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RESEARCH ARTICLE

John Paget of Amsterdam: Champion of English Presbyterianism-in-Exile

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Abstract
John Paget (c. 1574–1638), head pastor of the English Reformed Church of Amsterdam from 1607–1637, helped to shape the future of Presbyterianism. Exiled from England for nonconformity, Paget embraced the cosmopolitanism and religious toleration of his new city, studying Hebrew and Arabic in a multicultural circle of scholars. When the plague struck Amsterdam, he preached sermons on death and visited members in infected homes. When it came to Protestant English exiles, his own tolerance ran short. His strict interpretation of Presbyterian governance met with challenges from Separatists and Puritans advocating for independent congregations (Thomas Hooker and John Davenport), and some of his own congregants who wished for more democracy in church matters. The controversy in Holland, especially via polemical publications, influenced England and America. His last years of ministry were marred by a group known as "The Complainants," who attempted to unseat him. He relied on his relationship with the Dutch Reformed Church and the city magistrates to maintain his own position and turn away opponents. While his contentiousness dampened his influence and diminished his reputation, nevertheless, Paget was a key agent in the survival of Presbyterianism when it could not flourish in early 17th-century England.

Keywords: John Paget; English Presbyterianism; religious exile; plague Amsterdam; Begijnhof; religious toleration

Today the most prominent interior feature of the historic English church building located in the Amsterdam Begijnhof is a stained-glass window portraying John Robinson blessing the embarkation of the "Pilgrims Fathers" as they began the journey from Holland to England and then onward to America, a memorial for the 300th anniversary of the Mayflower in 1920. In the spirit of ecumenism, in addition to the window, the church mounted a plaque honoring Robinson, Henry Ainsworth, Francis Johnson, and other

[†]Keith L. Sprunger drafted this manuscript shortly before he died in 2022. His daughter Mary S. Sprunger completed the article. Based on reviewer suggestions, she made substantial revisions while seeking to retain his voice.

English nonconformists, given by American Congregationalists "In Christian Brotherhood."[1] The window and plaque provide a physical place of connection for Americans in Amsterdam in search of Pilgrim origins.[2] However, if the early 17th-century founding pastor of the Amsterdam English Reformed Church, John Paget, could see these Separatist Pilgrim and Congregationalist monuments in the building he presided over for thirty years, he would surely be distressed.

Amsterdam was a haven for 17th-century exiled English Puritans, at odds with the Church of England establishment. During the days of repression in England, from the late 1500s to 1640, pastors and sometimes entire congregations – Separatists, Jacobite semi-Separatists, Anabaptists, Presbyterian-Reformed, Saturday Sabbatarians – found refuge among the Dutch, all these groups vying to be recognized as the *jus divinum* church of God. The Netherlands was the locus of many English theological debates and models of church life that were impossible in England at the time. David D. Hall wrote that the Netherlands in many ways belonged to "the geography of the Puritan movement."[3] While these English dissenters had a common cause in their struggle against the religious and political establishment back home, not all found a warm welcome at the English Reformed Church in the Begijnhof. John Paget, firmly committed to the Presbyterian model of church organization, was at the center of many contentious exchanges with any nonconformists who challenged this system. He was especially at odds with Separatists, which includes all of those in the window and plaque, so their placement in the English Reformed Church of Amsterdam (for want of other surviving congregations) would have been highly offensive to Paget.

Among the churches in Dutch exile, the English Presbyterian faction was one of the most historically significant. Almost snuffed out in the home country prior to 1640 due to political and religious oppression, Presbyterianism continued as an active force among English people who settled in the Netherlands. English congregations at Antwerp, Amsterdam, Middelburg, Flushing, Dort, and elsewhere followed the Presbyterian-Reformed system through connection with the Dutch Reformed churches. Scottish Presbyterians had churches at Veere and Rotterdam. The most influential of these Presbyterian strongholds was the English Reformed Church of Amsterdam led by John Paget. As the founding pastor, Paget shaped the church for thirty years, from 1607 until his retirement in 1637, shortly before his death. A convinced Presbyterian in doctrine and practice, he worked within the Dutch Reformed system, resisting competing doctrines and rival English churches founded by Separatists, Anabaptists, and Jacobite-Amesian Puritans (the new Congregationalists). Eventually, his church and doctrine prevailed in the Netherlands against the English competition. While the other groups of

[1]The window was the project of the Holland Pilgrim Fathers Commission of Leiden in 1920 and was paid for by Edward Bok, a wealthy American of Dutch descent. On the church exterior is the American-sponsored bronze tablet honoring the Separatists (who have been folded into Congregational church history), given by the Chicago Congregational Club in 1909. Stadsarchief Amsterdam (hereafter SAA), Particular Archive (hereafter PA) 318, English Reformed Church Archive (hereafter ERCA), inventory no. 134 "The Pilgrim Fathers," and inv. no. 135, "The Pilgrim Window."

[2]The caption of a Begijnhof photo on Wikimedia Commons reads, "English Reformed Church—From here the Pilgrim Fathers set sail for the New World," accessed 24 Dec. 2024, at https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Amsterdam_-_Begijnhof_-_View_WSW_along_Engelse_Kerk_-_English_Reformed_Church_-_From_here_the_Pilgrim_Fathers_set_sail_for_the_New_World.jpg.

[3]David D. Hall, *The Puritans: A Transatlantic History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019), 196.

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nonconforming Puritans merged, migrated, or faded away, the English Reformed Church of Amsterdam is still a functioning congregation in the 21st century.[4]

While much credit goes to Paget for the survival of this congregation, other reasons merit a new look at the 17th-century churchman. This article is an expansion of the 2004 entry on John Paget in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, with material added from digitized archival and rare book sources to provide a fuller, nuanced biography. While some historians have downplayed his significance, Paget is an important figure in the broader history of Puritanism and Presbyterianism more specifically, as argued in the *Oxford DNB* article.[5] During a time when Presbyterianism was underground in England and by some accounts non-existent, in the Netherlands Paget defended Presbyterianism from especially Separatist and non-Separatist Congregationalist advocates. He used harsh and even wily strategies to prevent the church from going in one of these directions, including reliance on the Dutch consistory and city magistrates to bolster his own power against opponents. His efforts and influence, which extended to published works, contributed to the resurgence of Presbyterianism in England several years after Paget's death. Even more significant was the effect he had on the development of Protestantism in 17th-century America. He so alienated some Puritan exiles in the Netherlands that they went on to New England, taking with them a commitment to Congregationalism that may have become all the sharper in opposition to Paget's rigid stance in Amsterdam.[6]

Beyond this, Paget shepherded his flock through numerous bouts of the plague, reminding us that behind the arguments over religious belief and practice were flesh and blood humans dealing with the harsh realities of early modern Europe; the polemical author was also a concerned pastor who cared for his congregants. Finally, the life and work of John Paget illustrate how a migrant might remain mostly within his exile community while also participating in the unusual cosmopolitanism and religious diversity of his adopted city. In the first decades of the 17th century, as one of the many religious and intellectual refugees in the Dutch Republic, he had the opportunity and freedom to argue publicly about faith and practice and learn the languages of world religions, even while he was himself quite intolerant of other viewpoints. The nonconformist had become thoroughly conformed to the Dutch Reformed Church establishment.

Not all historians have seen Paget as significant; indeed, he was and is a controversial figure in church history. While he made a mark during his lifetime, he invited disregard because of his contentiousness and reputation for vitriol when dealing with opponents. This was certainly true in his own day when some contemporaries saw him as mean-tempered. A good many historians since then also have judged him harshly, portraying him as "unscrupulous," "officious," a "busybody," the "captious Puritan," a man of "violent antipathies," and the "Presbyterian watchdog."[7] Others have dismissed him,

[4]On Paget and the church, see Alice Clare Carter, *The English Reformed Church in Amsterdam in the Seventeenth Century* (Amsterdam: Scheltema & Holkema, 1964). Another surviving English Church is the English Episcopal church of 1698, described by J., Loosjes in *History of Christ Church (English Episcopal Church) Amsterdam 1698–1932* (Amsterdam: M. J. Portielje, 1932).

[5]Keith L. Sprunger, "Paget, John (d. 1638), Reformed Minister in the Netherlands," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (hereafter cited as *ODNB*), Oxford University Press, **2004**.

[6]Carter argued this position in "John Paget and the English Reformed Church of Amsterdam," *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis* 70 (1957): 358.

[7]Carter, *English Reformed Church*, 53. Benjamin Handbury, *Historical Monuments of the Independents, or Congregationalists* (London, 1830), **1**:324. The latter two descriptions of Paget ("violent antipathies" and

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saying that he played no great role – either positive or negative – in Puritan history.[8] Still others afford him a more constructive role, such as Michael Watts who went so far as to propose Paget as the savior of 17th-century English Presbyterianism. He wrote, "For the first forty years of the seventeenth century English Presbyterianism survived only among the congregations of English Puritans in the Netherlands, and in particular in the Amsterdam church of which John Paget was pastor for thirty years from 1607."[9] More recently, Polly Ha has highlighted Paget as a "vital" voice of early 17th-century Presbyterianism, one of the few English proponents and practitioners to be active between 1592 and 1640, albeit in the Netherlands rather than in England.[10]

I. Paget the Lifelong Presbyterian

Paget's zeal for the "presbyterial" church was lifelong, at least in his and family's memory. In ministry for nearly 40 years, Paget served the first part of England under episcopal rule but, according to his own later account, always yearned for Presbyterian governance. A decade after going into exile, Paget asserted that when ministering as a priest in the Church of England, whenever possible he spoke out: "I testifyed against the evilles which I conceyved to be in the order of that Church." Since opponents sometimes used Paget's ordination in the Church of England to question his Reformed credentials, he wanted to establish his early inclination to Presbyterian structure.[11]

Paget's early life and ministry were in Cheshire, although details of his family are obscure. Born in the 1570s, he was educated at Trinity College, Cambridge, graduating B.A. in 1595 and M.A. in 1598. A few writers have surmised, without evidence, that Paget's family was of Scottish origin, but during his lifetime he was always identified as "English," and he never made reference to a Scottish heritage.[12] The inner call to Gospel

"Presbyterian watchdog") come from Raymond P. Stearns, *The Strenuous Puritan: Hugh Peter 1598–1660* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1954), 54 and *Congregationalism in the Dutch Netherlands* (Chicago: The American Society of Church History, 1940), 16. Carter, who gave a positive view of Paget, observed that the criticism came mainly from Congregational-minded historians.

[8]The position of Tom Webster, *Godly Clergy in Early Stuart England: The Caroline Puritan Movement c. 1620–1643* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 311.

[9]Michael Watts, *The Dissenters: From the Revolutions to the French Revolution* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985), 60.

[10]Polly Ha, *English Presbyterianism, 1590–1640* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011), **1**, 56–59, 128–129. Less positive in giving attention to Paget are C. G. Bolam et al, *The English Presbyterians from Elizabethan Puritanism to Modern Unitarianism* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1968), 34, and the recent *Oxford Handbook of Presbyterianism*, edited by Gary Scott Smith and P. C. Kemeny (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 34, which makes no mention of him but discusses briefly the English Presbyterian churches in the Netherlands.

[11]John Paget, *An Arrow against the Separation of the Brownists* (Amsterdam: George Veseler, 1618), 34; Carter, *English Reformed Church*, 55–56, 93. A recent area of study has been how the experience of exile shapes memories, for example, Johannes Müller, *Exile Memories and the Dutch Revolt: The Narrated Diaspora, 1550–1750* (Leiden: Brill, 2016).

[12]The Paget family did have some friendly connections with Scotland, through visits and letters with David Calderwood of Edinburgh. Thomas Paget, John's brother, visited Edinburgh after being suspended from ministry in 1631. Examples of these Scottish connections are found in John Paget's letters to David Calderwood of Edinburgh in 1636–1637 regarding printing books: Paget noted that Thomas Paget, his brother, had visited (or found refuge) at the home of Calderwood, apparently after Thomas was removed from preaching in England in 1631. The Paget letters to Calderwood also state that John and Thomas were brothers, Wodrow MS, folio XLII, fols. 253, 254, National Library of Scotland.

ministry came early; even as a child before age twelve, Paget recalled, he "felt his heart strongly inclined" and had an "ardent affection to that calling."[13] After Cambridge, he returned to Cheshire, a locality with strong Puritan leanings.[14] Here, he received ordination and then appointment to St. Mary Church at Nantwich; he served as curate there from 1598 to 1604 alongside rector William Holford. Because Paget had scruples against the Church of England prayer book and ceremonies, Holford accommodated him by dividing the duties, Holford handling the prescribed public services, and Paget mostly teaching and catechizing. This arrangement soothed Paget's conscience. He seldom had to lead the distasteful ceremonies: "And so it was in the parish from whence I came,… an other minister did ordinarily use the same [the Prayer Book], so it was not imposed on me."[15] While in Nantwich, Paget published a small book of his teachings, *A Primer of Christian Religion, or a Forme of Catechising*, dedicated to his "beloved friendes" of Nantwich.[16]

In 1602 John married a young widow, Briget or Bridget Masterson Thrushe, a daughter of the prominent Masterson (Maisterson) family of Nantwich, a favorable step upward for John.[17] In Briget, John found a like-minded partner who would participate in the life of his congregation in Amsterdam, as when she served as a mediator in a dispute between members. Through John and the church, Briget crossed paths with eminent English Protestants, some of whom they hosted in their home. Briget would outlive her husband and contribute to his legacy by editing a volume of sermons for posthumous publication (see below). The couple had no birth children but adopted John's nephew, Robert Paget, as their son and heir.[18]

The Chester area had a cluster of Puritan-minded clergy, and for several years Paget successfully balanced the few required Anglican duties and his Puritan sensitivities. Fortunately for Paget, the bishops of Chester were lenient and allowed a bit of nonconformist flexibility – until 1604. At that point Archbishop Bancroft and other prelates launched a strict program of enforced conformity, requiring clergy to subscribe to all the church canons. A good number of Puritan clergy refused to subscribe (at least twelve in Chester diocese), and these were removed from ministry. Paget got caught up in this enforcement drive, although the details are not known. In 1605, according to the histories of Nantwich, the Reverend Paget, so "godly and learned," "so profitable – so beloved – so earnestly desired," was "turned out for Nonconformity" and "driven away to Holland."[19] The bishops had silenced him in the name of good religion.

[13]John Paget, *An Answer to the Unjust Complaints of William Best* (Amsterdam: John Fredericksz Stam, 1635), 16.

[14]Ha, *English Presbyterianism*, 129–130.

[15]Paget, *Arrow*, 83. James Hall, *A History of the Town and Parish of Nantwich or Wich-Malbank in the County Palatine of Chester* (Nantwich: Printed for the Author, 1883), 294–295, wrote that Paget was not head minister at St. Mary, more of an assistant, the head position being held by William Holford from 1583 to 1604.

[16]*A Primer of Christian Religion, or a Forme of Catechising* (London: John Harison for Thomas Man, 1601).

[17]Hall, *History of Nantwich*, 295. Briget's first marriage was to George Thrushe. He died in 1601, buried in November; Briget married John Paget three months later, 8 Feb. 1602.

[18]Kate Aughterson, "Paget [née Masterson], Briget," *ODNB*, 2004; Ha, *English Presbyterianism*, 175.

[19]Hall, *History of Nantwich*, 294–295; J. P. Earwaker, *East Cheshire: Past and Present*, **2** vols. (London: Printed for the Author, 1877), 1: 390; William Urwick, *Historical Sketches of Nonconformity in the County Palatine of Chester* (London: Keat & Co., 1864), viii; and Stuart Barton Babbage, *Puritanism and Richard Bancroft* (London: S P C K, 1962), chap. 3. Also comments from Robert Paget, "The Publisher to the Reader," in John Paget, *Meditations of Death* (Dort: Henry Ash, 1639).

John and Briget Paget crossed over to the Netherlands in 1605. Like many other refugee Puritan preachers seeking safety and employment, John Paget took a chaplaincy position with the English regiments stationed in the Low Countries, serving in accordance with the English-Dutch treaty of 1598. For two years, he was chaplain to troops under the command of Sir John Ogle and Sir Horace Vere. He later reported that here he "reioyced to find those things that I had desired before and this without variableness," and quickly accepted the Dutch Reformed confession of faith (the Belgic Confession of 1561) and the polity laid out in the national Synod of Dordrecht (1578), which aligned with the religious views that drove him into exile.[20] Preaching and catechizing the battle-hardened soldiers was hard work and not always appreciated, but, according to his nephew, his army ministry was successful, bringing comfort and benefits that were "greater then [sic] is ordinarily found in such places."[21] In 1607, he moved from chaplaincy work to become the first pastor of the new English Reformed Church of Amsterdam, where he championed Presbyterianism for thirty years.

John was only the first of a trio of Pagets to settle in the Netherlands and defend Presbyterianism. In 1639, a year after John's death, his younger brother Thomas Paget took his place at the Amsterdam church. In 1631, he had been deprived for nonconformity at Manchester and fled to Holland "to escape fine and imprisonment."[22] Another of the family, Robert Paget, nephew of John and Thomas, came over for education at Leiden University and then stayed for many years, serving as pastor of the English Reformed Church at Dort (1638–1683). Thomas, already in exile, had taken refuge with him at Dort before getting the position at the Amsterdam church.[23] From the Netherlands, for nearly eighty years, the Pagets advocated Presbyterianism as the God-given church government and condemned the Church of England's episcopal system, which, in their experience, was "tyrannical" and a source of oppression, persecution, and suffering.[24]

John judged the Dutch Reformed Church to be essentially Presbyterian in function, an assessment that matches historians today who also count the Dutch Reformed as "recognizably Presbyterian."[25] The recent *Oxford Handbook of Presbyterianism* situates Presbyterianism in "the Reformed branch of Protestantism." A close kin of continental Reformed religion, with a Calvinist theological heritage, it originated in the Church of Scotland and with the 17th-century English Puritan nonconformists who attempted to

[20]Paget, *Arrow*, 34. Paget subscribed to the Dutch confession of faith 18 Jan.1605, Keith L. Sprunger, *Dutch Puritanism: A History of English and Scottish Churches in the Netherlands in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Leiden: Brill, 1982), 93.

[21]Robert Paget, "The Publisher to the Reader," *Meditations of Death.*

[22]Thomas Paget was removed from his church in 1631, but the date when he crossed over to Holland is uncertain. By Nov. of 1639 the Amsterdam church reported his being at Dort. It is likely he spent some time after 1631 in Edinburgh with David Calderwood during his suspension, *History of Nantwich*, 296; and Earwaker, *East Chester*, 1:390-91.

[23]Sprunger, *Dutch Puritanism*, 184–186, 438–439. About Thomas Paget at Dort, see ERCA inv. no. 3, "Consistory Register III," 12 Nov. 1639, hereafter CR.

[24]John, Thomas, and Robert all wrote in favor of Presbyterianism and against the hierarchical Episcopal system. A selection of their views is found in John Paget, *A Defence of Church-Government, Exercised in Presbyteriall, Classicall, and Synodal Assemblies; According to the Practise of the Reformed Churches…* (London: H.A. for Thomas Underhill, 1641). The main body of the book is prefaced by Thomas Paget, "Humble Advice to Parliament" and Robert Paget, "The Publisher to the Christian Reader."

[25]Chad van Dixhoorn, "The Seventeenth Century and the Westminster Assembly," in *The Oxford Handbook of Presbyterianism*, **34**.

reform the Church of England.[26] In his examination of Dutch Reformed poor relief, Charles Parker called the structure that developed in the Netherlands in the 1570s "a Presbyterian form of church government." Each congregation had a consistory (or session) made up of elders to oversee its affairs; representatives from each consistory formed a local body, a classis (or presbytery), that weighed in on pastoral candidates and disciplinary disputes. A regional synod was mostly concerned with polity and contentious local issues. Above this yet was the national synod that met only every few years to settle difficult theological questions, such as the national synod of Dordrecht in 1578, which articulated this governing structure.[27] In her *History of English Presbyterianism*, Ha bases an entire chapter on the consistory records of the English Reformed Church of Amsterdam, mostly during Paget's tenure, situating it and therefore Paget firmly in the genealogy of Presbyterianism.[28]

II. Paget and an Establishment Church for the English in Amsterdam

In 1607 John Paget received a call to Amsterdam to become the first pastor of the emerging "English Reformed Church" – the *Engelse gereformeerde kerk* – serving the respectable "orthodox" English people of the city. It was the first such church in the Netherlands, its founding a collaborative initiative of the refugee community and the Dutch establishment. In 1605 an ex-Separatist and Latin scholar, Matthew Slade, made a case to the Amsterdam Reformed consistory for an English church: "Here in this city are a considerable number of English people, who do not understand the Dutch language, and therefore they earnestly request help in establishing an English Reformed church conformable in doctrine and church government with other Reformed churches in the Netherlands." The Reformed consistories welcomed a reprieve from having to work across language and cultural barriers, as there were sometimes misunderstandings with English migrants who joined the Dutch churches. The Amsterdam magistrates were eager to facilitate English-language preaching that aligned with the Dutch Reformed confession, especially for merchants and skilled artisans. They welcomed these migrants who were beneficial to the city's economy, even those who conducted the illicit English cloth trade in defiance of the legal monopoly held by the Merchant Adventurers, a London trading company based in Middelburg and other cities south of Amsterdam.[29]

The establishment of an English public church was one way the city was adapting to and absorbing the high number of immigrants who kept arriving, one of the most striking features of early modern Amsterdam. This influx of newcomers, bringing different customs, skills, ideas, theology, and kinship networks throughout Europe, contributed to the dynamism of society.[30] The population of the city more than tripled from about 1570 to 1620, to over 100,000, most of this due to immigration both from Dutch provinces and from elsewhere in Europe, such as Germany, Scandinavia, France, Spain, Portugal, England, and especially Flanders, which alone accounted for about one-third of those

[26]Gary Neal Hansen, "Sixteenth-Century Origins," in *The Oxford Handbook of Presbyterianism*, **9**.

[27]Charles H. Parker, *Reformation of Community: Social Welfare and Calvinist Charity in Holland, 1572-1620* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 111.

[28]Ha, *English Presbyterianism*, 144–177.

[29]Carter, *English Reformed Church*, 17–24; Sprunger, *Dutch Puritanism*, 45.

[30]Jonathan Israel, *The Dutch Republic: Its Rise, Greatness, and Fall 1477–1806* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1998), 309, discusses the way Dutch cities absorbed immigrants successfully, mostly referring to jobs and housing.

living in Amsterdam in the early 1600s.[31] The English immigrants were less numerous but their ranks continued to grow as the city swelled.

Much of the population growth, which reached about 200,000 by the end of the 17th century, was due to Amsterdam's economic expansion. English traveler James Howell in 1619 praised Amsterdam as "one of the greatest Marts of Europe."[32] In addition to manufacturing activity, such as shipbuilding and textile production, the city became an innovative financial center, hub of European trade, and the heart of an overseas commercial empire in Asia and later America, contributing to the so-called Golden Age, a period of general prosperity, cultural richness, and world influence for the young Dutch Republic.[33] Newcomers benefited from and contributed to the booming economy of the late 16th and early 17th century.

Another pull factor was the Dutch Republic's renowned policy of religious toleration. The new English-language church would align with the public church in the Dutch Republic, Reformed Protestantism, with origins in the writings and practices of Zwingli and Calvin. While the 80 Years War (1566/8–1648) against the staunchly Catholic Spanish Habsburgs would not officially be resolved during John Paget's life, by the time Briget and he arrived in the Netherlands, fighting in Holland and other northern areas was mostly over, and the Dutch Republic operated with de facto independence. A decentralized government left localities to work out their own way to honor the freedom of conscience dictated by the Union of Utrecht (1579) that bound together, eventually, seven provinces. This pragmatic policy gave a monopoly on public worship to the minority Reformed Church but allowed "private religious freedom" to everyone else. This "managed toleration" was a work in progress, especially through the 1620s, but by the time Paget arrived in Amsterdam, basic norms were already in place. The Amsterdam magistrates were more interested in social order and an environment favorable to commerce than imposed religious uniformity, especially since the Reformed constituted a minority of the population during Paget's life. While only Reformed members could serve in city government, church attendance, and membership were left entirely up to individual preference. Public worship other than Reformed was technically illegal, but Catholic, Mennonite and Lutheran services held quietly in unobtrusive buildings (*schuilkerken*) transpired without much interference. By the time Paget was in Amsterdam, even the Sephardic Jewish migrants from Iberia and Belgium could gather for worship unhindered.[34] This generated a remarkable diversity and freedom of conscience for an early modern city.

It was in this context that the new English Reformed church emerged. Despite the need brought on by the growing number of economic migrants and religious refugees from across the North Sea, it took well over a year to fill the position of pastor. The Amsterdam

[31]Geert H. Janssen, "Migration," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Dutch Golden Age*, ed. Helmer J. Helmers and Geert H. Janssen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 49–52.

[32]Israel, *Dutch Republic*, 307–318, 328; James Howell, *Epistolae Ho-Elianae. Familiar Letters Domestic and Forren*, 2nd ed. (London, 1650), **I**, 11.

[33]The notion of a Golden Age has recently been critiqued for its origins in colonial cruelty, exploitation and slave trading. For recent summaries of the Dutch economic rise, see Danielle van den Heuvel, "A Market Economy," in Helmers and Janssen, *Dutch Golden Age*, 149–65; and David Onnekink and Gijs Rommelse, *The Dutch in the Early Modern World: A History of a Global Power* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 22–32.

[34]An excellent overview of religious toleration in the Low Countries is Christine Kooi, *Reformation in the Low Countries, 1500–1620* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022), 133–139, 170–178.

magistrates and the consistory wanted someone with a strong commitment to Reformed Protestantism. They vetted Paget to make sure he adhered to orthodox Reformed faith and practice to ensure above all that he was not a Separatist. Providing an alternative to Separatist worship was a major motivating factor in founding the new church since up to this time it had been the Separatists – also known colloquially and pejoratively at the time as Brownists – who dominated English worship in Amsterdam. They were Puritan nonconformists like Paget but unwilling to submit to the authority of a consistory. They had held services in the city since the 1590s, but the Reformed consistory harassed them for their more extreme ideas about ecclesiology.

In moving to Amsterdam, John and Briget Paget became part of a community of English immigrants and exiles, some religious refugees, some there for commercial opportunities in the growing harbor city. Due to shared language, culture, and often neighborhood, the refugees and economic migrants interacted across religious lines, despite the fiery polemics hurled among leaders of different English groups. A new area just outside the old Reguliers Gate (the current Mint Tower) was home to many English, including a group of Separatists who rejected infant baptism, originally led by John Smyth. In 1615, after several years of negotiations, many joined a well-established Dutch Anabaptist church, the Waterlander Mennonites or *Doopsgezinden.* For over a quarter century, the Smyth group held their Mennonite English-language services in an old ships' biscuit bakery known as "the Bakehouse" ('t Backhuys), which also contained apartments that housed some of the English Waterlanders. The owner of at least part of the Bakehouse for many years was John Jordan, a wealthy English Reformed brandy distiller. Jordan himself lived in this neighborhood and built five additional houses there (the "*Engelse huizen*"), which he eventually donated to Paget's church. John and Briget lived in a different part of the city, but the minister was keenly aware that intermarriage and conversion from one church to another were hard to prevent when compatriots rubbed shoulders in a crowded neighborhood.[35]

With the Separatist and Anabaptist competition for English souls, no wonder that Paget devoted much of his energy to defending Presbyterian governance. Paget's congregation complained at times that he preached too often about the dangers of Separatism and how this could lead to an even worse set of errors, Anabaptism.[36] In the church record books, Paget referred to his church as the "English Orthodoxicall Church," contrasting his congregation with the various schismatic English churches that had sprung up around the city.[37] He took pride that he was the only English congregation with official backing from the Dutch Reformed Church and city government. He collaborated closely with the Amsterdam magistrates who provided the church building and salary, an arrangement similar to the French or Walloon church in Amsterdam (founded in 1586). For the

[35]Keith Sprunger and Mary Sprunger, "The Church in the Bakehouse: John Smyth's English Anabaptist Congregation at Amsterdam, 1609–1660," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* **85** no. 2 (2011): 229–233 and 234–244. The Pagets owned two houses on the Runstraat. Carter, *English Reformed Church*, **25**, n. 30.

[36]Gary K. Waite in *Anti-Anabaptist Polemics: Dutch Anabaptism and the Devil in England, 1531–1660* (n.l.: Pandora Press, 2023), 192–194, has recently shown that "Anabaptist" was a pejorative term often used inaccurately in English religious writing, connoting exaggeration and untruths. More analysis of Paget's use of the term could be an avenue of further study; however, since he overlapped with John Smyth's and Thomas Helwys's time in Amsterdam, and there were indeed meetings of English *Doopsgezinden* and what would later be viewed as Baptists in the city, Paget no doubt had these actual groups in mind when he used this term.

[37]Paget used the label "English Orthodoxicall Church" in ERCA, inv. nos. 85 and 86, "Alphabetical Membership Registers."

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English, the Dutch Reformed consistory made available a Catholic chapel confiscated at the time of the Protestant turn in Amsterdam (the 1578 *Alteratie*). The former chapel of the Beguine community, situated in the Begijnhof courtyard in the city center, is still in use by the English Reformed. Paget preached his first sermon on Sunday, February 5, 1607, using the text "Create in me a clean heart, O God" (Psalm 51:10). These words are inscribed on the chancel wall.[38]

The plan for the new church was that the minister would be a member of the Amsterdam Dutch Reformed classis, but the English church would have its own consistory (local elders and ministers who oversaw disciplinary and membership affairs for its own congregational members). Paget at first hoped for a separate classis of English Reformed churches if more were established, but by the time the Dutch approved this development in 1620, Paget had become firmly entrenched in the general Amsterdam classis. He dug in his heels and refused to support the English classis. He may have felt snubbed because it was organized without him and headed by John Forbes, whom Paget had rejected as a co-pastor in 1610. He also feared the incursion of more militant Puritanism, although the English Synod was firmly in the Presbyterian and Reformed tradition until the late 1620s. Perhaps even more, he understood the benefits of his relationships with the Dutch Reformed Church and even the civic magistrates. He would continue to use these to his advantage, especially during disputes with the congregation, as we will see below.[39]

III. Paget and His Ministry in the English Begijnhof Church

In the life of the church, John Paget stands out as the founding pastor and intellectual leader, and his 30-year ministry in Amsterdam became his lifelong mission. According to his nephew Robert Paget, admittedly biased, John had been called to be "God's chief instrument for constituting and settling of that church."[40] Robert praised his uncle for great success as a pastor, ever the "faithful shepherd," and also for his Biblical scholarship, "mighty in the Scriptures," and rare in language skills.[41] As the English and Scottish population in Amsterdam grew into the hundreds, Paget rounded up as many as possible of these English and Scottish people for the new church, rescuing them from Brownist and Anabaptist groups, as he saw it (there would be no Church of England congregation in Amsterdam until 1698). There were just 68 original members in the first year, but growth was steady, surpassing 400 by 1620.[42] Occupations of members varied, including merchants in world trade, factors (mercantile agents dealing in consigned goods), and skilled craftsmen. Fewer of the rank-and-file members were religious refugees than in the Separatist and Anabaptist congregations. Their livelihoods and fortunes depended on

[38]CR I, 5 Feb. 1607.

[39]For more details on the English classis and Paget's opposition to it, as well as his relationship with the Dutch classis, see Sprunger, *Dutch Puritanism*, 94–95, 289–294, 299.

[40]Robert Paget, "The Publisher to the Reader," *Meditations of Death.*

[41]Robert Paget, "The Publisher to the Christian Reader." Briget Paget gave similar fulsome praise: see Briget's dedication to Elizabeth, Queen of Bohemia in *Meditations of Death.*

[42]The church records provide some information about the numbers of English people. By 1623 the English Reformed Church membership was 450; in addition, Paget estimated that in 1618 there were also 300–400 active Separatists in the city. Some were not members of any church, a situation typical of the Dutch setting. Carter, *English Reformed Church*, 116; and Paget, *Arrow*, "To the Christian Reader." On the Anglican church, see Sprunger, *Dutch Puritanism*, 406–407.

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competing in Dutch economic life. Some in the church prospered greatly, such as wealthy members John Webster, a merchant, and Jordan (above); others did not do so well and had to depend on the church's poor fund, administered by deacons.[43]

More than just a local congregation, the English Reformed Church under Paget's leadership became a Puritan and Presbyterian stronghold. Paget had numerous connections beyond the local Dutch scene. Many nonconformist Puritans came to Amsterdam as exiles – like Paget himself in earlier years – and most found a haven in the Begijnhof church until they secured employment with one of the other English churches or the army chaplaincies. In the years before 1640, the church record books reported on visits from many exiled non-Separatist Puritans, including Robert Parker, William Ames, Hugh Peter, John Forbes, Thomas Weld, John Dury, Thomas Hooker, John Davenport, Samuel Eaton, Julius Herring, and Thomas Paget. Most of these took some turns preaching when Paget needed help, and the congregation generally gave them a good welcome, although as we will see below, bitter controversy ensued over several Puritan exiles.

Some of these exiles found shelter in John and Briget's home. One was Robert Parker in 1612. "He was not only a member of the same church," Paget recalled, "but a member of the same family, and living under the same roofe with me." There were debates about the best forms of doctrine and church government; "we had continuall and daily occasion to talk of these things."[44] When needing new pastors, the church looked first to the ranks of the nonconformist Puritan preachers, some already in Holland, others still in England and available for a call. During one pastoral search of 1632, seeking an assistant for Paget, the elders declared "that an English minister should bee procurred from England, whear many silenced and distressed ministers are which is judged to bee more for edifieng of this congregation, and the glory of God."[45]

Not only the clergy came but also other travelers, such as Sir William Brereton, a wealthy Puritan tourist. Like Paget, Brereton was from Cheshire and would later be an important Parliamentarian military leader in the Civil War. He found good fellowship and a good sermon on his visit in 1634. He stayed on to dine with pastor Paget: "We had a neat dinner and strawberries, largest that I have seen."[46] Other notable visitors included Elizabeth Stuart (sister of Charles I) and her husband Frederick V, Elector Palatine, who were in exile in the Dutch Republic after their short-lived reign as Protestant king and queen of Bohemia in the Thirty Years' War. They attended services in Paget's church and commented favorably on his sermons. Elizabeth developed a rapport with Briget Paget, who dedicated the book of John's sermons she edited after his death to Elizabeth of Bohemia.[47]

Paget especially welcomed those of fellow Presbyterian beliefs, a pattern the church continued after his retirement and death. Julius Herring in 1637 and Thomas Paget in 1639, also nonconformist Presbyterians from Cheshire, accepted positions as regular pastors. Thomas Paget, recently having come over from England, was eager to serve in his late brother's church. His distress at being forced into exile turned into a blessing for the church, his "being cast by speciall providence of God into these parts at this tyme."[48]

[43]Carter, *English Reformed Church*, 116–117; Sprunger, *Dutch Puritanism*, 93–95.

[44]Paget, *Defence*, 105.

[45]CR III, 29 Dec. 1632.

[46]Sir William Brereton, *Travels in Holland, the United Provinces*, England, Scotland, and Ireland (London: Chetham Society, 1844), 52; John Morrill, "Brereton, Sir William, First Baronet (1604–1661)," *ODNB*, 2004.

[47]Aughterson, "Paget, Briget."

[48]CR III, 12 Nov. 1639.

A decade after John Paget's time, the reputation of the church that he had helped to establish continued to draw those of similar mind, such as Thomas Edwards, the fiery Presbyterian, who took refuge with the church in 1647, shortly before his death.[49]

Paget built up the church by preaching and teaching the tenets of Puritanism. Key teachings were the glory of God and the necessity of salvation, with plenty of Presbyterian church polity and a strict moral walk (including an emphasis on economic morality, aimed particularly at the merchant members). Paget earnestly worked to make this church into a sound Reformed and Presbyterian bastion, appointed to be Amsterdam's "true Reformed English Church, lawfully … called and allowed by the magistrates."[50] Arminianism (the free will teachings of Jacobus Arminius) was at the center of a major controversy in the Dutch Republic, but Paget seemed much more concerned about members "declining" to the English conventicles of the Anabaptists and Separatists.

Paget was a great believer in strict church discipline for maintaining orthodoxy and morality. The consistory, composed of pastor and elders, kept a sharp eye out for backsliding members. The record book had reports dealing with card playing, Sabbath-breaking, whoring, fighting, domestic quarrels, and other moral failings that had to be dealt with – all concerns typical of other churches in Amsterdam (Reformed and Mennonite, for example) except for Sabbath enforcement. In this, Paget's church was much stricter. The usual punishment was exclusion from the Lord's Table for a period of time until repentance and reformation were achieved. In extreme cases, there was excommunication.[51]

Of particular concern were the economic sins. For a church with a core of merchants and investors, to fall into bankruptcy and fail to pay debts was terrible, "a form of cheating and robbing." In this, the English church was in agreement with the Dutch church. Together they barred bankrupts, and sometimes their wives, from the communion table until they made restitution or some satisfactory arrangements with their creditors. The elders copied into the consistory register the bankruptcy articles from the provincial Reformed Synod of 1618 and applied them in the church.[52] In later years, the standards were tightened even further with a resolution that "no member of this church who hath publically failed and hath not made full satisfaction to his creditors shall ever come in ye nomination for an office."[53] The church officials believed discipline served essential purposes, first for bringing repentance and then for helping to maintain piety and harmony within the congregation. A disciplined church showed to the world that the English people were respectable and moral citizens of Amsterdam. The elders

[49]Edwards's confession of his Presbyterian-Reformed faith (17 and 27 Dec. 1647) and his last will and testament (3 Feb. 1648) are in Appendix II of Carter, *English Reformed Church*. 201, 202. He declared, "I die in the faith of the Reformed Churches" and against "the sects and errors."

[50]ERCA, inv. no. 81, "Baptism Register, 1607–1625," fol. 1.

[51]Carter, *English Reformed Church*, 157-160. According to Herman Roodenburg, *Onder censuur: De kerklijke tucht in de gereformeerde gemeente van Amsterdam, 1578–1700* (Hilversum: Verloren, 1990), 335–336, restrictions on sabbath activities were minimal and applied at first only to small-scale selling of wares. Civic laws were added in 1624 to restrict trade and work, and dancing and going to taverns, among other activities, were banned until after noon on Sundays. For an example of Mennonite discipline, which included censure of bearing arms and oath-swearing but not Sabbatarianism, see Mary. S. Sprunger, "Mennonites and Sectarian Poor Relief in Golden-Age Amsterdam," in Thomas Max Safley, ed., *The Reformation of Chrity: The Secular and the Religious in Early Modern Poor Relief* (Boston: Brill, 2003), 150–151.

[52]Articles XI, XII, Synod of North Holland, 1618, copied into the CR I, 16 Oct. 1619. See Roodenburg, *Onder censuur*, 377–381; and Carter, *English Reformed Church*, 174–177.

[53]CR III, 5 Feb. 1686.

admonished members always "to seek for peace" and to avoid deeds which "might have brought a great scandal upon the church."[54]

In that day, and since, the minister was judged greatly by the quality of the preaching, "exercizing his gift," and thus it was for Paget.[55] He was expected to preach three sermons a week, twice on Sundays and again on Wednesdays. One can gain information about his preaching from comments made by members and from his few published sermons. The sermons were quite scholarly, as expected for one of his education, and often heavy with quotations of "human eloquence," in the words of one member.[56] An early book from his ministry in England, *A Primer of Christian Religion, or a Forme of Catechising* (1601), had edifying teachings about God's sovereignty and love. Another publication contains 16 of Paget's sermons from 1628, *Meditations of Death* (1639) brought to press posthumously by John's wife Briget and nephew Robert. This set of sermons was somber in tone with a message that "God calls us to remember death," for "Dust thou art and to dust thou shalt return" (Genesis 3:19). Paget described heaven and hell, and the ways of preparing for a good Christian death. At the end, the godly people would enter eternal life in fellowship with God and the saints.[57]

For the reprobate sinners – and here Paget became more dramatic – God offered only hellfire "where there shall be howling & wailing, weeping & gnashing of teeth" with "their torment & lothsome estate being an hundred times more & worse than the sight of any rotten carcasse in the grave." To bring the message home, Paget pictured some foretastes of hell in stories from the African and Asian "Torrid or hote Zone." In those terrible places, rude and barbarous inhabitants, "all-black naked impes," labored in pits and holes to mine gold and silver – but, of course, eternal hell would be far worse. He aimed these warnings to the present-day lovers of treasure in the congregation, those who were investing and "are content to adventure their lives in travelling thither."[58] The references to world travel, mining, and race suggest his warning and uneasiness about Dutch colonialism and profiting from the Indies trade, even though Paget himself had invested one thousand guilders in the West India Company not long after its founding.[59]

Paget originally preached these sermons in 1628, at a time of great troubles for the church and city; his co-pastor Thomas Potts was very ill, Holland was at war with Spain, and the plague was a recurring threat; in 1628 it raged in France and lingered in the Dutch Republic following severe epidemic years of 1624–1625.[60] The battlefront with the Hapsburg (Catholic) army was at 's-Hertogenbosch, barely 50 miles to the south. Paget feared the terrible horses of the Apocalypse, "the red horse marching in our borders, trotting, galloping, and rushing … [and] the pale horse ambling up and down in our streets … both warre & pestilence bringing measure upon measure, calamity upon calamity."[61]

[54]CR II, 30 Nov. 1622; and CR III, 24 Feb. 1635.

[55]On "exercizing of gifts," see, for example, Thomas Hooker's preaching at the English Reformed Church in June 1631, CR III, 13.

[56]Opinion of William Best, quoted in Paget, *Answer*, 103.

[57]*Meditations of Death* (Dort: Henry Ash, 1639), 7. Dutch versions appeared in 1641 and 1661.

[58]*Meditations of Death*, 154, 174, 207, 210–212.

[59]SAA, PA 5075, Notarial Archive Amsterdam, inv. no. 719, notary Pieter Carelsz, 19 April 1625, p. 132.

[60]Ronald Rommes has shown that plague continued to kill even between notable plague years; see Fig. 1 in "Plague in Northwestern Europe: The Dutch Experience, 1350–1670," *Popolazione e storia* 16 no. 2 (2015): 51, 55–57, https://popolazioneestoria.it/article/viewFile/705/674. In Utrecht, for example, plague led to excess mortality from 1623 to 1625 but then continued until 1632, before the next major onslaught in 1635.

[61]*Meditations of Death*, 21–25.

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Disease and death were more than scary sermon topics. Paget often faced the "pale horse" of disease in his regular church work. The 14th century brought the first onslaught of the plague (the Black Death, the yersinia pestis) to northern Europe, and it kept coming back to the Netherlands every 5–10 years.[62] Amsterdam got hit especially hard with recurrent plagues in the 1620s and 1630s. The city lost about 12% of its population in the acute plague years of 1623–1625 (with dysentery also taking a toll), and the mid-1630s were equally bad.[63] The church counted upon Pastor Paget to continue his house visitations, even during times of the severest pestilence. He went "to such as were diseased in body, and to such as have been afflicted in minde." He had many plague stories to tell, one about a horrible day in 1634 when so many members died that some had to lay unburied. At that time, he could do little to help, being himself in a "weake and sickly" state, fortunately not of the plague but of some other malady. On another day, visiting a very poor family, he reported, "the floor hath bene covered with death, some persons being already dead of the plague, and some ready to give up the ghost, lying so thicke on the ground that I could scarcely set my foote beside them, being six of them in one small roome, 3 dead, and 3 dying upon their pallets, yet have I with cheerfulnes and comfort gone among them."[64]

Some house visitations were for the purpose of checking into spiritual health, especially in preparation for the sacrament of the Lord's Table. The pastor was to visit every home before communion to give counsel and to deliver a token (a numbered coin or ticket) for each member who was in good standing with the church. These tokens were to be turned in when receiving the communion bread and wine, thus also serving as an attendance check on members.[65] As Paget grew older, walking the Amsterdam streets was too exhausting for his strength; the city was so large and members "scattered here and there throughout the same in many streates, lanes, and corners thereof." The magistrates had allowed the church to hire a second minister, Thomas Potts from the English church at Flushing (Vlissingen), who served from 1617 to his death in 1631. After Potts was gone, Paget once again had to shoulder double work until the church found a "suitable" second minister, John Rulice in 1636.[66]

To ease the burden, the elders helped Paget with the house visitations and then, in 1636 as plague ravished Amsterdam, they appointed the lay reader and sexton, Thomas Allen, to help with some sick visitation, a position called "comforter of the sick" (in the Dutch church the officer was called *ziekentrooster*).[67] In his last months of ministry, Paget was reworking his sermons on death, preached 10 years earlier, for publication, being "often importuned by others to publish." *The Meditations of Death*, based on his grim experiences with plague and mortality, gained readership among both Dutch and English as a

[62]William H. McNeill, *Plagues and Peoples* (New York: Anchor Books, 1976), 179.

[63]Leo Noordegraaf and Gerrit Valk, De gave Gods. *De pest in Holland vanaf de late middeleeuwen* (Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 1996), bijlage 3; and Israel, *Dutch Republic*, 624; Rommes, "Plague in Northwestern Europe," 61.

[64]Paget described some of his plague experiences in his *Answer to the Unjust Complaints*, 4, 95–97.

[65]Carter, *English Reformed Church*, 115–116.

[66]*Answer to the Unjust Complaints*, 96–97; Carter, *English Reformed Church*, 94–95. Rulice (Johannes Rulitius) was German but English-speaking, and selected by the consistory partly because he could also speak Dutch; he served the English church from 1636 to 1639, when he was transferred to the German Reformed church in Amsterdam.

[67]Paget, *Answer*, 96–97; Carter, *English Reformed Church*, 39.

devotional handbook promoting the "practice of Godliness." In addition to the English version of 1639, a Dutch version appeared in 1641 dedicated to the magistrates of Amsterdam, followed by another Dutch edition in 1661.[68]

The last years of Paget's ministry were discouraging. He faced controversy in the congregation (discussed in detail below), and he felt weighed down with "much affliction, long sickness and weakness of body." The city magistrates in 1637 agreed to award "emeritus" status and a retirement stipend.[69] Many members were pleased to see him go. It was a limp ending to a long career.

IV. Paget the Student of Languages in Multicultural Amsterdam

Along with his church career, Paget gained a reputation as a learned language scholar of Hebrew and Arabic, even though he never achieved fluency in conversational Dutch (see below). According to Robert Paget, his uncle was endowed with a prodigious memory, sufficient for him to learn by heart "most of the Psalms and sundry of the Epistles" in the original Hebrew and Greek.[70] He lauded his uncle's expertise in Hebraic studies, so thorough that "he could to good purpose and with much ease make use of the Chaldean, Syriack, Rabbinicall, Thalmudicall, Arabic, and Persian versions and commentaries." John Paget built up a good scholarly library, which Robert later inherited.[71]

While dismissive of those English Protestant non-conformists with whom he disagreed in church matters, John Paget was able to sustain relationships across religious lines in pursuit of linguistic knowledge. He met with a circle of intellectuals – a renaissance fellowship – that gathered from time to time for the study of eastern languages and other scholarly topics. The leading English figures, in addition to Paget, were Matthew Slade, rector of the Latin School, known as the "walking library" (mentioned above as an instigator of the English Reformed Church) and Hugh Broughton, scholar of the Hebrew language, who periodically moved in and out of the city. Henry Ainsworth, a top Hebraist, was on the edges of the circle because of his ministry at the Brownist church. Dutch scholars included Petrus Montanus, Dionysius Vossius, and Jan Theunisz, a member of the Waterlander Mennonite church. Despite his hostility to any kind of Anabaptists, particularly as rivals to his English flock, Paget was able to associate with Theunisz for the purposes of language study. Perhaps since he was Dutch, Theunisz's religious affiliation was less of an issue for the convinced Presbyterian.

Furthermore, Paget would hardly want to miss a rare opportunity for learning about the Arabic language and Islamic religion simply because of prejudice against other Protestants. In 1609, a Moroccan delegation visited Amsterdam. One of the diplomats, 'Abd al-'Azīz, lodged with Jan Theunisz, a printer and one-time professor at Leiden

[68]John Paget died before finishing his book; his nephew, Robert Paget finished the editing and published *Meditations of Death* in the name of his uncle. See "The Publisher to the Reader." The 1641 edition was published at Dort by Michael Feeremans and printed by Hendrick van Esch; for the 1661 edition also at Dort, Nicolaes Geerlingh was the publisher, and Nicolaes de Vries was the printer. The translator into Dutch was E.D.I.S (Josua Sand). For information on this and other books of piety, see the work of F. W. Huisman and the online source, *Pietas Online*.

[69]Paget to David Alderwood, June 16, 1636, Wodrow MS, folio XLII.; fol. 254; and Robert Paget, "The Publisher to the Reader," *Meditations of Death*.

[70]Robert Paget, "The Publisher to the Reader," *Meditations of Death*.

[71]Robert Paget, "The Publisher to the Reader," *Meditations of Death*; and J. van den Berg, *Joden en Christenen in Nederland gedurende de zeventiende eeuw* (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1969), 38.

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University. Theunisz arranged for Paget, Slade, and other English and Dutch friends to meet with 'Abd al-'Azīz for conversation and lessons in Arabic. When the Moroccan was preparing to return home in 1610, he gave gifts. Paget received a handwritten copy of the Gospels in Arabic, inscribed "for his friend John Paget."[72] Paget's interfaith associations around language study are an example of "interconfessional conviviality" or "everyday ecumenism," a practical co-existence that characterized neighborly, work, and even family relations in the Dutch Republic.[73]

John Paget's curiosity for Hebrew and Arabic studies was not so much a thirst for humanistic learning as for finding tools to refute erroneous religions. He acknowledged that foreign languages sometimes could deepen a pious study of the Scriptures – but how much further use did they have?[74] While there is no specific information on Paget and Jewish acquaintances in his study of Hebrew, through his association with Jan Theunisz, who met with Jews and Muslims in his home, it is quite likely that he would have had some interaction. The unusual tolerance accorded Jewish refugees, who were allowed to move freely about the city, participate in business, and worship in synagogues, meant that Paget must have encountered Jews in Amsterdam.[75] The tolerant air of the city, however, did not imbue Paget with undue sympathy toward non-Christian religion. In fact, he was concerned that delving into these strange languages could be dangerous for Christians and lead them astray. In his study of Hebrew and the Talmud, Paget granted that he found a bit of value but warned that one must avoid being seduced into accepting such books as the truth, on a level with Christian Scripture.

Paget directed much of this concern at Henry Ainsworth and warned him about being too enamored with the *Mishneh Torah* of Maimonides, and other rabbinic books. Paget's ability to overlook the religious affiliation of Theunisz did not extend to his Separatist rival. Paget was also no doubt jealous of Ainsworth's great reputation for Hebraic learning and withheld any praise, even though others recognized Ainsworth as Amsterdam's superior scholar of Hebrew, "the one who truly deserves the laurel." His learning was exhibited in a series of writings, including *Annotations upon the Five Books of Moses* and other Biblical commentaries, "wherein the Hebrew words and sentences are explained by ancient Greeke and Chaldean versions."[76]

Paget and Ainsworth did not have many occasions for face-to-face discussion because they belonged to different societies, one an officially recognized church, the other from a schismatic Separatist assembly (only a *vergadering*, not a real *kerk*, as was once

[72]Dorrit van Dalen, "Johannes Theunisz and 'Abd al-'Azīz: A Friendship in Arabic Studies in Amsterdam, 1609–1610," *Lias*, **43** no. 1 (2016):166–168. The inscription was in Arabic.

[73]Kooi, "Religious Tolerance," in Helmers and Janssen, *Dutch Golden Age*, 220-1. Benjamin J. Kaplan has examined this in *Divided by Faith: Religious Conflict and the Practice of Toleration in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Harvard's Belknap Press, 2007), 237–265.

[74]For more on Paget's intellectual activities in Amsterdam, see Sprunger, *Trumpets from the Tower: English Puritan Printing in the Netherlands 1600–1640* (Leiden: Brill, 1994), chap. 3; Paget, *Arrow*, 339.

[75]Gary K. Waite, *Jews and Muslims in Seventeenth-Century Discourse: From Religious Enemies to Allies and Friends* (London: Routledge, 2019), 117–118; Kooi, "Religious Tolerance," 211–212, 226–232.

[76]On Ainsworth's skill in Hebrew, see Aaron L. Katchen, *Christian Hebraists and Dutch Rabbis* (Cambridge: Harvard University Center for Jewish Studies, 1984), 35; and W. F. Wijnman, "De Beoefening der wetenschappen te Amsterdam voor de oprichting van het Athenaeum in 1632," in *Zeven eeuwen Amsterdam*, ed. A. E. d'Ailly (Amsterdam: s.a.), **2**:437–443. His commentaries on the five books of Moses appeared as five individual volumes, 1616–1619, printed by Giles Thorp, a fellow Separatist member, and then in a combined edition in 1627.

pronounced by the Dutch Reformed Church of Amsterdam.)[77] Occasionally, Paget crossed paths with Ainsworth at the Amsterdam library, the "library of the great church in this city where I have divers times found you."[78] Their usual means of debate was by writing letters and publishing books. Paget's book *Arrow against the Separation of the Brownists* (1618) was a sharp attack on Ainsworth, including much about the danger of Jewish scholarship. Attached at the end of Paget's book was a section critiquing Jews, the "Admonition Touching Talmudique and Rabbinical Allegations," a treatise of well over one hundred pages.

While Gary K. Waite has shown that, in general, Dutch writers tended toward less demonization of Jews and Muslims than was typical in early modern Europe, many of the Dutch Reformed preachers shunned the Jewish people as enemies of Christ.[79] Paget shared this negative view. He scolded Ainsworth for becoming a mouthpiece of Jewish ideas: "you runne vnto the Thalmud. … you runne for help to Maimony [Maimonides] your fellow labourer." In Paget's writings, Jews were "wicked persons, despisers of Christ, and his Gospel, and profane worldlings," peddlers of books with "prodigious and monstrous fables." Ainsworth, by relying too much on rabbinic lore to explain Scripture, was reducing Christian Scripture to a low level. The Bible is truth enough: "The law of the Lord is perfect, to convert the soule, to give wisdom vnto the simple, and to enlighten their eyes" (Psalm 19:7).[80] No help was needed from Maimonides. "All use of the Talmud I do not condemn," he said, but such knowledge could be best used "to refute the Jewes themselves from their own writings."[81] With other Puritans, Paget hoped for the conversion of the Jews to Christianity. This would bring a happy conclusion to his Jewish studies.

V. Paget and the Church System "Appointed of God"

The Jewish community was only one of several religious minorities that Paget would have encountered in pluralistic Amsterdam, even though officially Amsterdam was organized as a Reformed city. The Reformed Church alone was authorized to hold public church services, and the oligarchic city government supported Reformed goals, if not too stringent.[82] However, during Paget's lifetime, Reformed Church membership did not exceed 30% in the Dutch Republic, and the regents above all wanted to encourage a stable and welcoming business environment. According to R.B. Evenhuis, "there was no city in Holland where more dissenters lived," including Catholics, Lutherans, several kinds of Mennonites, Brownists, and Arminians (eventually known as Remonstrants).[83] In Paget's eyes, this toleration of erroneous religions was regrettable, even though he purposefully

[77]The reference to the Brownist church as only a *vergadering* is found in the minutes of the Dutch Reformed consistory: SAA, PA 376, Archief van de Hervormde Gemeente; Kerkenraad, inv. no. 3, fols. 53, 10 and 17 Feb. 1600 (hereafter Acta Kerkeraad).

[78]Paget, *Arrow*, 159–160.

[79]Waite, *Jews and Muslims*, 119; R. B. Evenhuis, *Ook dat was Amsterdam* (Amsterdam: W. Ten Have, 1967), **2**:167–178; Steven Nadler, *Menasseh ben Israel: Rabbi of Amsterdam* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018), 17–18.

[80]Paget, *Arrow*, 106, 138.

[81]Paget, *Arrow*, 339.

[82]On the relationship between the Amsterdam government and the Reformed Church see Parker, *Reformation of Community*, 171–174.

[83]Kooi, *Reformation in the Low Countries*, 170; Evenhuis, 2:167.

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kept company with people of other faiths when it suited him, as with Theunisz, the Mennonite (above). In his public position, he was concerned about the maintenance of proper church governance and doctrine, having no doubts that the Reformed and Presbyterian churches were "appointed of God."[84] Despite his own background of English nonconformity, being one of the religious outsiders in his homeland and then a refugee in the Netherlands, he took a stand with the official Reformed religion, not with the dissenting groups. He declared, "The English that first made suite; the Dutch Ministers that furthered the suit; the Magistrates that granted the suit; did all agree in this, to have such an English Church as should accord with the Dutch, in the same order of discipline & government, and be as the Dutch."[85] According to Evenhuis, Paget was renowned at Amsterdam as the English preacher "very zealous for the pure Reformed doctrine."[86]

Paget defended the "presbyterial" system and saw his English Reformed church as a demonstration of Presbyterianism in action, with four elements of pastor, elders, classis, and city magistrates all working together. The pastor upheld the doctrines of the Belgic Confession; the consistory (pastor and elders) handled local governance; the Classis of Amsterdam and the Synod of North Holland gave overall supervision as needed; and the Christian magistrates provided the funding and political stability. This Reformed system "is the way of peace, liberty, and edification."[87]

He wrote three books in defense of this church's polity. Besides *An Arrow against the Separation* (1618), he authored *Answer to the Unjust Complaints of William Best* (1635), and his magnum opus *A Defence of Church-Government* (1641). Through these pages, Paget hammered at the necessity of Presbyterian governance, using Scripture and the example of the early church, with special attention to the "First Synod of Jerusalem" (Acts 1) and the "Renowned Synod" (Acts 15). "Upon this example doe generally all judicious Writers build the authority of Synods, as upon a sure foundation & groundwork."[88] Robert Paget promoted *Defence*, a posthumous work of nearly 300 pages, as one of the major books on English Presbyterianism, treating "the power of classical and synodical assemblies, and more fully than any other yet seen."[89]

The *Defence* discussed three main branches of English religion: Presbyterianism at the central position and two erroneous outlying branches, Brownist Separatism and the official Church of England episcopal system. John Paget was the primary author, but the book appeared three years after his death. The other Pagets of Holland each added some pages to the work. Thomas detailed the evils of English episcopacy, a religious tyranny that had forced his brother and him into exile. He declared, "Woe is us." Robert, editor and publisher (the "Timothy," the spiritual son) got John's book into print. In his Publisher's preface, he wrote warmly of his uncle, "at whose feet I have been brought

[84]Paget, *Defence*, 29.

[85]Paget, *Answer*, 86.

[86]Evenhuis, *Ook dat was Amsterdam*, 1:205.

[87]Thomas Paget, "Humble Advertisement," *Defence.*

[88]Paget, *Defence*, 63.

[89]The claim that *Defence* was the most thorough book on Presbyterianism came from Robert Paget in his preface to the book, "The Publisher to the Christian Reader." A more recent and less biased assessment, while not including the book among the top list of books to influence English Presbyterianism in the 1640s, nevertheless named it as an "influential posthumous treatise for Presbyterian church government." Elliot Vernon, "Presbyterians in the English Revolution," in *The Oxford History of Protestant Dissenting Traditions*, vol. **1**: *The Post-Reformation Era, c. 1559-c. 1689*, ed. by John Coffey (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 55–56.

up."[90] Robert arranged the details for printing in London (H. A. for Thomas Underhill, 1641). Getting the book printed in England rather than Holland was possible now due to the change in fortunes for Puritans there with the Long Parliament's impeachment of the censorial Archbishop William Laud. This timing meant that the book could speak into the debate over which form of church governance should prevail in England, even though John had composed the book out of his local struggles in Amsterdam.[91]

Despite Paget's credentials of thorough Presbyterianism, demonstrated by his loyal membership in the Amsterdam Reformed Classis, his influence in general Reformed Church affairs was minimal. He regularly attended classis meetings but largely as a silent member unless the issues directly concerned his English Church. The classis minutes seldom mention any input by Paget, and he did not have leadership roles. A big factor in non-participation was his weakness in the language; despite living in the Netherlands for over thirty years, he never mastered Dutch. In meetings with church and government officials, he usually brought someone along to help with translation "because I am not perfect therein." On one occasion, following a discussion of weighty church matters at the classis, he expressed regret that he could add nothing "because he cannot sufficiently expresse his mind in Dutch."[92] Language problems aside, his first concern was always matters of English religion. His heroes were the English Presbyterian greats: Thomas Cartwright, Walter Travers, Dudley Fenner, John Udall, and all the good faithful English nonconformists who "have so much desired" Presbyterianism.[93]

But there were anti-Presbyterians in Amsterdam. Among the English population, the most troublesome were the Separatists, and they were numerous, at least three or four hundred strong, according to Paget's estimate – similar to his own church numbers.[94] By 1610 there were at least four of these English schismatic congregations: one Separatist group led by Francis Johnson (1562–1618), another by Henry Ainsworth (1571–1622), and two Anabaptist congregations, one led by John Smyth (c. 1570–1612) and one by Thomas Helwys (c. 1575–1616), who broke with Smyth in Amsterdam and returned to England, founding the Baptists there. In the 1630s, the main Separatist pastor was John Canne (c. 1590–1667). The Separatist preachers were active authors, and they had a printing shop, run by Giles Thorp, to get the books out in big quantities. Paget was involved in several well-publicized debates via letters and books with the chief Separatist spokesmen, Henry Ainsworth and John Canne.[95]

[90]Thomas Paget's anti-episcopal preface, "Humble Advertisement to the High Court of Parliament," fol. 3, pronounced "woe." Robert Paget's preface is "The Publisher to the Christian Reader." Robert also added material at several points to finish out the incomplete parts. For more on printing and Laud, see Sprunger, *Trumpets from the Tower*, 22.

[91]Thomas Paget, still in Amsterdam at this point, spoke into a political and religious debate in his home county of Cheshire, advocating for Presbyterianism as a middle ground between the opposing options of episcopacy and Congregationalism. William Urwick, et al, *Historical Sketches of nonconformity in the County Palatine of Chester by Various Ministers and Laymen in the County* (London: Kent & Co., 1864), xvi; Michael P. Winship, "Straining the Bonds of Puritanism: English Presbyterians and the Massachusetts Congregationalists Debate Ecclesiology, 1636–1640," in *Puritans and Catholics in the Trans-Atlantic World 1600–1800*, ed. Crawford Gribben and Scott Spurlock (Houndmills: Palgrave MacMillan, 2016), 105.

[92]Paget, *Answer*, 52; Davenport reported that Paget "has been heard to say" that he was weak in Dutch, *An Apologeticall Reply to a Booke Called An Answer To the Unjust Complaint of W. B.* (Rotterdam: Isaack van Waesberghe, 1636), 92.

[93]Paget, *Defence*, 29–30, 44–49.

[94]Paget, *Arrow*, preface.

[95]Sprunger, *Dutch Puritanism*, chap. 3; Sprunger, *Trumpets from the Tower*, 84–101.

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The Amsterdam Separatists gained some members by proclaiming to be the church of Christian purity and freedom, contrasted to Paget's Presbyterian church with its "mixed membership" and oppressive classes and synods. Separatist congregations aimed to be sanctified assemblies, in fact, "little utopian commonwealths."[96] This was in contrast to Paget's church, which, as part of the Reformed establishment, was required to serve the public. Dutch and English Reformed alike were to baptize the children of non-members and perform marriage ceremonies for any Christians.[97] This was especially important since Paget's church was meant to serve any non-Separatist English traveling through or living in Amsterdam. In addition, according to Ainsworth, Paget's imperfect church gave members only a small voice in decision-making. A further indictment questioned Paget's authority, since his ordination was under episcopal hands back in England.[98] Paget once proposed solving the Separatist problem by having them "banished out of the cittie for their wicked deeds and writtings of libels and scandalous articles against the Reformed Churches."[99] Most Dutch Reformed preachers also opposed the Separatists and did not acknowledge them in Christian fellowship.[100]

The English Reformed Church had occasional losses when members slipped away to the Separatist or Anabaptist churches. Paget, however, was skillful in drawing in dissatisfied Separatists, especially during periods of disorder in the Separatist "utopias," and then converting them over to his Reformed worship. These new conversions more than made up for Separatist losses. Paget had notable successes in 1615 and 1621 when clusters of ex-Separatists, numbering at least 18, came into the English Reformed church. They publicly renounced Separatism and accepted the church discipline and use of read prayers. In joining, the new members specified that they would not "approve of any particular errours or abuses in the booke of common prayer" – Paget had no problem with this proviso since he also disapproved of the official Church of England book.[101] These ex-Separatists, who had found Separatism too confining, became very active members. Looking back, however, they sometimes yearned for some of the positive aspects of their old church, such as democratic congregational decision-making. Paget's church, a model of cool decorum, offered an orderly Presbyterianism, without the disorder of "democracy." By the 1630s "the more vigorous and energetic part of his congregation consisted of ex-Separatists."[102] These members, as Paget came to realize, were a mixed blessing. Although zealous for the church, they were hard to control, and they insisted on a larger share in decision-making.

Paget had another anti-Presbyterian problem. In the 1620s and 1630s, he faced an invasion of "new" Puritans coming over as nonconformist exiles. They threatened to overwhelm his claim of holding the orthodox religious position. A party of them set up an "English Synod" (1621–1633) headed by John Forbes, pastor of the Delft church, aided by Samuel Balmford, William Ames, and Hugh Peter. They taught the doctrine of independent congregations. Forbes worked to get Paget and the Amsterdam church to join, but he steadfastly refused, convinced that the synod was a nest of anti-Presbyterians

[96]Critical comment by Robert Paget, in *Defence*, 241.

[97]Kooi, *Reformation in the Low Countries*, 162; Carter, *The English Reformed Church*, 82.

[98]Ainsworth, quoted in Paget, *Arrow*, 4v.

[99]From Paget's notes in the Baptism Register, ERCA, inv. no. 81, 1607–1625.

[100]See, for example, the action of the Dutch Reformed Church of Amsterdam, in Acta Kerkeraad, III, fols. 53, 10 and 17 Feb. 1600.

[101]CR, I, 14 Oct. 1615; II, 18 Aug. 1621.

[102]Carter, *English Reformed Church*, 59.

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masquerading as orthodox Reformed Puritans.[103] In the 1630s the most outspoken in championing the alternative doctrine were Thomas Hooker and John Davenport. These Puritans, said Paget, pushed "Independencie" and "Semi-separatism" (Jacobite and Amesian doctrines, propounded by Henry Jacob and Dr. William Ames); later they would be known as Congregationalists. Their program was the "single uncompounded policy which Mr. Jacob required," without presbyteries and synods, it being "in Mr. Jacobs time when Orthodox men began first to be stained with it." They talked much about the liberty of congregations without claiming total "separation" from the Church of England. Opposed to the Presbyterian polity, they allowed synods only for "counsel and advice" and "they maintain that every particular congregation is independent." The Pagets predicted that this novel doctrine would bring nothing but "manifold disorders, confusions and dissipation of churches."[104]

Paget made no apologies for the strict Presbyterian discipline of his English Church and brushed aside the calls for more "liberty" and "freedom." Within the congregation, Paget had the Presbyterian tools for maintaining his authority. Pastor and elders could handle disruptive members, with difficult cases being referred upward to the classis or synod for a decision. There were procedures for "electing" the church officials. For example, the appointments of new elders and deacons were the prerogative of the existing elders and pastor. In the case of installing a new minister, the system required conjoint action by the elders (consistory), the city magistrates, and the Reformed classis. After going through these steps, the names of newly chosen church officials were propounded to the congregation so that members (without a congregational vote being taken) could individually offer up their "consent."[105] When ordinary members asked how they could claim more of a voice in the Presbyterian maze of discipline and elections, Paget had his answer. Ordinary persons "may assist with their prayers," and in large matters, they may individually witness their consent or dissent to the various elders, as they shall find occasion. He wrote, "This is the order of these churches & this is our practice."[106]

In discipline cases of troublesome members, the church could ask the classis for support. This was the procedure used in dealing with such as Richard Jones, who "declyned to the Anabaptists" (1622), Abraham Finch, guilty of non-attendance, profaning the Sabbath, and despising admonition (1624), and Robert Bulward, who was spreading Arianism and denying Jesus to be the eternal son of God (1628). In disciplining them, the church officials consulted first with the Reformed classis, and then moved forward to suspension and excommunication with the proviso, "having had the advise and consent of the classis."[107] On occasion, the entire case could be delivered to the classis, as happened with John Webster, the richest person of the church, accused of having sexual relations with his housemaid and fathering her child. After wrestling over the Webster scandal for fifteen consistory meetings (1625–1626), without coming to a resolution, the elders sent the matter upward to the higher authority of the classis. It was a blessing, said

[103]On the English Synod, see Sprunger, *Dutch Puritanism*, chap. 11.

[104]Robert Paget, "Publisher to the Christian Reader," and John Paget, *Defence*, 29–30; John Paget, *Answer*, preface and p. 72.

[105]In 1607, at the founding of the church, congregational votes were taken. They elected three elders and three deacons "by the most voyces of the whole congregations," but this practice does not seem to have been continued. CR I, 12 May 1607. The same six officers served for at least five years. According to Carter, 28, the procedure was not "regularized" until 1632.

[106]Paget, *Answer*, 19–20; CR II, 7 Feb. 1624.

[107]CR II, 5 Oct. 1622; 28 Feb., 12 June, 3 July 1624; III, 23 Aug. 1628.

the elders; this option was a way "to remove the burden thereof from ourselves thereby."[108] In all situations, according to Paget, the Presbyterian system served very well for maintaining church order and preventing inroads of the "popular order and government of the Brownists among us."[109] While Paget's proclamations and later congregational complaints (see below) suggest that most members were without any agency at all in church affairs, Ha used the consistory records of the Amsterdam English Reformed Church to show that even the poor and humble could serve as witnesses, bring the moral failings of members to the attention of the consistory, act as mediators between members in disagreement, and voice their opinions about leadership appointments.[110]

Paget encountered situations where the Presbyterian elements of pastor, elders, classical assemblies, and magistrates were not in harmony, and this required special action. When the elders outvoted him, he felt a weakening of his authority. Rather than accept defeat, Paget could call in the city magistrates or the classical assemblies to overrule his own congregation. When this happened, members complained of tyranny. Paget, in *Answer to the Unjust Complaints*, justified this kind of maneuvering as good Presbyterianism, with the pastor acting as the "sanctuary" against an uninformed majority.[111] Many members of his congregation, however, called foul.

VI. Paget and Insurrection in the Congregation

Conflict between members and pastor contributed to a sour ending for Paget's career. His 30-year ministry at Amsterdam, although marked by successful church membership growth, concluded negatively in 1637, with sickness, retirement, and a dissatisfied congregation. Robert Paget called the 1630s John's time of "unhappy differences raysed in later years in and about the church."[112] The consistory and a substantial portion of the congregation turned against him, sparking a church "insurrection." There were two main complaints: (1) his domination of the congregation through bringing in classis and synod rulings, thus creating a "spiritual tyranny" that deprived members of their "liberty"; and (2) his ineffective pastoral leadership as he grew old and ill, compounded by his bad temperament. Many members urged him to be more accommodating, and there was hope that he would step down gracefully and open the way for fresh leadership. This insurrection peaked in the 1630s with the arrival from the homeland of a wave of innovative Puritan preachers, most notably Thomas Hooker, John Davenport, Hugh Peter, Thomas Weld, Samuel Eaton and others fleeing from Archbishop Laud's crackdown. These energetic preachers brought new ideas that seemed increasingly radical to Paget, who was comfortable in the Dutch Reformed system. Arriving in Amsterdam in search of refuge and employment, they were eager to preach at the church.

[108]The records of this case were spread over many meetings of the consistory register. See especially CR II, 6 Feb. and 7 Feb. 1625 and 4 Mar. 1626; also SAA, PA 379, Archief van de Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk; Classis Amsterdam, inv. no. 3, fol. 66v, 67r, 68r, 23 Mar. and 6 April 1626 (hereafter Acta Classis). For more on the Webster case, see Sprunger, "English Puritan Women of Amsterdam at Worship and Work 1600–1640," in *Gericht Verleden: Kerkhistorische opstellen aangeboden aan prof. dr. W. Nijenhuis…*, ed. Chr. G. F. de Jong and J. Van Sluis (Leiden: J.J. Groen en Zoon, 1991), 87–89.

[109]CR III, 25 June 1633.

[110]Ha, *English Presbyterianism*, chap. 7: "Popular Presbyterianism," and p. 186.

[111]Paget, *Answer*, preface and p. 24.

[112]Robert Paget, "The Publisher to the Reader," *Meditations of Death.*

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Sometimes when Paget was too sick to deliver the customary three sermons a week, the refugees filled the pulpit as guest preachers, "exercising their gifts." Because of Paget's hostile maneuvers, however, none of the new preachers ever obtained a regular position as preacher or lecturer in Amsterdam. Although Paget was welcoming at first, he increasingly saw them as rivals. He sensed that Hooker's sermons were stirring up the congregation "by preaching against that in the afternoone, what I had taught in the forenoone." To have one of these Puritans alongside, asserted Paget, would be like having a "Resistant" rather than an "Assistant."[113] Pastor Paget wrote about those hard times when his church was deeply divided into factions, "my side" and the "Hooker-Davenport" side.[114]

When confronted with the controversies around Hooker and Davenport, Paget found Presbyterian ways of blocking them. He tripped up Hooker by examining him with a cleverly devised set of "20 Propositions" intended to highlight the differences between the established Reformed views and the newly imported ones. He then used the responses to portray Hooker to the Reformed classis as theologically unsound – not a Separatist but dangerously soft on some issues like the doctrine of synodical authority, for example in choosing of ministers. Hooker, perhaps a "proto-Congregationalist" at this time, thought the individual church should have the final say in appointing ministers, a view he would take with him to America a few years later. This position might have worked to his advantage in Amsterdam, since he had the support of some lay members, but Paget appealed to a higher authority. Hooker might have been prepared to compromise, but as a newcomer, he did not fully understand the context and Paget's rigid, career-long stances. It was a theological and political win for Paget when the Dutch classis declared Hooker to be an unsuitable preacher and "not to be allowed into the pulpit."[115]

Davenport, who came over from England in 1633, received an equally chilly reception. He offended Paget by rejecting strong synodal authority and proposing more stringent standards for membership. He saw signs of "promiscuous baptism" and lax standards of membership in the Dutch churches, even in Paget's English Reformed Church. Davenport's desired program was to restrict infant baptisms to children of church members in good standing, thus weeding out unworthy families, in contrast to Paget's more lenient practice of baptizing all infants brought to the church, which was required Dutch Reformed policy as noted above.[116] Davenport, along with others in the congregation,

[113]Paget, *Answer*, 69–70.

[114]Paget, *Answer*, 105. Paget's time of troubles of the 1630s is discussed in several books. From Paget's side, by Robert Paget in his "Publisher to the Reader" (*Meditations of Death*, 1639) and by Paget himself in *Answer to the Unjust Complaints* (1635), especially 102–106. The Complainants gave their side in William Best, *The Churches Plea for Her Right* (London, 1635), and John Davenport, *A Ivst Complaint against an Vnivst Doer* (s.n., 1634) and *Apologeticall Reply*.

[115]The "classis ackt" (Oct. 6, 1631) against Hooker is recorded in the church consistory record, CR III, 13 Oct. 1631; and Paget, *Answer*, 23–24. For Paget's 20 Questions, CR III, 5 Nov. 1631, fols. 13–18; also Carter, *English Reformed Church*, 189–200; and Stearns, *Congregationalism in the Dutch Netherlands*, 105-113. For more on the Hooker controversy, see Sprunger, "The Dutch Career of Thomas Hooker," *New England Quarterly* 46 (March 1973): 17–44 and Carter, *English Reformed Church*, 78–79, 191. Ha called Hooker a "proto-Congregationalist," *English Presbyterianism*, 111. Much later (1702), Cotton Mather quoted Hooker as rejecting the Brownists in his response to Paget, Thoms Robbins, ed., *Magnalia Christi Americana* (Hartford: Silas Andrus & Son, 1853–1855), **1**: 339.

[116]Paget, *Answer*, 36–39, 54–57, for his controversy with Davenport. For Paget's earlier efforts against Ames and Forbes, see 27–28. See also Carter, *English Reformed Church*, 76–83 and Sprunger, *Dutch Puritanism*, 102–120. For a more recent study of Davenport at Amsterdam, Francis J. Bremer, *Building a New Jerusalem: John Davenport, a Puritan in Three Worlds* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012),

envisioned a more purified church membership. All such notions sounded "Brownisticall" to Paget.[117] Fresh Puritan ideas about making better churches, formed under oppressive conditions in England, did not find favor with Paget who had been working for a quarter century in completely different circumstances.[118] Now used to being part of the establishment, Paget had little sympathy for the views of these new Puritans. "For my part," he asserted, "I desire to walke in the old beaten path of that discipline and government, practiced by these Reformed Churches."[119]

Deprived of Hooker and Davenport and other new energetic preachers, the insurrectionist faction actively campaigned against Paget for destroying the "liberty of the congregation." The controversy became a public Amsterdam affair when the critics took to the printing press. The title of their first book summarized their cause: *Complaint against an unjust Doer. Wherein is declared the miserable slaverie & bondage that the English Church of Amsterdam is now in, by reason of the tirannical government and corrupt doctrine of Mr. John Paget* (published by William Best and printed at Amsterdam by Sabine Staresmore and John Canne, 1634). The pamphlet was subscribed by twenty-one persons, identified by their initials, known thereafter as "The Complainants." Nine of them were sufficiently angered that they abstained for a time from the Lord's Supper when Paget presided over the bread and wine. William Best, a former deacon, headed the Complainants, several of them ex-Separatists. This party included most of the church elders.[120] Several similar books, pro- and anti-Paget, followed.[121]

The second anti-Paget complaint of the Complainants was that he failed as pastor. He occupied the office of pastor, "yet he does not behave himself as becometh a Pastor, neither in government nor doctrine towards us." Paget readily acknowledged his failing health and gave sickness as the reason for his absence from preaching and home visitation, pleading that he was doing his best.[122] The Complainants, however, did not accept his excuses but rather saw the problem as Paget's proud uncompromising spirit. When he preached in his declining years, members grumbled that his delivery was "weakened" and the sermons "slight." There was too much flaunting of "human eloquence," such as Greek and Latin stories and quotations of classical poets and philosophers, all for the purpose "to amaze the hearers." Not only was there nothing to warm the heart in his sermons, but the Complainants also believed that Paget was acting from personal animus, sometimes

chap. 8. For the Dutch Reformed Church, an inclusive baptizing and marriage policy was a compromise struck with the States of Holland as religious and secular authorities vied for power, Roodenburg, *Onder censuur*, 86, 419–420.

[117]Paget, *Answer*, 83.

[118]Stephen Brachlow noted the significance of nonconformist exiles like Hooker in the Netherlands: "Carried into practice in Holland, the theoretical literature of Elizabethan and Jacobean radicals thus spawned a small but vigorous experiment in congregational autonomy during the 1620s and 1630s," providing "yet another avenue of practical experience for the emergence of Independency and the Congregational Way in Old and New England of the 1640s." *The Communion of Saints* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 213.

[119]Paget, *Answer*, 105.

[120]Paget was greatly offended by the book; its very title, he complained, is "Brownisticall." Paget, *Answer*, see the preface and 82–83, 92–94. For more on Best, see Carter, *English Reformed Church*, 30, 122.

[121]The Complainants gave more of their side in William Best, *The Churches Plea for Her Right* (London, 1635), and John Davenport, *A Just Complaint* (1634), 20–21, and *Apologeticall Reply* (1636). From Paget came *Answer to the Unjust Complaints* (1635) and *Defence of Church Government* (1641) published posthumously.

[122]Davenport, *Just Complaint*, 17 (mislabeled as p. 19); Paget, *Answer*, 102.

launching hurtful attacks. They objected to one sermon based on the parable of "The Lord's Vineyard" in Isaiah 5, which warned about the enemies of God. This sermon, thought the Complainants, was directed personally at them, as if they were the "enemies of God." His preaching "made us odious before our brethren," said Thomas Adams, one of the Complainants. After such sermons, pleaded the listeners, we departed in sorrow "sent home with sad hearts."[123]

The Complainants' campaign pushed ahead for several years, always agitating on behalf of getting a new preacher. They turned out more books for the public highlighting Paget's "tyrannical" actions. They campaigned at consistory meetings, flooding the chamber with embittered members and rallying the elders to their cause. On one issue, they canvassed house to house with a petition, collecting support, not only of male members "but of women and maydes also" – a shocking innovation, said Paget, "as if they had power."[124] Some Complainants in protest took to attending the new church of Samuel Eaton, recently come over from Cheshire, like Paget once had. Eaton gathered a "covenanted church," and, although short-lived, it was the first explicitly non-Brownist "Congregational" church in Amsterdam.[125]

After Paget silenced Davenport at the English Church pulpit, his supporters arranged for him to hold Sunday afternoon house meetings, called "catechizing" gatherings. They met at the home of Henry Whitaker, one of the elders. These afternoon sessions of spirited preaching, under the guise of a private family gathering, drew attendance of over one hundred, including elders, deacons, and many from the congregation. To Paget and his Dutch allies, such unauthorized house meetings, teaching the doctrines "of some new sect," were a schism. The classis, with information supplied by Paget, stopped these Davenport-led gatherings.[126] Paget always had to be on guard, for the wily Complainants were ever ready to pounce, like an adversarial army waiting in ambush, "set in aray and armed for the battell."[127]

Paget was hard pressed, but he had powerful resources to bring into play: the Reformed clergy and the supervising city magistrates. Paget could count on support from these groups, "their love and bounty to us" going back to 1607, when he began his Amsterdam ministry. At the opening ceremony of the church, the Amsterdam city *schout* (sheriff) and Reformed church officials, including Dominee Petrus Plancius, presided and blessed the event.[128] Consequently, instead of a two-way pastor-eldership dynamic in disputes, Paget maneuvered the controversies into three-way affairs by bringing in these higher-ranking Dutch forces. Paget's opponents could also play at this game; the elders persisted in trying to secure classis and magistrate support for a new preacher (to serve alongside Paget as assistant or lecturer). Desiring first Hooker and then Davenport, they presented them as worthy, noncontroversial candidates. Paget, however, told a different story: that they were unorthodox and even, in Davenports's case, illegal renegades from England. The two

[123]CR III, 30 Jan.1636 (on Thomas Adams); ERCA, inv. no. 27, Thomas Adams letter to the consistory, 30 Jan. 1636; Davenport, *Just Complaint*, 20–21; Paget, *Answer*, 102–105.

[124]Paget, *Answer*, 21, 92.

[125]CR III, 30 Jan. and 6 Feb. 1636. Samuel Eaton, after being removed from his church in Cheshire, went to the Netherlands, c. 1635, then on to New England where he served with John Davenport at New Haven. Later he returned to England to serve several Congregational churches; see Geoffrey F. Nuttall, *Visible Saints* (Oxford: Basil Blackwood, 1957), 31.

[126]Paget, *Answer*, 58, 112–114.

[127]Paget, *Answer*, 131.

[128]CR I, 4 Feb. 1607, fol. 1.

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sides, elders versus Pastor Paget, made several competing trips to the classis and to the magistracy pushing their respective causes. On one occasion, the elders ordered Paget to desist in his opposition and "by no means to proceed to that classis" – but, undeterred, he went all the same. Two elders followed after him, "to oppose Mr. Paget's dealing in this business."[129] Although opposed by the elders and many in the congregation, Paget still came out on top because of firm support from the Dutch classis and magistrates and his skill in using every punctilio of Reformed churchmanship. In the various maneuvers the classis always backed Paget, vindicating his actions and praising his work of "acting truly" and with "good conscience in all dealings."[130] Meanwhile, the English consistory and church membership felt aggrieved and muzzled by Paget and the classis – as they put it, slapped with a "muyl [mule] binding."[131]

During these controversies Paget felt threatened enough to seek out some surprising alliances. He collaborated – secretly, of course – with English ambassador Sir William Boswell, who was acting as agent for Archbishop Laud's campaign to silence Puritan exiles in Holland. Making common cause with Boswell and Laud was justified in Paget's thinking because many of the archbishop's targets were also his opponents (John Forbes, Hugh Peter, Thomas Weld, Thomas Hooker, and John Davenport). Paget provided information about Puritan activities that Boswell found very useful. This collaboration put Paget at odds with most of his former Puritan friends, a drastic step for him, "indeed a remarkable record for one who himself was an English refugee in Holland," wrote Raymond Stearns.[132] Paget's anti-Puritan maneuvers shuffled the cards and after outwitting his opponents, he went "rejoycing that now the busines is ended," in confidence that his actions advanced the greater good of English Presbyterianism.[133] Paget the nonconformist exile was now collaborating with the very authorities who might have prevented his return to England. He rationalized this with an end-justifies-the-means reasoning.

The Complainants never set out their comprehensive goals, and indeed these varied among members. There was angry talk about asserting "liberty" and much complaining about the highhanded actions of pastor, classis, and synod. When overruled, the congregants' response was this: the faults "were not given by us unto others but by others unto us."[134] These arguments suggest a goal of subverting the Reformed-Presbyterian system and turning the English church into an independent quasi-Congregational church (an interpretation proposed by Stearns and Alice Clare Carter).[135] Some of the

[129]CR III, under date 5 Nov. 1631, 19.

[130]The classis repeatedly backed Paget against the church. See Acta Classis IV, 9r, 9v, 10r, 6 Oct. 1631; 11v, 13 Oct. 1631; 19r, 5 April 1632; the pro-Paget classis "ackt" against Hooker was copied into the English CR III, 19; Carter, *English Reformed Church*, 76–87.

[131]The English church entered a long report of its view of congregation and classis actions, CR III, 5 Nov. 1631, 12–22. The classis "depriveth the church of its dew power." See also Acta Classis, IV, 11v, 13 Oct. 1631. The phrase "muyl binding" is not found in the *Oxford English Dictionary* but based on context it seems to refer to a muzzling or silencing.

[132]Stearns, *Congregationalism in the Dutch Netherlands*, 68. Winship discusses Paget's collaboration, calling it part of his "uphill battle to minimize the Congregationalist infection of Holland," "Straining the Bonds," 107.

[133]Davenport, *A Just Complaint*, 13; State Papers (hereafter SP) 84, vol. 147, fols. 205–206; vol. 148, fol. 177, Public Records Office, London; Sprunger, *Dutch Puritanism*, 114–115.

[134]CR III, 21.

[135]Carter, *English Reformed Church*, chap. 5, "The Begynhof Church and the English Congregational Synod in the Netherlands," and Stearns, *Congregationalism in the Dutch Netherlands*, 30, 43, 60–61 and *Hugh Peter*, 54–55, 89.

Complainants, strongly influenced by Ames, Hooker and Davenport, did seem to support "independent" congregations, especially William Best. For most Complainants, however, the program was less comprehensive – they were desiring a new preacher. Although pressing for more flexibility for the church, they assumed a continuing status within the Dutch church system and the accompanying city financial support. The Complainants were asking for the leeway allowed to some other immigrant churches, especially the French Reformed churches in the Netherlands and various English churches in other Dutch cities. They observed, for example, that the English Reformed Church at Rotterdam had gained much liberty in running its own affairs, even while nestled within the Dutch Reformed system. While enjoying Dutch church and city support, the Rotterdam English Church was allowed to install Hugh Peter and William Ames as co-pastors (preachers rejected by Paget as unsuitable for Presbyterian churches) and to reorganize into a covenanted congregation.[136] The Complainants granted that synods still had their place, for "counsell and advice," but not for domination of the congregations.[137]

Additionally, if given more "liberty," the Complainants wanted to foster a warmer spirit of piety and "Godliness" in the church. Their envisioned congregation would be less rigid and more open to the enlivening spirit of God, a worshiping body filled with "those wayes of Godlines wherin we desire and indeavour to walke."[138] Such a liberated church would be a fellowship of "visible saints." In the Puritan view, the Dutch Reformed Church, although pure in doctrine, was very weak in the practice of personal Godliness, and this coldness had rubbed off on Paget and his church. Hooker, after his time in Amsterdam, voiced concern about Dutch Reformed religion: "the power of godliness, for aught I can see or hear, they know not."[139] By the 1630s this doctrine of personal Godliness was becoming a precious Puritan ideal in Holland for producing better churches, as spelled out in the writings of William Bradshaw and Ames, perhaps as important as proper church structure.[140] This call for heartfelt religious piety among Puritans inspired the movement in the Dutch church known as the *Nadere Reformatie* or Further Reformation, but Paget seems to have been unaffected. All the reformist efforts by the Complainants, including this one, were stymied by Paget's "unkind" actions.[141]

It must have been about this time, 1631, that Dr. William Ames intervened with a famous reconciling sermon in the church. Matthew Nethenus, Ames's 17th-century Dutch biographer, reported that Ames once came and preached on an appropriate text from the Psalms: "Surely I have behaved and quieted myself, as a child that is weaned of his mother."[142] Nethenus wrote, "On that occasion his spirit was so reconciling and

[136]Sprunger, *Dutch Puritanism*, 164–167.

[137]Paget saw the "counsell and advice" position as greatly inadequate. See Paget *Answer*, 84 and *Defence*, part 2, 30.

[138]"The Grievances and Complaints of the Burthened and Oppressed Members of the English Church in Amsterdam. Anno 1634. The 18 of October," (statement by William Best and the Complainants), included in Davenport, *Just Complaint*, 21.

[139]While in the Netherlands, Hooker wrote to John Cotton, still in England: Mather, *Magnalia*, 1:339-40; George Williams et al, *Thomas Hooker: Writings in England and Holland* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975), 297.

[140]On Puritanism and the increasing concern for membership purity (especially among Congregationalists) based on high standards of "godliness" and piety, see Brachlow, *Communion of Saints*, chap. 3, "Church Membership and Saving Faith," 114–156; and Nuttall, *Visible Saints*, chap. 4.

[141]A short explanation of the *Nadere Reformatie* is in Parker, "Reformed Protestantism," in Helmers and Janssen, *Dutch Golden Age*, 197. A comment by the church elders noted Paget's unkind actions, CR III, 10 Nov. 1631.

[142]Psalm131:2.

reasonable, and his sermon so learned, discerning, skillful, and effective that he powerfully moved the minds of his hearers and persuaded them to study their own peace."[143] Ames, greatly esteemed, was on fairly amiable terms with both sides of the controversy, and these reconciling words helped to calm the church – but did not solve the issues in the wider Puritan movement.

One English church's dispute of the 1630s was a local Amsterdam affair, and much more. Because of the people and issues involved, we see portents of future religious controversy in England and America. The two sides made (and published) thorough explications of their competing church polities, Paget for the Reformed-Presbyterian position, and Hooker, Davenport, and their Complainant allies for the emerging "independent" position. Only a few of the Complainants had fully developed ideas of polity, but some, especially Best, were fully on board with Hooker and Davenport. The painful experience in Amsterdam had a considerable impact on exiled Puritans such as Hooker, Davenport, Peter, Weld, and Eaton, and they left Holland with a strengthened resolve to shake off the Presbyterian shackles and work hard for the liberties of the Congregational way. Carter concluded, "It cannot be disputed that the religious life of America would have been the poorer, had Paget not acted as he did."[144]

Although Paget's position often looked weak during these church controversies, he fended off his detractors and prevailed in maintaining his authority and the Presbyterian system. In 1637, he resigned, and Julius Herring took his place. He was appointed with the approval of consistory, classis and burgomasters, and since he was more amiable than Paget, this ended the controversy over congregational authority. The former Complainants declared themselves satisfied, the issues being "redressed by God's good providence in provydinge a comfortable ministry for them."[145] As he was preparing to step down (1637), Paget wrote to David Calderwood at Edinburgh that the worst was over for the church troubles: "In our particular congregation matters are reasonably well pacified."[146]

VII. Paget and a Mixed Legacy – His Works Do Follow Him

When Paget retired from the church, the city magistrates granted him a ministerial "emeritus retirement allowance." He died a few months later, August 18, 1638. The causes of death, in addition to exhaustion from the church struggles, were "weakness, and infirmities, grievous fits of colic and kidney stones, accompanied with rheumatism and catarrh unto which he had been long subject."[147] Widow Paget moved to Dordrecht to live

[143]Matthew Nethenus, "Praefatio Introductoria," in vol. I of Ames, *Opera Omnia* (5 vols. Amsterdam: Johannes Jansson, 1658–1661). There is an English version of Nethenus in *William Ames*, Douglas Horton, trans. (Harvard Divinity School Library, 1965), 20. No copies of this sermon have been found; Nethenus wrote that it was long remembered but did not give us the details of the date and place. The early 1630s, during the Hooker dispute, is the likely setting (before 1633, the year Ames died). See Sprunger, "The Dutch Career of Thomas Hooker," 34.

[144]Carter, "John Paget and the English Reformed Church," 357.

[145]Comments from James Crisp, Humphrey Denman, and Daniel Burr, CR III, 20 Jan. 1638. On Herring's official approval, see Carter, *English Reformed Church*, 85.

[146]Paget to David Calderwood, 23 April 1637, Wodrow MS, folio XLII, fol. 253.

[147]He received a promise of his emeritus allowance in February 1637 and retired soon after. See CR III, fol. 72; Robert Paget, "The Publisher to the Reader," *Meditations of Death;* and Carter, *English Reformed Church*, 25.

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with Robert Paget, her nephew and adopted son.[148] Zealous to the end, Pastor John was now at peace, as promised in Scripture: "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord.... Yea, saith the Spirit, that they now rest from their labors, and their works do follow them" (Revelation 14:13).

Paget's works left a mixed legacy. Robert Paget, not surprisingly, praised him for his lifelong Presbyterian energy, for having "fought a good fight, finished the course and kept the faith."[149] But for others embittered and harmed by his actions, it was a different story. Davenport recounted many stories of the meddlesome actions and the "unquiet spirit of the old man."[150] Paget's unyielding actions had made Presbyterianism unattractive to many at the English church, even odious. Indeed, late in life Paget had to acknowledge that some of his former Puritan friends now "abhor" Presbyterianism as much as episcopal religion.[151] Hugh Peter warned others to "Take heed!" Being under Paget's Dutch synod was very much like being under the English bishops – and just as bad. Davenport had sour comments about his experience with Paget's Presbyterianism, that "a Classic Presbytery sets up many Bishops instead of one."[152] Because Hooker and Davenport left Holland for prominent careers in America, Paget ended up in the annals of New England. Cotton Mather's *Magnalia*, a 1702 history of the church there, recounted Hooker's and Davenport's contentious experiences in Amsterdam. Mather portrayed "old Mr. Paget" as secretive, conniving and jealous, an "old man" who was on the wrong side of the controversies.[153]

In the first decades of the 17th century, dark days for Presbyterianism in England, two English-Scottish outposts were sites of vibrant Presbyterianism: the Church of Scotland and the network of English and Scottish Reformed churches functioning in the Netherlands. Chief among them was the Amsterdam Reformed English Church pastored by Paget. In England itself, there was always a core of silenced "presbyterian" Puritans, but unlike Paget, they were barely visible.[154] English Presbyterians revived in the 1640s and played a prominent role at the Westminster Assembly. Presbyterianism managed enough political clout for the Long Parliament to recognize it as the new church governance model in the late 1640s, although without widespread implementation or enforcement.[155] C. G. Bolam and co-authors wrote that the Presbyterian ideas appear in print in England among the "burst" of Puritan books of the early 1640s.[156] Robert S. Paul noted that the English Presbyterians had not been able to practice their church governance and for many years could not publish books of English Presbyterian opinion. From those pre-1640 silent years, he wrote, "one looks in vain for any books advocating Presbyterianism."[157]

[148]Briget Paget lived at least until 1647, when she sold two properties in Amsterdam, Carter, *English Reformed Church*, 25.

[149]Robert Paget, "The Publisher to the Reader," *Meditations of Death.*

[150]Amzi Benedict Davenport, *A Supplement to the History and Genealogy of the Davenport Family, in England and America, from A.D. 1086 to 1850* (Stamford, Conn.: Wm. W. Gillespie, 1876), 366.

[151]SP 16, vol. 252, no. 55.

[152]Bremer, *Building a New Jerusalem*, 127, 136.

[153]Davenport letter, July 1635, Letters, 56; Mather, *Magnalia*, I, 324, 339 (lives of John Davenport, Thomas Hooker); Bremer, *Building a New Jerusalem*, 136.

[154]Ha, *English Presbyterianism*, 2–3; Watts, *The Dissenters*, 60.

[155]Elliot Vernon, *London Presbyterians and the British Revolutions, 1638–1664* (Manchester University Press, 2021), ch. 6.

[156]Bolam et al, *The English Presbyterians*, 34.

[157]Robert S. Paul, *The Assembly of the Lord: Politics and Religion in the Westminster Assembly and the Grand Debate* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1985), 111–116.

However, one only needs to look across the North Sea to find open conversation about Presbyterianism, both oral and in print. Ann Hughes noted that church governance was more hotly debated among English Puritans in the Netherlands than it was in England, with Paget an active participant in these debates.[158] Paget, from his Dutch refuge, was outspoken and active, even to the point, as Watts proposed, as a key agent of Presbyterian survival "for the first forty years of the seventeenth century."[159] Paget's Holland-based relatives, Thomas at Amsterdam and Robert at Dort, contributed to this effort, with Thomas returning to England in 1646 as a minister and advocate for Presbyterianism in Shrewsbury, Shropshire.

It is difficult to determine with certainty how far Paget's voice extended. Some of the London Presbyterians of the 1640s knew of his books and gave him some mention. The *Jus Divinum Regiminis ecclesiastici; or, The Divine Right of Church Government, Asserted and Evidenced by the Holy Scriptures* (1647), the magnum opus of Presbyterianism, recommended his *Defence of Church-Government*, published six years earlier, as a "judicious and elaborate treatise," of great value in defending the power of classes and synods. Paget had proved resolute "against the usuall cavils and exceptions that are made against *Synods*, and their *power*."[160] But beyond some occasional recommendations to dip into his books, the Westminster Assembly people and later English Presbyterians gave his pioneering work scant attention. There were no calls to reprint his books on Presbyterian religion in England and Holland; only his pietistic book *Meditations of Death* received new editions in English and Dutch. This may be why Tom Webster argued that "Paget is best understood as a member of the Dutch Reformed *classis*" rather than someone influential in English church history.[161]

It is possible that recognition of Paget's influence was reduced because of the contentious tone that marked his preaching and writing, a militancy that carried over into his personal relations with perceived rivals, including members of his own church. Through the numerous exiled Puritans who took refuge for a time in Amsterdam, his name was known in England and America. However, this international reputation turned quite negative, especially in America, given the stories spread by Hooker and Davenport, bitter about their experiences with him in Holland. Honed in the Dutch church struggles, his message was a blow-by-blow account of contending with dangerous Separatists, Anabaptists and newly assertive Independents but finally becoming victorious. His conclusion: a weaponized version of Presbyterianism was the answer for gaining the upper hand. Religion's use of coercive power to silence dissenters was a lesson, painfully and personally learned from his experience with the episcopal Church of England. Once in Amsterdam, he recommended a similar authoritarian practice in the service of Presbyterianism. The dissenter became the establishment. His militant Presbyterianism might not have transferred well to other settings.

Nevertheless, the stridency with which Paget defended his church against rival ideas about church governance foreshadowed and influenced similar debates, especially in America, and must be seen as a part of an unbroken tradition of English Presbyterianism. Elliot Vernon noted that "Paget's debates with Davenport and the separatists were in part

[158]Ann Hughes, Gargraena *and the Struggle for the English Reformation* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2004), 35, 44, 416.

[159]Watt, *The Dissenters*, 60.

[160]*Jus Divinum Regiminis Ecclesiastici* (London, 1647), 236, 240; Hall, *The Puritans*, 273.

[161]This is the position of Tom Webster, *Godly Clergy in Early Stuart England*, 311, who does not see Paget as much of a figure of English church history.

influenced by the practice of the Dutch Reformed church, but they also highlight the survival of an English presbyterian tradition which developed over the early seventeenth century."[162] According to Michael Winship, these polemics around church governance and ecclesiology among English Puritans in the Netherlands during Paget's tenure as minister foreshadowed later exchanges that split nonconformists in England and New England. Would "big tent Puritanism" – loosely held together by common history, enemies, and kinship – fall apart over arguments about church governance? A letter exchange starting in 1636 between Puritans in England and New England, "the sole collective in-depth dialogue between Congregationalists and Presbyterians before the 1640s" included the voice of Thomas Paget, John's brother, as one of the ardent Presbyterians. On the side of non-separatist Congregationalism, in Massachusetts, was John Davenport who had run up against John Paget in Amsterdam just a few years earlier. Paget's efforts to eradicate congregationalist and separatist elements from English Protestantism in the Netherlands was a precursor to the trans-Atlantic debates to follow, making him significant in international Puritanism.[163]

An area for further exploration of John Paget would be more analysis of his status and identity as an exile-turned-migrant. Refugee experiences and the role of religious exile on individuals as well as institutions, doctrine, and practice – for both the host community and the exile community – have been the subject of recent post-Reformation scholarship.[164] For example, Jesse Sponholz and Gary K. Waite have noted that the experience of exile could lead one to "become more zealous and more deeply committed to the religious identity that had forced the move in the first place." On the other hand, it was also possible to become "less doctrinaire and less anxiety-ridden about the reality of religious diversity in the early modern world."[165] While a detailed analysis about this is beyond the scope of this essay, Paget's experience of having to leave England due to his nonconformist views did not, as we have seen, make him more generous in his interactions with other exiles if they disagreed theologically. He stayed mostly in the company of fellow English-speakers, but he maintained a close connection to the Dutch Reformed establishment even when the opportunity arose to become part of an English classis. This was a strategy to defend his strict Presbyterianism against the Separatists and new Puritan arrivals whose ideas had continued to develop under the pressure of Church of England dominance, while Paget had been living and working for decades within the privileged system. If he feared that a Separatist or "new Puritan" (in favor of "independency" or Congregationalism) was in danger of usurping his pastorate or influencing his congregation or the overall religious climate in Amsterdam and beyond, he turned to the Dutch Reformed consistory or classis

[162]Vernon, *London Presbyterians*, 40–41.

[163]Winship, "Straining the Bonds," 90.

[164]An important work arguing that Dutch exiles made a strong imprint on the development of Reformed Protestantism in the Netherlands upon their return is Andrew Pettegree, *Emden and the Dutch Revolt: Exile and the Development of Reformed Protestantism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992). Challenges to this view include Jess Spohnholz and Mirjam G. K. van Veen, "The Disputed Origins of Dutch Calvinism: Religious Refugees in the Historiography of the Dutch Reformation," *Church History* **86** (2017): 398–426. Other recent studies that highlight the diversity and complexity of exile churches, their influence on home communities and their relationship with authorities in the host locality include Peter Gorter, *Gereformeerde migranten: De religieuze identiteit van Nederlandse gereformeerde migrantengemeenten in de rijkssteden Frankfurt am Main, Aken en Keulen (1555-1600)* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2021) and Silke Muylaert, *Shaping the Stranger Churches: Migrants in England and the Troubles in the Netherlands, 1547–1585* (Leiden: Brill, 2020).

[165]Jesse Sponholz and Gary K. Waite, eds., *Exile and Religious Identity, 1500–1800* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2014), 3.

to regain the upper hand. Because he died before the rise of the Long Parliament and Puritan ascendency back in England, he did not join the many refugees who returned to their homeland starting in 1640, so his story does not include return from exile.

There is no doubt about John Paget's influence on the English Reformed Church of Amsterdam. Paget would have seen his greatest achievement as being the architect of the survival and prosperity of the English Begijnhof church, now a model of a more genial Presbyterianism. The longest continuously functioning English church in the Netherlands, it maintains double fraternal denominational ties to the Dutch Reformed Church and the Church of Scotland. For many years, there was fierce competition with the Brownist Separatists (eventually evolving into the Independent Church). Over the years, this congregation shrank and, in 1701, closed, having "been a considerable time without an ordained minister."[166] At that time a few of the remaining members joined the English Reformed Church, promising to "submit" to the Presbyterian order, while others went to the Dutch Reformed Church. The English elders welcomed them, "seeing there was no difference between them and us in the fundamental articles of our Christian faith, but only about Church Government, and the use of forms."[167] Now, at last, all were united under the Presbyterian banner. For Paget, this would be a mission accomplished.

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[166]CR IV, 10 April 1701.

[167]CR IV, 10 Oct., 15 Oct., and 29 Oct. 1701; see also Acta Kerkeraad, XVII, p. 191, 20 April 1702; p. 192, 27 April 1702; and p. 202, 13 July 1702.

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