

The remarkable thing about the church of John Robinson and William Brewster was that it was none of those things. In practice, it was tolerant, to the extreme, of other churches and religious views. Robinson also warned against the dogmatic fundamentalism of the other churches. In his Farewell Address to the Pilgrim emigrants in 1620, as reported by eyewitness Edward Winslow, Robinson “took occasion also miserably to bewail the state and condition of the reformed churches, who were come to a period in religion, and would go no further than the instruments of their reformation. As for example the Lutherans—they could not be drawn to go beyond what Luther saw. . . . And so also the Calvinists, they stick where he left them; a misery much to be lamented. . . . He also put us in mind of our church covenant, at least that part of it whereby we promise and covenant with God, and one with another, to receive whatever light or truth shall be made known to us. . . .”

But these differences pale in importance to the quality

The Mayflower Compact

IN THE NAME OF GOD, AMEN. We, whose names are underwritten, the Loyal Subjects of our dread Sovereign Lord, King James, by the Grace of God, of England, France and Ireland, King, Defender of the Faith, e&

Having undertaken for the Glory of God, and Advancement of the Christian Faith, and the Honour of our King and Country, a voyage to plant the first colony in the northern parts of Virginia [the original meaning of the term “Virginia” covered the whole Atlantic seaboard—ed.]; do by these presents, solemnly and mutually in the Presence of God and one of another, covenant and combine ourselves together into a civil Body Politick, for our better Ordering and Preservation, and Furtherance of the Ends aforesaid; And by Virtue hereof to enact, constitute, and frame, such just and equal Laws, Ordinances, Acts, Constitutions and Offices, from time to time, as shall be thought most meet and convenient for the General good of the Colony; unto which we promise all due submission and obedience.

In Witness whereof we have hereunto subscribed our names at Cape Cod the eleventh of November, in the Reign of our Sovereign Lord, King James of England, France and Ireland, the eighteenth, and of Scotland the fifty-fourth. Anno Domini, 1620.

[Signed]

John Carver, William Brewster, William Bradford, Isaac Allerton, Edward Winslow, & 36 others

with which Robinson’s ministry is most identified: an unwavering commitment to *agapē* and the Common Good. At the time of Robinson’s death in 1625, a collection of 62 of his essays, which had been written over many years, was published under the title, *Observations Divine and Moral*. Representative titles include “Of God’s Love,” “Of Created Goodness,” “Of Equability and Perseverance in Well-doing,” and “Of Society and Friendship.” The following brief quotes give a very accurate picture of the essence of the motivating beliefs of Robinson and his Brethren:

Of God’s Love—“But being once drawn sweetly by the cords of God’s goodness, and love, we readily, and pleasingly follow after him; as being debtors, and constrained, not by necessity, but, which binds more strongly, by love.”

• *Of Created Goodness*—“First, We must do [good] in obedience to God’s commandments. . . . Secondly, That we do it at all times, as we have opportunity. . . . Thirdly, We must do good readily. . . . Fourthly, According to our ability. . . . Fifthly, We must have respect to men’s present wants; and not only consider what we can spare but withal what they stand most need of. . . . Sixthly, We must do good to all. . . .”

• *Of Faith, Hope, and Love, Reason and Sense*—“Thus, to love God is to become godly, and to have the mind, after a sort, deified, ‘being made partakers of the divine nature’ He that loves not his brother whom he sees, how can he love God whom he sees not? . . . And so natural to Christians is this brotherly love as that the apostle makes account he need not write to the churches, to teach them that which God taught them so many ways. . . . If we were perfect in this love, we needed no other law to rule us, either in the duties towards God, or our neighbors . . . and, indeed, to love as we ought, is a very happy thing, wherein we resemble God.” In the same essay, Robinson writes, “Reason is that wherein man goes before all other earthly creatures and comes after God only. . . . For whereas God and nature hath furnished other creatures, some with hoofs, others with other instruments, and weapons both defensive and offensive, man is left naked, and destitute of all these, but may comfort himself in that one endowment of reason, and providence, whereby he is able to govern them all.”

• *Of Liberality and Its Contraries*—“Liberality teacheth us to bestow our worldly goods, when, upon whom, and as we ought, in obedience unto God, and for men’s good. This is to be done without hope of requital from them, as not being a mercenary virtue, but wherein a man looks to his duty to others, and not to a profit from them.”

• *Of Society and Friendship*—“God hath made man a sociable creature; and hath not only ordained several societies, in which persons are to unite themselves for their mutual welfare; but withal so dispensed his blessings as that no man is so barren but hath something wherewith to profit others; nor any so furnished but that he stands in need of others to supply his wants.”

• *Of Religion, and Differences and Disputations There-*