

400 YEARS OF FAITH

The eleventh of November 2020 marks the 400th anniversary of the Mayflower Compact. It's "the first constitutional document" of a new experiment in self-government, under God. It was established in 1620 by the Pilgrims, religious separatists exiled from England via Holland.

A legal charter for their enterprise was issued for English land near the Hudson River. Blown off course to Cape Cod, they had to establish a covenant of government before leaving the ship. The wording (in boldface), is recorded in "*Of Plymouth Plantation*" by William Bradford.

1- IN THE NAME OF GOD - "*In the Name of God, Amen. We, whose names are under-written, the Loyal Subjects of our dread Sovereign Lord, King James, by the Grace of God, of England, France and Ireland, King, Defender of the Faith, &c.*"

As in everything the Pilgrims undertook, they did so as worshipers of Almighty God, citizens of heaven, having been reborn to eternal spiritual life by personal faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. They sailed as colonists to the new world under the authority of King James.

2- FOR CHRISTIAN FAITH - "*Having undertaken for the Glory of God, and Advancement of the Christian Faith, and the Honour of our King and Country, a voyage to plant the first colony in the northern parts of Virginia;*"

The Pilgrims sought religious liberty in the new world for this reason: to grow the kingdom of God. It's the stated purpose of their enterprise. "This constitution invokes a religious sanction and the authority of God on their civil obligations," observes Webster's Works.

3- A POLITICAL BODY - "*do by these presents, solemnly and mutually in the Presence of God and one of another, covenant and combine ourselves together into a civil Body Politick, for our better Ordering and Preservation, and Furtherance of the Ends aforesaid;*"

Momentous words! "This compact was the first in the world entered into by freemen, preserving the liberties of each, and guaranteeing to all equal privileges and rights. The germ of the first true republic on earth," wrote Puritan historian Hall, "derived from a Christian church." They had patterned their compact after their Scriptural understanding of church government.

4- FOR THE GENERAL GOOD - "*And by Virtue hereof to enact, constitute, and frame, such just and equal Laws, Ordinances, Acts, Constitutions and Offices, from time to time, as shall be thought most meet and convenient for the General good of the Colony; unto which we promise all due submission and obedience.*"

"This was the birth of constitutional liberty," writes historian G. Bancroft. "In the cabin of the Mayflower, humanity recovered its rights, and instituted governments on the basis of equal rights, for the general good. As the Pilgrims landed, their institutions were already perfected. Democratic liberty and independent Christian worship at once existed in America."

5- IN MUTUAL COVENANT - "*In Witness whereof we have hereunto subscribed our names at Cape Cod the eleventh of November, in the Reign of our Sovereign Lord, King James of England, France and Ireland, the eighteenth, and of Scotland the fifty-fourth. Anno Domini, 1620*" - signed by male heads of families and unmarried men of the people.

The responsible adult representatives had gathered in the captain's cabin to establish a voluntary government for all those going ashore. Their first challenge was to survive the winter.

6- FOR POSTERITY? - The Pilgrims could not know their covenant would grow to become the Constitution of the United States of America, still strong 400 years later. But how strong? Just as bitter winter winds blew them to New England - in the providence of God - so do we face a raging storm against our liberty. Dark forces of oppression seek to enslave our nation.

We must not only remember brave pioneers, but emulate them. Their compact "is a full demonstration that the nature of civil governments, abstracted from the political institutions of their native country, had been an object of their serious meditation," wrote John Quincy Adams.

7- LET US PRAY that the 2020 election results in a continuation of the unparalleled and God-honoring achievements of the past four years. These are answers to decades of prayers by right-thinking citizens, heirs of the Pilgrims. As they sought the freedom of God-given rights, so we must endure hardship and risk our very selves, to secure liberty for our children! ☐