

# National Monument to the Forefathers

Excerpted from, *The Rewriting of America's History*

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There are many outstanding monuments and memorials in Plymouth, Massachusetts which glorify God. In stone, marble, granite and bronze, they relate a heroic Christian past, worthy to be passed down to succeeding generations of Americans, vibrantly exuding the gospel message of eternal life, the Pilgrims' main concern.

The predominant and most impressive of these is the **National Monument to the Forefathers**. A poem read at the dedication of this monument on August 1, 1889, reads thus:

“This Monument, where  
Virtue, Courage, Law and  
Learning sit, Calm Faith, above  
them, grasping Holy Writ; White  
hand upraised o’er beauteous  
trusting eyes, and pleading finger  
pointing to the skies.

– John Boyle O’Reilly.”

Towering high in its majestic splendor, the central figure of the monument is *Faith*. She stands upon a main pedestal, one foot resting upon a replica of Plymouth Rock, and holds an open Bible in her left hand. Her right hand points heavenward. The symbolism is trust in God and His unfailing words, written down for us in the Bible.

Four smaller, seated figures represent the Christian values and principles promulgated by the Pilgrims themselves. They are **Morality, Law, Education and Liberty**.

**Morality** holds the Ten Commandments in her left hand and the scroll of Revelation – the last book of the Bible, in the right. She is flanked by an Old Testament *Prophet* on one side, and the *Evangelists* on the other.

**Law** is tempered with *Justice* on the one hand, and *Mercy* on the other.

**Education** is represented with the *Wisdom of maturity* on one side and *Youth following Experience* on the other.

**Liberty** is accompanied by *Peace* on the one side and the *Overthrow of Tyranny* on the opposite side.

The main pedestal has four polished facades. Two of these bear the names of the Mayflower Pilgrims, while another bears the inscription “National Monument to the Forefathers. Erected by a grateful people in remembrance of their labors, sacrifices and sufferings for the cause of Civil and Religious Liberty.” The upper half of the fourth panel was, in June, 1989, inscribed with the moving words from William Bradford’s account *Of Plimouth Plantation*, found in the dedication to his book.

This inspiring statue is made of Maine granite. Its cornerstone was laid on August 1, 1859. Designed by Hammatt Billings, her height is 81 feet from the ground to the top of her head. The total weight of the National Monument to our Forefathers is 180 tons.

## Burial Hill

The most striking monument at Burial Hill is that to Governor William Bradford. A marble obelisk marks his grave, with a Latin inscription bearing the phrase:

“What our fathers with so much difficulty attained, do not basely relinquish.”

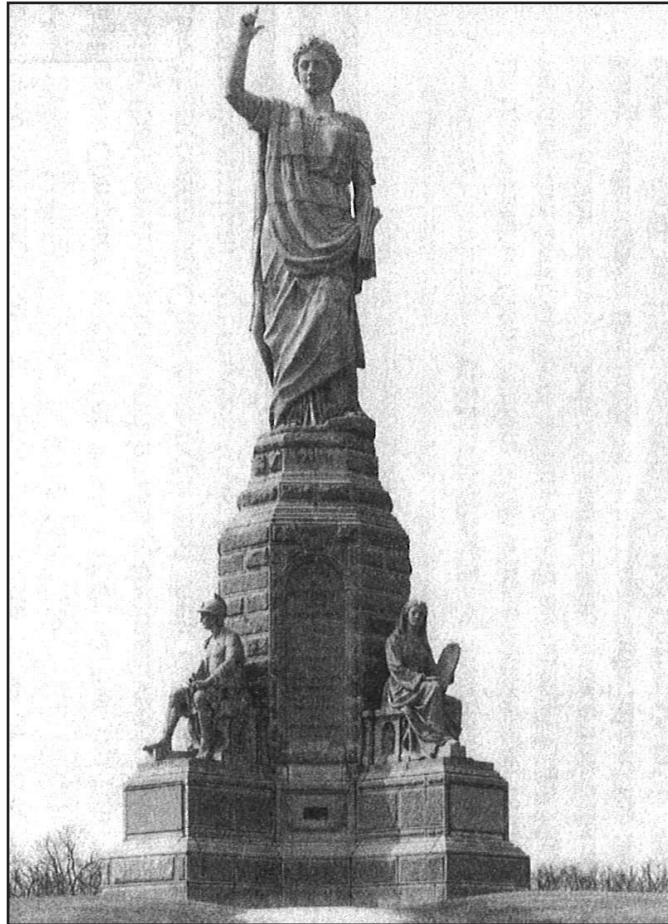
The inscription on the south side reads: “H.I. William Bradford of Austerfield, Yorkshire, England. Was the son of William and Alice Bradford. He was Governor of Plymouth Colony from 1621 to 1633; 1635 to 1637; 1639 to 1643; 1645 to 1657.”

An inscription to the north side follows:

“Under this stone rest the ashes of William Bradford, a zealous puritan and sincere Christian Governor of Plymouth Colony from 1621 to 1657, (the year he died) aged 69, except 5 years, which he declined.”

Since Bradford was a student of Old Testament Hebrew, it is appropriate that a Hebrew inscription, beautifully reiterating his life, is engraved upon his tombstone:

“Let the right hand of the Lord awake.”



“Faith” pointing Heavenward, holds the Holy Bible in her left hand.  
*The Monument to our Forefathers*, Plymouth, Massachusetts.  
Courtesy of Pilgrim Society.

## Other Memorials

A radiant stained-glass window in First Church, Plymouth, depicts John Robinson delivering his Farewell sermon to the Pilgrims before their departure from Holland.

Not far from Plymouth Rock, another moving statue is that of a Pilgrim woman standing next to a tall granite fountain. She portrays the courage and Christian virtues exemplified by Pilgrim wives, who stood firm in their faith, withstanding great trials and tribulations for the cause of the gospel. She holds a Bible in her right hand. An inscription on the back of the fountain reads:

They brought up their families in sturdy virtue and  
a living faith in God without which nations perish.

A moving and inspirational painting entitled: *Thanksgiving – And so instead of famine God gave them plenty*, graphically portrays the origins and true significance of America's present-day "thanksgiving" celebration. The original can be seen in Pilgrim Hall, Plymouth, Massachusetts.

...It is interesting to note that in William Bradford's history *Of Plimoth Plantation*, the first nine chapters are devoted to the history of the Christian church prior to their arrival at Cape Cod in November, 1620. As Bradford states, it was essential that he begin with the very root. And that he did. We see this in chapter one, as he discussed the opposition that took place following the Reformation and the downfall of popery:

"It is well knowne unto ye godly and judicious how since ye first breaking out of ye lighte of ye gospel in our Honourable Nation of England, (which was ye first of nations whom ye Lord adorned ther with, after the grosse darkness of popery which had covered and overspred ye Christian world), what wars and opposissions ever since, Satan hath raised, maintained, and continued against the Saints, from time to time, in one sort or other. Some times by bloody death and cruell torments; other whiles imprisonments, banishments, and other hard usages; as being loath his kingdom should goe downe, and trueth previale, and ye churches of God revert to their ancient puritie and recover their primitive order, libertie and bewtie. But when he could not prevaile by these means, againste the maine trueths of ye gospel, but that they began to take rooting in many places, being watered by ye blood of ye martires, and blessed from heaven with a gracious increase; he then begane to take him to his ancient stategeme used of old against the first Christians. That when by ye bloody and barbarous persecutions of ye heathen Emperours, he could not stop and subvert the course of ye gospel, but that it speedily overspred with a wonderfull celeritie the then best known parts...ye professours themselves, (working upon their pride and ambition, with other corrupte passions incident to all mortall men, yea to ye saints themselves in some measure), by which wofull effects followed; as not only bitter contentions, and hartburnings, schisms, with other horrible confusions, but Satan tooke occasion and advantage therby to foist in a number of vile ceremoneys, with many unprofitable cannons and decrees, which have since been as snares to many poore and peacable souls even to this day..."

Governor Bradford goes on to give the lamentable results of this schism:

"...Religion hath been disgraced, the godly greeved, afflicted, persecuted, and many exiled, sundrie have lost their lives in prisoness

and otherways. On the other hand, sin hath been countenanced, ignorance, profannes, and atheism increased, and the papists encouraged to hope againe for a day...so that in England at this day the man or woman that begins to profess Religion, and to serve God, must resolve with him selfe to sustaine mocks and injuries even as though he lived amongst ye enimies of Religion..."

The historian weighs all these cataclysmic happenings in the scales of Scripture, and concludes:

"...but it is ye Lord's doing, and ought to be marvelous in our eyes!...Every plante which mine heavenly father hath not planted (saith our Saviour) shall be rooted up. (Matthew 15:13)...Behold, I come unto ye, O proud man, saith the Lord God of hosts; for thy day is come, even the time that I will visite thee. Jeremiah 50:31..."

"When the Lord brought againe the captivitie of Zion, we were like them that dreame. Psalm 126:1. The Lord hath done greate things for us, wherof we rejoyce. V. 3. They that sow in teares, shall reap in joye..."

Bradford gives much credit to the preachers and true men of God, such as John Robinson, William Brewster, Richard Clifton and others. Through them, people saw their sinful conditions, repented and received God's grace to change their lives. But they soon met with persecution and scorn which, Bradford tells us, they bore with much patience. Furthermore, God revealed to them that the "lordly and tyrannous power of ye prelates ought not to be submitted unto: which was contrary to the freedome of the gospel, would load and burden men's consciences, and by their compulsive power make a prophane mixture of persons and things in ye worship of God."

The afflictions took a turn for the worse; Bradford likens their former problems to "flee bites" in comparison to their latter sufferings. In 1607, concluding that it was impossible to continue the worship of God in England, they agreed to resettle in Holland where they had heard they would have freedom of religion. It was not an easy undertaking, as Bradford describes below:

"Being thus constrained to leave their native soyle and countrie, their lands and livings, and all their friends and familiar acquaintance, it was much, and thought marvelous by many. But to goe into a countrie they knew not (but by hearsay), wher they must learne a new language, and get their livings they knew not how, it being a dear place, and subjecte to ye miseries of war, it was by many thought an adventure almost desperate, a case intolerable, and a miserie worse than death. Espetially seeing they were not acquainted with trade nor traffique, (by which ye countrie doth subsiste), but had only been used to a plaine countrie life, and ye inocente trade of husbandry. But these things did not dismay them (though they did sometimes trouble them) for their desires were sett on ye ways of God and to enjoye His ordinances; but they rested in His Providence, and knew whom they had believed..."

Life in Holland was very difficult. There were extremely long hours for the adults and children alike. They feared the corruption of their children by the native youth. Difficulties finally drove them to leave Holland.

After much prayer and the consideration of various resettlement locations, it was decided it would be best to live as a distinct body by themselves, under the government of Virginia. Bradford describes their departure from Holland being rooted in their love of God:

“So being ready o departe, they had a day of solleme humiliation, their pastor taking his texte from Ezra 8:21: “And ther at ye river, by Ahava, I proclaimed a fast, that we might humble ourselves before our God and seek of Him a right way for us, and for our children, and for all our substance.” Upon which they spent a good parte of ye day very profitably and suitable to their presente occasion. The rest of the time was spent in pouring out prairs to ye Lord with greate fervencie, mixed with abundance of tears. And ye time being come that they must departe, they were accompanied with most of their brethren out of ye citie, unto a towne sundrie miles off called Delfes-Haven, wher the ship lay ready to receive them. So they lefte ye goodly and pleasante citie, which had been ther resting place near 12 years; but they knew they were pilgrims (Hebrews 11), but lift their eyes to ye heavens, their dearest cuntrye, and quieted their spirits...

What could now sustaine them but ye spirite of God and His grace? May not and ought not the children of these fathers rightly say: Our fathers were Englishmen which came over this great ocean, and were ready to perish in this wilderness; (Deuteronomy 26:5,7) but they cried unto ye Lord, and He heard their voice, and looked on their adversitie, etc. Let them therefore praise ye Lord, because He is good, and His mercies endure for ever. (107 Psalm: v. 1,2,4,5,8) Yea let them which have been redeemed of ye Lord, show how He hath delivered them from ye hand of ye oppressour. When they wandered in ye deserte wilderness out of ye way, and found no citie to dwell in, both hungrie, and thirstie, their sowle was overwhelmed in them. Let them confess before ye Lord His loving kindness, and His wonderful works before ye sons of men.”

They arrived at Cape Cod, Massachusetts, on November 11, 1620. Ocean storms had blown them off course. They arrived in Massachusetts rather than their originally intended Virginia destination, King James I having granted a charter to the Virginia Company for its incorporation, excerpted as follows:

“James, by the grace of God, King of England, Scotland, France, and Ireland, Defender of the Faith, etc.,... We, greatly commending, and graciously accepting of, their Desires for the Furtherance of so noble a Work, which may, by the Providence of Almighty God, hereafter Tend to the Glory of His Divine Majesty, in propagating of Christian Religion to such People, as yet live in Darkness and miserable Ignorance of the true Knowledge and Worship of God...”

It is interesting to note that these Pilgrims had written up an agreement entitled *The Leyden Agreement of 1618*, subscribed by John Robinson and William Brewster, setting forth their Biblical priorities, which commences thus:

“Seven articles which the Church of Leyden sent to the Counsel of England to be considered of their judgment occasioned about their going to Virginia. Anno 1618...”

The *1618 Leyden Agreement* only further validates the Christian identity and purpose of the 1620 Pilgrims, who subsequently finding themselves about to arrive upon land with no established form of government as it would have been, had they landed in Virginia, saw the necessity to establish some type of governmental order among themselves before landing. The result was the **Mayflower Compact**, a charter which they drew up and signed, electing their own officers, and binding themselves to work together for their common Christian faith and their common good.

From this simple mutual agreement, took form the first American Commonwealth, the beginning “ of government of the people, by the people, for the people.” This document, establishing the Pilgrims’ priorities, read as follows:

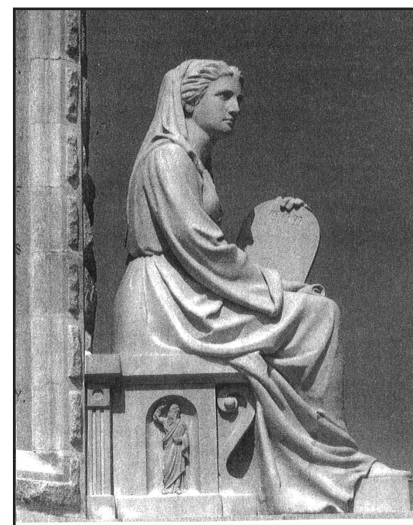
### THE COMPACT

“In the Name of God, Amen. We, whose names are underwritten, the loyal subjects of our dread sovereign Lord King James, by the grace of God, of Great Britain, France and Ireland King, defender of the faith, etc., having undertaken, for the glory of God, and advancement of the Christian faith, and honor of our king and country, a voyage to plant the first colony in the northern parts of Virginia, do, by these presents, solemnly and mutually, in the presence of God and one another, covenant and combine ourselves together into a civil body politic, for our better ordering and preservation, and furtherance of the ends aforesaid; and by virtue hereof to enact, constitute and frame such just and equal laws, ordinances, acts, constitutions, and offices, from time to time, as shall be thought most meet and convenient for the general good of the colony; unto which we promise all due submission and obedience. In witness whereof we have hereunder subscribed our names at Cape Cod the 11 November, in the year of the reign of our sovereign lord, King James of England, France, and Ireland and the eighteenth, and of Scotland the fifty-fourth, Anno Dom. 1620.”

It had been a difficult journey. Bradford tells us that, of the 103 Mayflower Pilgrim disembarking passengers, 51 of these died during the first New England winter. However, this stalwart band of settlers who had braved the dangerous seas and inhospitable New England shores to live their lives in harmony with God’s Holy Scriptures, persevered in prayer, obedience and praise to Almighty God.

Having devoted most of his book to the origins of the Pilgrims, Bradford continued his history, giving brief highlights of life in Plymouth Plantation...

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