a country in crisis and wrapped in fear. While the crisis over religion that had caused turmoil for nearly a century was finally abating, pockets of Catholic and nonconformist resistance to the Church of England remained. After the turn of the century, James’ peaceful ascension to the throne gave people a modicum of hope that the question of religion had finally been resolved. But fear of ________________

441 “A crisis must first arise out of some kind of steady state (the stresses and stains of which are often unnoticed as they are resisted), which is made acute in a moment of crucial alteration (or decision), all of which is followed by a resolution to a new steady state. To be explanatory of observed change, a crisis must have comprehensive origins. There must be a way to account for the disruption of the prior steady state – either by invoking an easily identifiable exogenous shock from outside the system or by explaining it as a result of complex endogenous forces emanating out of what might have been only an illusory steady state preceding it.” Anne E. C. McCants, “Historical Demography and the Crisis of the Seventeenth Century,” Journal of Interdisciplinary History, Volume 40, Number 2, (Autumn 2009), 195-214.
famine, disease, death, war, overpopulation, and underemployment created a new crisis that religious stability could not alleviate.

Beginning in 1570 and continuing for nearly a century, plague ravaged densely populated societies. During this period, serious outbreaks of the plague swept through England, the Netherlands, and throughout continental Europe. Weather also affected food supplies for those living in England in the late sixteenth century; a simple harvest failure could be serious, though not necessarily fatal, to people living close to subsistence; but a series of such failures could and did bring death from famine and starvation. In the bad years of 1594-7 much of the country was thus affected, especially in poor and remote areas, such as Cumbria, where famine was also followed by outbreaks of plague in the local towns in 1598."

While “it is very unlikely that food, even for the extremely poor, ever gave out all at once in early modern England. It is more likely, that diets progressively worsened and the symptoms of famine would have become increasingly apparent.” Famine also led to spikes in food prices. Between 1500 and 1650, “food prices in England rose approximately seven times and prices of a selection of industrial products increased


three-fold” ushering in a period of sustained inflation.\textsuperscript{445} These food spikes were brought on by four successive harvest failures that caused food prices to rocket.

The impact on small farmers was catastrophic. Many “slid into rent arrears and debt” from which, they never recovered.\textsuperscript{446} The most vulnerable areas were “the upland north and west – where agricultural land was most marginal, numerous small-holders subsisted without adequate reserves to fall back upon, rural industry was depressed, local populations depended upon imported grain and the transportation of relief supplies was difficult.”\textsuperscript{447} The result was famine conditions in the winters of 1596, 1597, and 1598 and “widespread misery among the laboring poor.”\textsuperscript{448} Rolling crop failures and resulting famine, along with record high unemployment and rapid population growth during the last half of the sixteenth and the first half of the seventeenth centuries marked a hundred years of “long hard struggle for working men and women, whose wages were eroded by inflation, and who never caught up with the rise of prices” within their lifetime.\textsuperscript{449}

Rapid population growth, beginning in the mid-sixteenth century, exacerbated the impact of rolling famines. The population of England in 1570 is estimated to have been 2.8 million. By 1603, the population increased to 3.75 million, an increase of nearly one


\textsuperscript{447} Keith Wrightson, \textit{Earthly Necessities}, 199.

\textsuperscript{448} Keith Wrightson, \textit{Earthly Necessities}, 199.

million people in thirty years. Economic historian Andrew Appleby argues that attempts to overcome food shortages resulting from overpopulation were disastrous:

Cultivated pasture was planted with grain, which – in the short run – made the land yield less calories than it would have in animal production. The reason for this is that land converted from pasture is poor and quickly becomes exhausted. Harvests decline to the point where the seed is not recovered. Then the land must be returned to pasture, even though it may take some years to regain its grass. The temporary benefits are thus erased and food production actually begins to decline. If population growth continues into the period of declining food production, the supply demand balance is broken, as less food is available to freed more people. Hunger, or famine, follows unless there is some supplemental source of food or unless the people can migrate to an area with a food surplus.

Andrew Cunningham and Peter Grell argue that demographic changes and population pressure, “underlay all the crisis of the age” affecting every aspect of life in England including marriage, employment, childbirth, health, and life span. Andrew Appleby posits that in some parts of early modern England, "starvation among the children of the poor was too common, too 'natural'" to have warranted written records. However there are indications within the archives of widespread death associated with


famine. In 1597, the vicar of Tamworth, Staffordshire “noted in the parish register that ‘Dyvers died of the boudie flixe.’” These references are "almost certainly a reference to the characteristic terminal diarrhea of starvation and not some infectious dysentery that happened to break out in the parish." Famine and the resulting deaths from starvation and famine related disease resulted in an increase in burials recorded during the periods of identified famine. In turn, as burials increased, “recorded baptisms and marriages declined” sharply.

Anyone living in late sixteenth century England would have been aware that the countryside was full and the towns were incapable of absorbing the overflow after the shift from arable land to enclosed pastures robbed a large portion of the rural population of their livelihood. Population shifts soon followed the realization that the population would outstrip the limited amount of arable land available to support farming efforts. Migration was very evident, especially in “the northern upland parishes, where there were few restraints on immigration.”

Overpopulation and hunger were driving more and more people away from their homes to seek employment that did not exist. In 1573, sustained unemployment led to an increase in complaints in the House of Commons about “rogues, vagabonds, and

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454 Appleby, Famine in England, 8.
456 Cunningham and Grell, Four Horsemen, 15.
457 Clarkson, The Pre-Industrial Economy, 32.
458 Clarkson, The Pre-Industrial Economy, 32.
thieves.” By 1593, what had been once been viewed as roving bands of miscreants became a “multitude of beggars” that stood as a testament to an economy that had failed to provide employment opportunities in the face of population growth. In 1597 alone, the House of Commons considered thirteen bills on pauperism and unemployment, which led to two acts passing through Parliament. One act “authorized the erections of houses of correction for the punishment of idle rouges, vagabonds, and beggars; the other reaffirmed the responsibility of parishes for their poor, who were to be put to work with money raised by compulsory assessments. The impotent were to be cared for in hospitals and pauper children apprenticed.” By 1601, Parliament had codified all the minor bills and acts into one encompassing poor law that remained the basis of poor law administration until 1834.

Peter Clark’s study of migration into Kentish towns during this period shows that “migration was the rule” and not as historians previously thought “the exception.” The “tramping pauper was a demographic commonplace” during the period of 1580 to 1640, an era marked by a “massive influx of long-distance subsistence migrants, superimposed over local or betterment migration.”

E. E. Rich’s research in the muster rolls in sixteenth century England lends support to the notion of migration as the rule rather than the exception by showing evidence “that

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462 Clark and Slack, Crisis and Order, 138.
movement from one county to another within England was fairly commonplace.” The rolls contain a pattern of movement resulting from social and economic factors, which was well established by the end of the sixteenth century.

An example of Rich’s findings from the eleven parishes that comprise the Hundred of Godalming, Surrey suggests that “the number of names not repeated in the return for 1583 and that of 1575-7” reflects the astonishing changes to the population that took place over less than a ten year period. He concluded that, “the general picture after a lapse of less than ten years was that the men who answered the muster had changed by over 50%.” Rather than finding evidence of a static population during this period, Rich found that the evidence is “very strong in favor of movement between 1544 and 1641,” estimating that by the end of this period “only 16% of the agricultural population had a hundred years in the same village behind them.” Rich’s overall conclusion was that "once movement begins to appear normal instead of exceptional,” additional study of the period would lend substance to the concept that mobility was indeed a part of the very fabric of life in early modern England. Others such as E.J. Buckatzsch agree that Rich’s conclusion “seems to be incontrovertible.” Buckatzsch research also shows that “village populations at this time in this part of England were remarkably fluid.”

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into guilds and corporations echoes Rich’s findings and allows us to estimate “the distances over which some migrations were made” between 1575 and 1630.\textsuperscript{468}

Not all those roaming the country were vagabonds. Economic historian Leslie Clarkson argues that, "the widespread nature of labor mobility in pre-industrial England strongly suggests that many people desired to better their living standards" as well as survive. Clarkson’s focus on labor suggests that, “there was a good deal of mobility of labor between occupations as well as from one region to another.”\textsuperscript{469} Young men seeking “apprenticeships and unskilled labor seeking work” made up much of the movement from farm to town and from one county to the next during this period. For those engaged in agriculture, there were still a few areas of the country, where “it was possible to find a piece of common land or waste on which to eke out a living.”\textsuperscript{470} For a time, for those engaged in agriculture willing to move, often frequently, it was possible to better their living standards. However, after 1603, the Crown made subsistence lease holding less attractive by “demanding greater payments from its tenants . . . private landlords followed suit and demanded high fines or the substitution of leasehold for customary tenure.”\textsuperscript{471}

The changes to leaseholds affected the tithes paid to clergy further reducing the already meager stipends they received and placed this once stable occupation at greater risk. Richard Bernard, a friend and mentor to John Robinson who would later become

\textsuperscript{468} Buckatzsch, “Local Populations,” 68.

\textsuperscript{469} L. A. Clarkson, “The Pre-Industrial Economy,” 31.

\textsuperscript{470} L. A. Clarkson, “The Pre-Industrial Economy,” 32.

\textsuperscript{471} Appleby, Famine in England, 5.
the pastor of the Scrooby Puritans in Holland, warned that the inability to maintain a living would drive away top clerics. In a sermon in 1607, he suggested that “the nobility and gentry would rather their sons become anything – ‘wordy lawyers, fraudulent merchants, killing physicians’ – as long as they did not take holy orders.”

Alongside this social disintegration, Carl Bridenbaugh has described the beginning of a religious insecurity felt by some of the English clergy and laypeople “as a gnawing sense of sin accompanied by a relentless search for religious security and assurance.” Puritans made a strong case that the Church itself was to blame for the social and economic crisis the country faced.

Rank and file clergy began to question the administrative structure of a church that allowed the wealth and social status of bishops and archbishops to grow, while those at the parish level grew “economically and socially impoverished by commutations, imprecations, leasing of tithes, the decay of fees and offerings, and the inequitable distribution of taxes.” To make matters worse, “Cambridge and Oxford were increasing their divinity enrollments at a time when the practice of ecclesiastical pluralism and non-residency placed the few available positions in the hands of an even smaller group of the privileged few.”

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Rather than return home, “educated clerics served where college patronage took them, not in their native parishes.” While seeming advantageous to those seeking employment in an already flooded market, “clerical inter-marriage, synods, and exercises created a horizontal nexus of clerical contacts at the expense of parochial relationships” further eroding the systems that helped maintain continuity at the local, parish level. Rather than being seen as a part of the community, ministers may have been viewed as outsiders who brought with them radical ideas and intruded into the neighborhood by complaining about “alehouses and present[ing] fornicators at visitation.” John Robinson, who would later become minister to the Scrooby Puritans in Holland, was one of those young clerics fresh from university. His first appointment at Norwich went well in the beginning, but his presence in the pulpit there began to chafe. Robinson owed his unpopularity to his “over-valuation of the learning and holiness” of the congregation at Norwich. Robinson’s tenure in Norwich was short-lived.

Adding to the uncertainty within parishes led by unfamiliar clerics was the influx of “strangers” and vagabonds. Over time, communities struggling to provide resources to those constantly on the move began to enact strong vagrancy laws. Vagrancy in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century was about more than simply being poor.


Vagrancy was a direct result of overpopulation, a factor that "even the most superficial approach to the sixteenth century in England must take full account of." Vagrancy was “the product of profound social dislocations – a huge and growing poverty problem, disastrous economic and demographic shifts and massive migration – and had important political consequences.  

Contemporaries such as Richard Hakluyt were so perturbed by the ever-increasing population of vagabonds they began to drawing up plans to dispose of them in the colonies. The masterless men and women “prowl[ing] the streets of London would be better off building forts, towns, and churches in new English settlements abroad.”

Nearly thirty years after Hakluyt published Divers Voyages Touching the Discoveries of America, Robert Gray penned A Good Speed to Virginia, a melancholy treatise about the economic prospects in England for surplus men and women, that continued to urge them to seek their fortune in Virginia. Gray summed up the situation in this way: “our land hath brought forth, but it hath not milk sufficient in the breast thereof to nourish all those children which it hath brought forth. It affordeth neither employment nor preferment for those that depend upon it.”

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It was not just vagrants finding their way into communities. “Strangers,” immigrants from Holland, Spain, France, and elsewhere made their way to England in increasingly greater numbers in an attempt to escape the famines in their own country. Strangers did not limit themselves to London, which in 1573 reported having a total of 4,287 immigrants on the rolls. The London immigrants came from at least five countries – Holland, France, Scandinavia, Italy, and Scotland. Norwich too reported a sizeable pool of strangers Colchester, Halstead, Ipswich. Most came “onlie to seek worck for their lyvinge.”

Earlier historians argued that the strangers who immigrated during this period were fleeing religious persecution, but notes found among the rolls suggest otherwise emphasizing “they were of no church 'and their comynge hether was not for religion as by their owne confession dothe appeare.”

During this period “more people were in motion over long distances and sojourning away from home for longer periods than at any other time in human history. More people were engaged in transactions with people whose languages they did not know and whose cultures they had never experienced.” These newcomers to England brought with them new industries, powered by large groups of skilled workers. York was one of the first cities to embrace these early modern entrepreneurs. In 1597, the corporation of York “granted the freedom of the city, a ten-year monopoly, a house rent free, and a loan of money to a man who promised to set up the making of fustians in York and employ 50

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486 Brook, *Vermeer’s Hat*, 19.
poor people.” This type of economic partnership continued for the next three decades, “as more schemes unfolded in England and then moved across the Atlantic.”

As people left communities and unfamiliar clerics, strangers, and immigrants found their way there, traditional communities that made up much of the parish system began to collapse. Urban centers expanded, drawing away resources from the country, causing the structures that comprised the parish system to erode. Many of the parishes that suffered losses from famine and migration “ceased to be genuine communities.” Across England, society had been “irreversibly altered.” The effects, while not immediately apparent, could be seen over time. Keith Wrightson argues that:

by the turn of the seventeenth century, local communities had been deeply penetrated by forces, which both weakened their localism and gave a sharper edge to their patterns of social stratification. Inequalities of wealth were more marked. Sharper distinctions of education, religion, attitudes, beliefs, and manners had emerged to reinforce the polarizing effects of demographic and economic development.

Although population growth began to slow by 1590, the slow down was due to "the effects of rising rates of mortality, and in particular to the growing susceptibility of populations pressing hard on available economic resources to periodic 'crisis of subsistence'" and not because of policies or programs that addressed the root causes of

While there appears to be some stabilization of population in the early part of the seventeenth century, the results of decades of population growth had already taken their toll. The changes to English economic and social structures during the period of growth resulted in “deteriorating life chances of a much enlarged wage-laboring population.”

Hardest hit by the uncertainties of this period were “people of small property, those for whom marriage was linked to leasing and stocking a small farm or establishing themselves independently in a craft or a trade in an increasingly competitive environment.”

One example of the societal changes Wrightson alludes to can be seen in the marriage patterns and the effect these changes had on families and particularly on young men and women. Timothy Brook posits that, “those who failed to marry were propelled out of their homes in search of employment and survival.” Many of the young men made their way to the coast seeking employment as sailors, or work on the “wharves and warehouses handling the new global trade.” For those truly desperate, there was work on the “crews of pirate ships that preyed on the growing maritime traffic.” Young women cast from their homes had even fewer options. They could become maids or prostitutes.

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491 Wrightson, *English Society*, 221.
492 Wrightson, *English Society*, 221.
495 Brook, *Vermeer’s Hat*, 14
496 Brook, *Vermeer’s Hat*, 14
A more recent study by Robert Huston argues that not all of the migration during this period was out of desperation. Some of the migration that occurred in the early seventeenth century, "was voluntary and [drew] from a broad spectrum of society: from laborers to lairds."\footnote{Houston, The Population of Britain and Ireland, 54.} Huston posts that the motivations of those moving about the country or immigrating were more complex that once thought. Upon closer study, we now find that “even the 'supposedly' religious movers to New England in the first half of the seventeenth century had important family and economic reasons for leaving their homeland.”\footnote{Houston, The Population of Britain and Ireland, 54.} While we should not simply infer motivation, “the timing of emigration and the composition of migrant groups suggest that narrowing opportunities to improve, or at least maintain, individual or family fortunes rather than absolute want were among the principle incentives.”\footnote{Rich, "Population," 262.}

E. E. Rich expands the argument further, positing that when we broaden the scope to include all those who migrated during this period, “not only social and economic but religious factors assume new proportions.”\footnote{Rich, "Population," 262.} When we begin to understand more about how people moved, and how they embraced the concept of mobility as a means to improve their situation, the “strangers in London and the Leyden Puritans, lose their air of peculiar godliness and purposefulness.”

\footnote{Robert A. Houston, The Population of Britain and Ireland, 1550-1750 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 54.}
As with persecution, when historians began to look at movement and mobility in its entirety, rather than as singular cases associated with those “fleeing persecution,” what they found was that moving, whether it be from one county to the next or to another country, was “accomplished by ordinary men and women who for the most part were not conscious that they were doing anything remarkable.”

Traveling aboard was a luxury afforded to the sons of royalty as well as necessity of the untitled. Mixed through the Calendar of State Papers for James I are travel licenses granted for numerous “Sirs” and their sons as well as those such as Richard Chalcroft, “a sewer” and Dudley Digges of Poppeshall, Kent.

Much credence has been afforded Bradford’s claim that those in his party were twice thwarted by authorities while attempting to “flee” to Holland. On the first attempt they were betrayed by a ship captain and turned over to a “chatchpoule officer” who “rifled and stripped them” of all their money and valuables before handing them over to “the magistrates.”

The next spring, the group was set to leave from Hull where, again they


502 Robert Lemon and Mary Anne Everett Green. Calendar of State Papers / Domestic Series / Reigns of Edward VI., Mary, Elizabeth I., James I.: Preserved in the State Paper Department of Her Majesty's Public Record Office (London: H.M. Stationery Office, 1857). There are numerous records of licenses for “foreign” or “abroad” travel throughout the CSPD for James I from 1603-1610. These grants were made to those with titles, to students studying at university, and to those without title or professional distinction suggesting that the limitations on travel alluded by Bradford and those who cite him may have been overstated.

503 The Oxford English Dictionary defines the catchpole as a “petty officer of justice; a sheriff’s officer . . . a warrant office who arrests for debt, a bum-baliff.” OED Online. November 2010. Oxford University Press. http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/28830?redirectedFrom=catchpoule (accessed October 12, 2010). The practice of rounding up groups of people traveling without the proper immigration papers or permission by the King to leave the country was standard practice. This passage leaves open the question – Were they detained because for their religious beliefs? Or were they simply viewed as vagrants, which had become a growing problem in seventeenth century England?
were found out and only the men aboard the ship at the time made it to freedom, while the women “gatt over at length . . . to much rejoicing.”

At first glance, Bradford’s story seems a heroic and tragic tale of persecution and escape, but it is the only account of its kind before the Great Migration. After 1630, letters, personal testimonies, and accounts of escape and persecution became more commonplace, rather than the one off exception, circulating through Plymouth and Boston. Almost two decades after the Scrooby Puritans left England for Holland and then for America, the stories of those employing the desperate courage required to tear a family from its ancestral village, the fierce sense of intolerable wrong, crusading missionary zeal made sense. In Bradford’s day these heroic tales seem more like narrative extravaganzas that must be placed within the context of those who were migrating for economic reasons or to escape the cycles of plague and famine that were prevalent during this period. When viewed against the larger contextual frame of life during this period, the group that Bradford’s writes about may have felt they were living in a world that was fraught with perils controlled by supernatural forces. The fears they felt may have contributed to Bradford’s singular narrative, what appears as a one-off story of perceived persecution, rather than contributing to a narrative of systematic religious persecution driving forced migration occurring during this period.

Turning to S. A. Peyton’s work on the lease holding records for Nottinghamshire county, where Scrooby is located, is quite useful. His research finds that between 1558 and 1641:

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the population of the county of Nottingham was in a highly mobile condition. It would be expected that the names of tenants, leaseholders, and even copyholders, might gradually disappear, but one was hardly prepared for so rapid a disappearance of freeholders . . . therefore it seems permissible to infer that the rural population, contrary to the general conception, was not permanently rooted in its native soil.  

Peyton concludes that, “any uncompromising assertion of the stability of the rural population under the Tudors and Stuarts deserves revision in the light of this fiscal evidence.”

By the time the Scrooby Puritans removed to Holland, “they and their families were accustomed to the idea of migration.” Having traveled to Holland as a young man, traveling to a foreign country would have held few fears for Brewster, who may have used contacts made while in Davison’s employ to pave the group’s way. In 1620, some of the Scrooby Puritans who had removed to Holland a decade earlier, set out from England for their new life in America. The time the Scrooby Puritans spent in Holland informs Bradford’s persecution narrative, yet historians often ignore this period. It is here, in the narrative of their time in Holland, that we find the economic motivation for forming the colony at Plymouth. Bradford writes, that William Brewster suffered greatly after removing to Holland. Bradford recalls that Brewster “spent most of his means,


506 Peyton, Village Population, 250.

having a great charge and many children; and in regard of his former breeding and course of life, not so fit for many employments as the others were, especially for such as were toilsome and laborious.” In England, Brewster had been a member of the gentry, a class that included landowners, sheriffs, bailiffs, and royal and ecclesiastical administrators. The members of this lesser nobility “exercised collective social control over the populace on a territorial basis, which reinforced their individual status and power.”

Prior to his leaving England for Holland, Brewster was a wealthy member of the “parish gentry,” exercising influence and control over the local affair of Scrooby Manor and the surrounding area. Those who followed Brewster to Holland were primarily clergy and there was only room in the church formed at Holland for one minister. John Robinson became the leader of the church at Holland and a professor at the University of Leyden.

The rest had to find what occupations they could in a place where they did not speak the language and within a culture they found inhospitable. Bradford recounts having been burdened with “heavy labors . . . their bodies bowed under the weight of such [they] became decrepit in their early youth; the vigor of nature being consumed in the very bud as it were.” These were not a people accustomed to want or hard labor.

Of the 102 people aboard the Mayflower, only 35 were from the congregation in Leyden. Most were from England and were full members of the Church of England.

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509 Mercer, Medieval Gentry, 8.

John Robinson, their pastor in Holland, cautioned the members of his flock to get along with the others. Before leaving the dock, he entreats his parishioners to neither take or give offense because "you are many of you strangers as to the person, so to the infirmities one of another." Rather than taking offense at the actions or deeds of the strangers among them, Robinson suggests that "your intended course of civil community will minister continual occasion of offense, and will be as fuel for that fire, expect you diligently quench it with brotherly forbearance." If the Scrooby/Leyden Puritans had been the only group aboard, such precautions would hardly seem necessary.

By the time of the Great Migration, twenty years after the Scrooby group’s removal to Holland and ten years after they established a colony in New England, "the Atlantic had ceased to be a barrier and had already become a highway." Much has been made of the minority of the colonists traveling that highway. The Puritans have been the easiest to detect, leaving behind journals to be discovered and writings to support their views and disaffection for the Church and its authorities. What still eludes us is the “frame of mind of the majority of the colonists, who were not quite so noticeable.” The majority of those who immigrated where “moved naturally and freely as was their custom. Unselfconscious, unembittered, uninhibited, and perhaps uninspired, they

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moved into a new sphere. This was the most important factor in the first great modern colonial movement.\textsuperscript{515}

It is from within this mix of sixteenth century crises and events, movement and mobility and new information that we should reevaluate the Scrooby Puritans. Having cast doubt the argument that a lack of freedom to move about the country resulted in their imprisonment by authorities or that economic motivations added to their decision to flee, we turn in the next and final chapter to their religious state of mind for an explanation of their decision to leave Scrooby for Holland. Examining the religious underpinnings for their removal brings us full circle, allowing us to explore their beliefs within their historical context. By laying to rest the economic motivations for removal, we can now move on to explore the religious ideas that underscored the Scrooby Puritans decision to separate themselves from the Church of England and ultimately, their country.

Chapter 6: A Theology of Separation

The Church of England, till it be separated and free from the world, and prince of the world that reigneth in it, and so from Antichrist, his eldest son, in his hierarchy, priesthood, and other ordinances, and be taken into covenant with the Lord, cannot possibly be the true church of God, or wife of Christ.\textsuperscript{516}

\textit{John Robinson}

To those who knew him, John Robinson must have seemed like so many of the young and zealous Cambridge pastors finally set free to preach after having spent years studying at the feet of their academic heroes while consuming the Bible and the scholarly texts of their calling. He has been described as having had the “restlessly critical, yet hopeful outlook of many young religionists who, in the early months of James's reign rejected the alarming extremes of separatism.”\textsuperscript{517} Had James I embraced the entirety of the reforms presented by the Puritans at the Hampton Court Conference, we might never have heard of John Robinson or known of his pastoral enthusiasm. In all likelihood, he would have remained loyally and anonymously within the Church of England. Rather, than becoming pastor to a group of separatists from Scrooby who travelled from England to Holland and ultimately to America in search of freedom from the church they believed was so evil and so corrupt, it was the very embodiment of the Antichrist.

Robinson began his career as a lecturer at St. Andrew’s Church in Norwich. His debut sermon, heard by the mayor and other dignitaries, was reportedly quite successful.


Within the year, services at Norwich had become so popular, that “divers convenient seates” had to be added to accommodate the large numbers attending the sermons at St. Andrews. Yet, Robinson’s tenure there was short lived. At some time between 1604 and 1605 Robinson left Norwich. Some historians have claimed that Robinson was “deprived” of his position at Norwich in 1604 because he refused to submit to the canons. However, no record of his deprivation has been found among the records for the Norwich diocese.

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520 The accounts of Robinson’s early career are conflicting. While some agree that Robinson was employed at St. Andrews in Norwich and was later removed from his position there because of his beliefs, others such as Matthew Reynolds argue that he was never formally employed by the church at Norwich and only served there occasionally as a guest lecturer in 1603. Reynolds posits that “if Robinson ministered at St. Andrews, it is unlikely he held the cure itself . . . his name certainly does not feature among the extent *libri cleri* for the period in question as the parish’s chaplain or preacher. Matthew Reynolds, *Godly Reformers and their Opponents in Early Modern England; Religion in Norwich c. 1560-1643* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2005), 98. The *Dictionary of National Biography* entry for Robinson further complicates Robinson’s association with St. Andrews. Its author Keith Sprunger states that Robinson left his fellowship at Cambridge in 1604 after his marriage (married students could not hold fellowship) and then tells us that he was ousted from Norwich in 1603, even though records show that Robinson was in residence in Cambridge during this time. Sprunger points to an account written in 1608 by Henry Ainsworth as proof of Robinson’s troubles in Norwich; however, Ainsworth only recalls that, “certain citizens had been excommunicated for resorting to prayers conducted by Robinson,” but he fails to tell us where this meeting occurs and there is no record of presentment for Robinson during his time in England. Historians have speculated that Ainsworth was referring to the church at Norwich, but there is no way to be certain. Sprunger also points to a document held in the Bodleian Library that for a number of years was unknown to historians. The document is an exchange an anonymous author and Robinson conducted after his removal from England in 1608. Robinson’s first response is quoted throughout the document. The quote that concerns us is Robinson’s response to an attempt by the author of the original letter to place him at St. Andrews. Robinson agrees that he was “sometimes a minister (as you say) at St. Andrews in Norwich, but never any member, having my house standing (which is the infallible determination of members) in another parish and my children were baptized there, which has led to the confusion about from
More likely, Robinson’s departure was tied to his growing disillusionment with the Church. Disappointed by the lack of progress from the Hampton Court conference, he began to view the Church of England as a harbinger of evil that must be completely cleansed or rejected.\textsuperscript{521} In the essay “An Answer to a Censorious Epistle,” he wrote that the church had become an "odious commixture of all sorts of people in whose lap the vilest miscreants are dandled, sucking her breasts, as her natural children."\textsuperscript{522} By the time Robinson left Norwich, he was convinced that hell itself had gained the upper hand over the church.

However, it was not until his association with Scrooby Robinson began to develop the view that he was a seventeenth century Moses, sent to save his people. He wrote at length about Moses and the exodus from Egypt. In an answer to his adversaries, Robinson wrote, “whilst he was in the land of Midian, God indeed then showed his will to Moses but stretched not out his hand for their deliverance till many days after”.\textsuperscript{523} Separation was not a hasty decision. Robinson and his congregation did not come to the decision rashly. The decision to separate was made after much discussion, prayer, and consideration. For Robinson, separation from those he admired and respected became a


necessary step. And, separation would come at with a price. Before leaving Scrooby, he wrote:

No man can endure to be withdrawn from, nor easily dissented from, by another, in his way of religion in which, above all other things, he makes account, that he himself draws nearest unto God. Therefore to do this causelessly, for not the separation but the cause makes the schismatic, though out of error or scrupulosity, is evil more, to do it out of wantonness of mind or lust to contend, or affectation of singularity; most of all to do it out of proud contempt or cruel revenge against others.\textsuperscript{524}

As difficult as the course of separation might be and as much as they may have to endure censor and even derision from those staying in the church, Robinson argued that their cause, delivering God’s church from Satan, was worth any pain that separation might cause. Robinson reminds his detractors that, “God hath, in a peculiar manner, entailed afflictions to the sincere profession of the gospel, above that of the law before Christ.”\textsuperscript{525} Indeed, Robinson cast himself as Moses leading his people out of Egypt and establishes separatists as God’s new chosen people. As such, he viewed them as the: main ends for which the Lord gathereth and preserveth his church upon earth, are that he might have a peculiar people, separated unto himself from all other peoples, to call upon his name in faith and to glorify him their heavenly Father in their holy conversation, whom he also might glorify in the end of their faith, the salvation of their souls. But for wicked

\textsuperscript{524} Robinson and Ashton, \textit{Works of John Robinson}, Vol. 1, 72.

\textsuperscript{525} Robinson and Ashton, \textit{Works of John Robinson}, Vol. 1, 140.
and ungodly persons in the church, as they serve no way for these ends, but the contrary, causing God's name to be blasphemed, and his wrath to come upon their disobedience, so to gather or admit them into the church is utterly to frustrate God's ends, and to gather for Satan rather than for God.  

He continues this theme in his essay, “On Ministerial Dignity,” writing that when “two or three faithful people do arise, separating themselves from the world into the fellowship of the gospel, and covenant of Abraham, they are a church truly gathered . . . against which the gates of hell shall not prevail, not your disgraceful invectives neither.”

The tipping point in favor of separation seems to have come in late 1605, when Richard Bernard held a small conference with a handful of likeminded Puritan clerics who had begun to talk of separation from the church. At the conference and in papers released later, those convened made their arguments for and against separation. Bernard, Robinson’s mentor, came into the conference leaning toward separation. He had refused to subscribe to the canons during the 1604 Visitations and was deprived, but after eventually subscribing, he was reinstated to his church. John Smyth, who would later lead a small separatist congregation in Amsterdam, originally argued against separation at the conference, but later became convinced it was the only course left to pursue. Ironically, Bernard would later accuse Smyth of duplicity, claiming that after “conferring

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with divers of godly and learned Ministers, he came resolved of the truth against the way of Separation” and yet choose separation.528

After his rejection of separation, Bernard penned a “Dissuasive from the Way of Separation” in 1606 in an attempt to keep Robinson, Smyth, and Clifton from taking the final and fateful step of removing from the church and England. Bernard offered an option to separation, the formation of a group of “voluntary professors” who entered into a “particular covenant to watch over one another, to admonish one another, . . . and there upon to receive the Lord's Supper.”529 Covenanted groups like these joined together across England for the purpose of ensuring that their members lived a 'godly' life on earth despite the actions of the church.530

John Smyth, John Robinson, and Robert Clifton, the leaders of the congregations at Gainsborough and Scrooby, ultimately determined that the Church of England had refused reformation according to biblical requirements, and thus, it was no longer a true church. Total purification of the church and nothing less would do. They adopted the covenant structure proposed by Bernard, but they would establish covenants within separated churches. Stephen Brachlow argues that “as Lot separated from the city of Zoar ‘for fear of the same judgment, which had overtaken the rest of the cities,’ so Robinson believed the time had come to flee the established church, in which ‘habitation of devils, . . .


530 Collinson, Godly People, 545.
. . had hold of every foul spirit.”

For Robinson and the Scrooby group, separation was the only option. Robinson embraced an eschatological theology of “Last Things” based on intensive study of the book of Revelation and the book of Daniel. The failure of the church to reform solidified for Robinson the surety that he was “living in a new age, one that was indeed the last age.” Although the Catholic Church had suppressed millenarianism for centuries, it began to thrive in the late sixteenth century among Puritan divines, especially in “areas where population was increasing, where social bonds were being shattered and the gap between rich and poor was becoming a chasm.” For those living with social and economic uncertainty as Robinson and the members of his congregation at Scrooby were, “the desire for a kingdom of saints” ushered in by a “millennium of peace and security” was intensely appealing. Millennial writings set the history of the Church “from the time of St. Paul to the days of Queen Elizabeth” squarely in context of chapters

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532 Burrage, Early English Dissenters, 229.

533 Peter Toon, Puritans, the Millennium and Future of Israel Puritan Eschatology 1600 to 1660 (Cambridge: James Clarke, 1970), 18.


535 The theology of Millenarianism focused on the “imminent Second Coming of Christ” predicting Christ’s triumphant return to establish an earthly kingdom and rule with his saints either for a literal one thousand years or an indeterminate period. Puritan Thomas Brightman writing in 1604-1607 predicted a gradual Godly transformation of society for one thousand years. His ideas were “championed and legitimized” by Puritan ministers. See Ronald H. Fritze and William B. Robison, (London: Greenwood, 1995), 333 and Toon, Puritans, the Millennium, 18.

536 Toon, Puritans, the Millennium, 18.
Those such as Robinson who embraced millennial theology believed that “the Reformation was a mighty act of God that must surely triumph because it was of divine origin.”

By equating the Church of England with the Antichrist, Robinson shows full acceptance of an “end times” theology. Robinson in his answer to “Mr. Bernard’s Reasons Against Separation Discussed” provides one of his strongest arguments that the Antichrist was on the throne of the Church of England and that separation from the church was the only path to salvation. He wrote:

> Antichrist cannot be rightly discerned of us, but in his opposition unto Christ, and exaltation above him, so doth this his exaltation appear sundry ways, by which he doth translate unto himself the honour due unto God alone, and his Son our Lord Christ: as in dispensing with the moral law professedly, binding and loosing conscience, devising and imposing forms of religion, transferring empires and kingdoms; and all these doth this earthly god, as he is called by the plenary power of the seat apostolical. The same also it was, which John foresaw in the Revelation, namely, that the Antichristians worshipped devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and wood which can neither see, nor hear, nor walk, and again that they worshipped the beast, both small

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537 Toon, *Puritans, the Millennium*, 25

538 Toon, *Puritans, the Millennium*, 25.
and great, rich and poor, free and bond, and received his mark on their
right hand and on their foreheads.\footnote{Robinson and Ashton, \textit{Works of John Robinson}, Vol. 2, 468.}

Robinson saw the poverty, hunger, and the loss of goods and lands occurring around
him as part of God’s plan, marking the end times, all things to be endured for “Christ's
sake” including the “willful poverty . . . and willful persecution” that accompanied their
inevitable separation.\footnote{Robinson and Ashton, \textit{Works of John Robinson}, 161.} He and his fellow separatists believed that the corruption that
flourished in the church was a lightning rod for God’s coming wrath. The only way to
escape it was to leave the church.

Thomas Brightman, a fellow at Cambridge and a contemporary of Robinson, penned
an apocalyptic scenario that informed Robinson’s own end-times theology. In his
treatise, Brightman “reversed the role of England in providential history from that of
Foxe’s elect nation to doomed Laodicea, the most sinful church in the book of
their time and place in history as one directly tied to prophetic revelation. The
Reformation marked the “end of time, a great revelatory and eschatological event
preceding that moment when the whole mystery of salvation history would be
in the final stage of providential history, a sacred eschatological time when the whole drama of salvation and redemption would be finally resolved. Thus, while Satan and his minions were ravaging the earth, . . . Christ’s second coming was imminent, and that his saints would be delivered.\textsuperscript{543}

Brightman and Robinson believed that the “saints” were living through the “second millennium, a ‘new binding of Satan, by the restoring of the Gospel,’ which had begun with the . . . reformation, but which had not yet been consummated.”\textsuperscript{544} This was coming about during a period of general crisis, itself a signal that the millennium was underway, and the willing “martyrdom” of the saints was yet additional proof.\textsuperscript{545}

Prior to 1600, it was common for English Protestants to identify the Church of Rome with Antichrist. But applying that argument to the Church of England (as the separatists did) was unnerving for many of those who heard it. As a reformed separatist, Bernard censured Robinson, Clifton, and Smythe for twisting passages from the prophets in order to serve what he felt was their own warped assessment of the Church of England. In his response to Bernard, Robinson replied that, agree or not, their interpretation was “given to them by the Holy Spirit. All truth, by whomever spoken, is of God and of his Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth.”\textsuperscript{546}

\textsuperscript{543} Zakai, \textit{Jonathan Edwards}, 170.


\textsuperscript{545} Haykin and Jones, \textit{Drawn into Controversie}, 86.

\textsuperscript{546} Robinson and Ashton, \textit{Works of John Robinson}, Vol. 1, 73.
For Brightman and Robinson, the only options were to either stay within the church and share in its ultimate judgment or flee. Brightman would die in a coach accident before accepting the call of early separation. No longer able to reconcile himself to the Church of England, Robinson gathered the congregation at Scrooby and bound them into a covenant outside the established Church.\textsuperscript{547} About the same time, Robinson was forming his Separated church Smyth similarly organized a covenanted church at Gainsborough.\textsuperscript{548} For those who chose separation, the act led first to “a profound theological, social, and psychological divide.”\textsuperscript{549} The decision to separate geographically was merely the end of a long and painful spiritual deliberation. To remain within the church would threaten their very salvation.

Non-separatists, such as Bernard and William Ames, saw separation not as a means to overcome persecution but as an ego driven theology. They argued that the separatists were casting themselves as "super-saints, in fact, not so much in performance and worthiness but in their sorrowful recognition of how unsatisfactory their Christian profession had become."\textsuperscript{550} Each faction – separatist and non-separatist – drew on the teachings of Paul to make their case. The separatists bound their separation with the “Pauline teaching on edification and Christian liberty” at the heart of Puritanism.\textsuperscript{551} The non-separating Puritans bound their decision not to separate to the Pauline principle at the

\textsuperscript{547} Bradford’s History, ed. cit., 27-9; Burrage, op. cit., 231, 234; and Whitley, op. cit. lxii.

\textsuperscript{548} Bradford’s History, ed. cit., 29.

\textsuperscript{549} Collinson, Godly People, 545.

\textsuperscript{550} Collinson, Godly People, 545

\textsuperscript{551} Collinson, Godly People, 545
core of Protestantism, based in a justification by faith alone.\textsuperscript{552} In his essay, “The Original State of Mankind,” Robinson wrote

As by one man's disobedience many were made sinners. If they say as some do that all are made sinners by imitation only they are clearly confuted; first by daily experience, in which it is plain, that children coming to some discerning, will lie, filch, and revenge themselves though they never heard a lie told. It is alas! too evident that they bring this corruption into the world with them. Secondly, by the apostle's words, ‘For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.’ If we be made unrighteous only by imitation of Adam's sin, and not by his performing it, as our root naturally then we are made righteous only by imitation of Christ's righteousness and not by his performing righteousness and fulfilling the law for us, as our spiritual root, in which we are grafted by faith.\textsuperscript{553}

In this passage, Robinson makes clear that faith alone is not enough to ensure one’s salvation. To ensure salvation, he had to “righteously imitate” Christ’s own righteousness. And for Robinson, that was only possible within a community of true saints. While Robinson believed that “election was an inward spiritual reality known absolutely to God alone,” one of the ways saints were made known was through their

\textsuperscript{552} Collinson, \textit{Godly People}, 546

“profession of faith and confession of sins.” A public manifestation of “these hidden and invisible graces” was “required of everyone, both man and woman” before they could be admitted into the church. Without these public confessions, the congregation had no way to “discern whether or not a person was, in all probability, elect and therefore fit for church membership.”

Robinson believed church membership should be limited to only those who showed visible signs of having been elected by Christ for membership in the renewed church. He considered a true church a company of “saints” who displayed an “outward calling to Christianity.” Because their anointing came directly from Christ, true believers were compelled to follow a biblical pattern of the church in order “to make the election more sure to themselves.” For Robinson, the precise practice of the churchmanship set forth in the Bible was so intertwined with the assurance of salvation that failing to observe biblically prescribed practices would bar him from “Christ's kingdom.”

For Robinson a covenanted church of saints represented the highest form of spiritual security. Living within a covenant community made up of “all the true and faithful members of the visible church” was nothing short of being “taught by the Apostle himself

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who accounts the whole visible church and every member of it elect redeemed justified sanctified."\textsuperscript{560}

In the truest Revelation sense, Robinson believed that the “saints” were “sealed.”\textsuperscript{561} The mark of the true church was the covenant that the Lord had “established with his people, unto himself.”\textsuperscript{562} A covenanted congregation was then the earthy protection for the saints, those sealed by God. It was, in fact, the judgment of the congregation, not the profession itself that ultimately mattered. In responding to Bernard’s objection of his reasons for separating, Robinson wrote

So it is not for the profession of faith, ex opere operato, or because the party professing utters so many words, that he is to admitted into the church, but because the church by this profession, and other outward appearances, doth probably, and in judgment of charity . . . deem him faithful and holy.\textsuperscript{563}

For the members of Robinson’s church the public confession was foundational to a covenanted church. The church, while made up of individuals, was only as strong as its weakest member. Those who followed the covenant model believed that “the judgment of the community always took precedence over the judgment of the individual.”\textsuperscript{564} If the community allowed someone to remain within the church who had perpetrated “some

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\begin{itemize}
\item Revelation 7:3, \textit{Holy Bible The New King James Version} (Nashville: T. Nelson, 1982), 1084
\item Brachlow, “John Robinson,” 300.
\end{itemize}
great wickedness” their continued presence would weaken the entire church.\textsuperscript{565} The church became the collective conscience. Those who did not live up to the highest possible standards were not allowed to remain within the church. The covenant made the individual members of the church the spiritual supervisors of one another, not just of themselves. Robinson saw the members of the covenanted church as:

priests, not only for themselves but for their brethren for whom they are to offer up the spiritual sacrifices of prayer and thanksgiving so neither are they kings for themselves alone but for their brethren also having the power of Christ whereby to judge them the keys of the kingdom to bind and loose them in the order by him prescribed.\textsuperscript{566}

Ultimately then, the decision belonged to the community. The spiritual security sought by those who believed they were living in the “last age” required membership in a covenanted congregation, through a profession of faith, that led to communal affirmation and election. The covenanted church was an instrument that “separated them from the outside world and bound them together.”\textsuperscript{567} Separating from England was just the next logical step. They viewed themselves as contemporaries of the Apostles who had “vowed willful persecution.”\textsuperscript{568}

A narrative of persecution, akin to that faced by Moses and his people, became a necessary theme within the doctrine of saints. To become saints required that “men walk  

\textsuperscript{565} Brachlow, “John Robinson,” 300.  
\textsuperscript{567} Brachlow, “John Robinson,” 299.  
in the obedience of the truth of the Lord . . . and secondly, when men, being called thereunto [the truth of the Lord] suffer persecution for the same.” Robinson offered significant Biblical evidence for the saintly to make his case.

The non-separating clerics such as Bernard and Ames objected to the new doctrine of “saints” and the “churches of the visibly worthy” created by Robinson, Clifton, and Smyth. Bernard dismisses Robinson’s persecution theology by arguing that “God doth not command persecution, nor are we to desire it, or to pray for it, but to avoid it by all good means and [if it is] lad upon us by the Lord, with all patience, we are to bear it.” Bernard believed that entering into covenant with anyone willing to share an examination of the heart would bring about the same result, from within the established church. The belief they could bring about change from within is ultimately why those arguing against separation decided to remain with the church, rather than fleeing from it, as Robinson, Clifton, and Smyth did, taking only those they deemed “worthy.” For the Scrooby Puritans, working within the church, could not fulfill the persecution element that was vital to their saintly evolution. Without persecution, there could be no sainthood.

An examination of the letters exchanged between Robinson and Bernard reveals the messy and tenuous relationships these clerics had with their church. Those at the fringes of Puritanism changed their opinions and positions frequently, ebbing and flowing across the divide of separatism. Bernard and Smyth offer us an example of allegiances that shifted and changed. As much as we would like to create neatly organized buckets for

conforming, non-conforming, separating, non-separating, schismatic, and non-schismatic clergy, the records, the official and unofficial position taken by the leadership of the church on issues of “non-conformity,” and the correspondence of those struggling with the question of what was “the church” were often conflicted and evolving.\textsuperscript{572}

Robinson and his separatist compatriots did not feel as if they were forsaking their church as much as they felt their church had forsaken them. In a letter to Bernard, addressing his reasons against separation, Robinson refuted each of Bernard’s points and then concluded that their natural course had to be separation, walking through the door that “the government ministry, worship, and communion of the Church of England . . . opened unto us.”\textsuperscript{573} Robinson wrote:

That which is commonly called schism ariseth if it be affected from the conceit of faith and want of love but may fall out upon simple error of judgment or scrupulosity of conscience by occasion whereof a person may sequester himself either in or from some particular church in some inferior courses of religion from them towards whom he yet bears much more true and hearty Christian affection than the most of them do who unite with them therein.


\textsuperscript{573} Robinson and Ashton. \textit{Works of John Robinson}, 82.
Robinson’s writing made it clear that separation wasn’t the result of persecution, but of a “scrupulosity of conscience” that could not allow him to remain within the church. In his essay “On society,” Robinson offered his strongest justification for separation, stating that:

God hath established fellowships and communities of men to procure their mutual good, and to fence them the better, on every side, against evil; so sin and wickedness being the greatest and only absolute evil, Christians are most bound by virtue of their association, to help, and assist, within the bounds of the callings in which God hath set them, their brethren and associates against it: according to that of the philosopher he that bears with the vices of his friend and makes them his own.574

Robinson and the Scrooby congregation suffered from a “deep anxiety of the soul” locked in a lifelong battle with the world and evil so pervasive that it clearly signaled the end of an age. The only way to guard against the loss of their very soul was to “fence” themselves off from the world’s influence and surround themselves with those who were committed to “diligently and faithfully employ their labour in the same, ever expecting the return of the Master; and all and every one of them watching . . . according to the special charge laid upon him to watch over one another.”575

Clearly, Brewster, Robinson, Clifton, and the others who joined them in Holland were separatists. But what they were separating from was a church that within their


an eschatological view had become an instrument of the Antichrist. These were not views that were embraced by the larger Puritan community. Indeed, only they and a handful of others shared the need to leave the Church of England, much less England. The pushback that their extreme leap from the Catholic Church to the Church of England as the Antichrist (see the quote that begins this chapter) and their millenarian views elicited from Bernard and those who had been among their strongest supporters and mentors, gave additional credence to their perceived and required persecution. However, it seems clear that their persecution arose from a self-imposed isolation, necessary to further their seventeenth century Moses narrative, which was informed by an eschatological theology, rather than persecution from outside sources.

Having examined the historical records and finding little or no evidence of persecution by royal or civic authorities or that of the ecclesiastical courts, we turned in this chapter to a theological explanation for the description of persecution Bradford places at the heart of their decision to flee Holland. Bradford offers little evidence of the persecution other than a compelling narrative of harrowing escape. Yet, upon examination we find the escape may not have been from the authorities trying to confine them, but from the corruption of their very souls had they remained in England and under the theological influences of the Church of England.
Chapter 7: Conclusion

After examining the monarchical and ecclesiastical evidence, it would seem that Bradford magnified rare, individual experiences informed by a separatist theology into a tale of deep and wide spread persecution. Once the Scrooby Puritans applied the godly rhetoric of visible saints and “opened the possibility of persecution by the church” they became a subject of heroic admiration by first lay and later professional historians. 576 While the majority of lay Puritans and clerics seemed satisfied with the changes and concession won at the Hampton Court conference, the very small minority who did not captured the interest, imagination, and focus of American historians for nearly three centuries. Had historians examined the history of persecution in England and the ecclesiastical and court records for evidence of actual instances of persecution suffered by the Scrooby Puritans, they would have found the record to be lacking any evidence of persecution or prosecution in the traditional sense. It is only through a close reading of the theological record do we find that the persecution suffered by the Scrooby Puritans was not actually persecution, but a narrative form of persecution they felt necessary to elevate them to sainthood.

Historians have made much out of Jacobean separatism, building their case out of a “rupture of separation [that] occurred rarely, even exceptionally, and in response to particular circumstances.”577 When we focus on the rare, exceptional events or the

576 Tom Webster, Godly Clergy in Early Stuart England: The Caroline Puritan Movement, C. 1620-1643 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 142

occasional outbursts, we lose focus on the larger history that reflects the “thrust of everyday life and survival of those who have remained largely anonymous in history -- the 'nameless' multitudes in their workaday trials and tribulations.”\textsuperscript{578} Focusing on dissenters, those who “simply by defining themselves consciously, have caused others to become somewhat more aware of the spiritual borderlines” is intriguing.\textsuperscript{579} But, when we make more of these events than they might have been, we run the risk of naively accepting “accounts of historical events written by participants in order to justify themselves in the eyes of posterity.”\textsuperscript{580}

When the evidence for persecution came up lacking, one of the avenues of explanation pursed was that of socioeconomic motivations. Here too we find little or no evidence that the Scrooby Puritans were pushed from their home by lack. Rather, the evidence shows that these were learned men who were members of the clergy and gentry classes. They were university trained and held positions within the church and enjoyed connections at court. Leaving England placed them at a significant financial disadvantage, requiring them to begin a new in a foreign country.

Rather, than finding for persecution or economic disenfranchisement, what this dissertation finds is that the Scrooby Puritans were a very small group of religious purists organized by William Brewster around 1598. They did not represent the majority of the English people nor did their views resonant with the majority of their fellow Puritans. Had they remained in Holland and not founded a colony in America in 1620, they would

\textsuperscript{578} Ludtke, \textit{History of Everyday Life}, 4.

\textsuperscript{579} Marsh, \textit{Popular Religion}, 96.

\textsuperscript{580} Christopher Hill, \textit{The Collected Essays of Christopher Hill} (Brighton: Harvester, 1985), 13.
have likely remained merely a footnote to British history. Historians have long made the case for removal by the Scrooby Puritans to Holland using the argument that separatist Puritans faced persecution, using as their evidence a nebulous unnamed and undocumented other. These arguments rely on the assertions in Bradford’s journal that the Scrooby group was forced to leave the church and England because a vague “they” never fully identified by Bradford who persecuted the members of Brewster’s church. Bradford’s journalistic embellishment of persecution, exploited by early American historians, and repeated without verification for the next four hundred years, turned what was a heroic story of survival and grit into something it had never been, a quest for freedom from oppressive religious and civil authority in England.

The Scrooby Puritans’ separation from the Church of England marks the beginning of the Christian church in America. Their church has the distinction of being the oldest continuous congregation in America. The First Parish Church of Plymouth, Massachusetts. According to the church’s history, a congregation has been meeting on its site since 1621, when the survivors of the Mayflower, included among them William Bradford and William Brewster, first attended services at the Fort constructed on Burial Hill, the site of the current church. While the “Puritan” church no longer exists, the American church was born from the urgency of those who made their way here yearning for a closer and purer relationship with God through the protection of a covenanted church of saints.

The real legacy of the Scrooby Puritans, one that has yet to be fully explored, is their role in establishing a Christian church in America from which sprang the legion of
denominational and nondenominational churches that make up the Christianity we know today.

**Scrooby Today**

Today, 400 years later, Scrooby is still a very small hamlet. Inquires about how to get to Scrooby are often answered with “Where?” There is no direct train service or bus route servicing the village. To get there from London requires a two-hour train ride from London to Doncaster and then an hour bus ride from Doncaster on to Scrooby. Bus service, which is quite well developed nationally, is limited for Scrooby. You can also get to Scrooby by car on the A1, which follows the remnant of the Great North Road.

Once there, you will find that although the church Brewster, Bradford, Clifton, and Robinson once attended still stands, it remains shuttered most of the year. Twice rebuilt, once in 1830 and again in 1864, the church is rarely used. The only thing that remains of Scrooby Manor is a large brick building that was originally a farm building. It no longer resembles the great palace it was when Archbishop Wolsey sought refuge there. The only physical references to the Scrooby Puritans are two bronze tablets attached to the farmhouse. The first, dedicated in 1844 by the Pilgrim Society of Massachusetts, reads:

This tablet is erected by the Pilgrim Society of Plymouth, Massachusetts United States of America to mark the site of the ancient manor house where lived William Brewster from 1598 to 1608 and where he organized the Pilgrim Church of which he became ruling elder and with which, in 1608, he removed to Amsterdam, in 1609 to Leyden and in 1620 to Plymouth, where he died on April 16, 1644.
The second plague reads,

On the three hundredth anniversary of the sailing of the Mayflower with 
the Pilgrim Fathers to New England, this tablet was unveiled by the 
representatives of the Anglo-American Society in commemoration of the 
heroic virtues of the little band of lovers of Truth and Freedom which first 
met in this place. September 2, 1920.

Travelers looking for other connections to the Pilgrims can stop at the Pilgrim’s Pub for a 
pint or a bite of Sunday carvery. Beyond the tablets and the name above the pub, there 
are no other references to the Scrooby Puritans in Scrooby.

Scrooby is equally obscure in the history of Great Britain. Other than being home to 
a series of archbishops, no great events or anything of historical note ever occurred at 
Scrooby. No battles were fought there, no great intrigue occurred with the palace walls. 
Had it not been for the Scrooby Puritans finding a colony in America, Scrooby would 
have slipped through the notice of history altogether. It was their narrative of persecution 
that elevated them both to sainthood and to a revered place in American history.
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