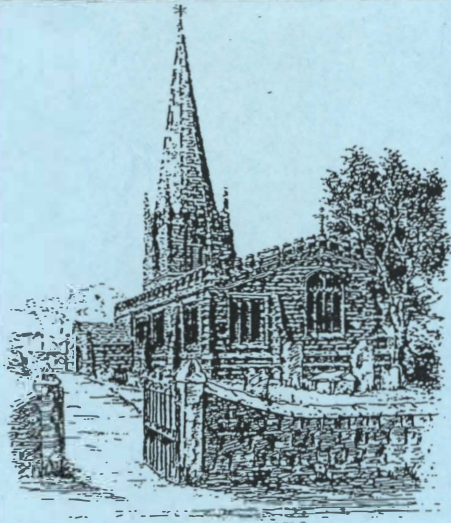
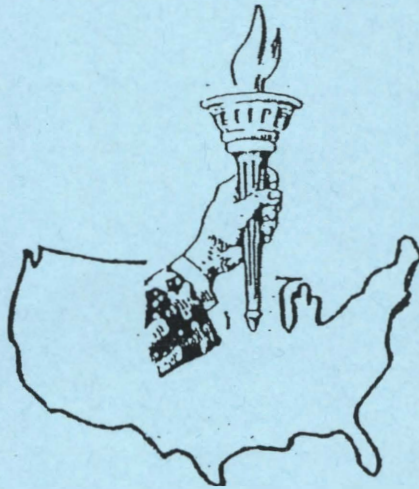
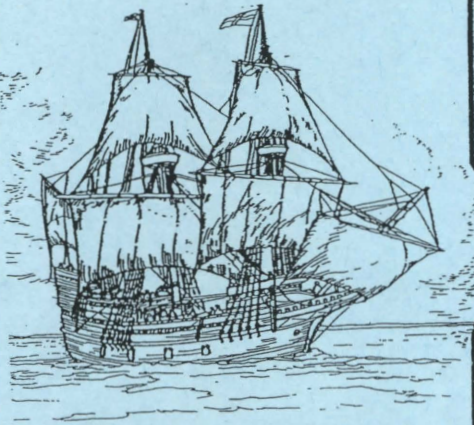


The Secret of America's Greatness



Church at Austerfield, Bradford's Birthplace.

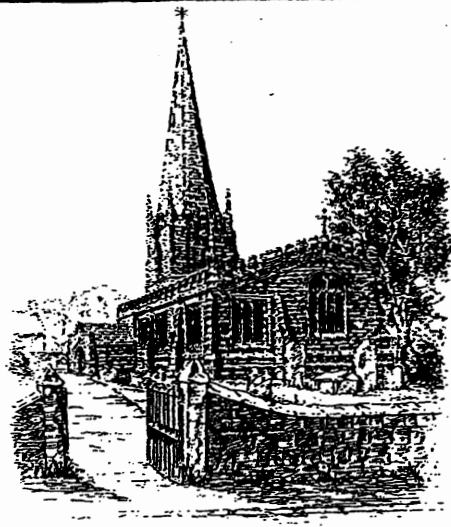


John Smith.

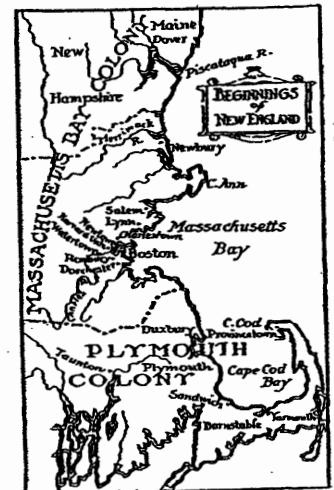
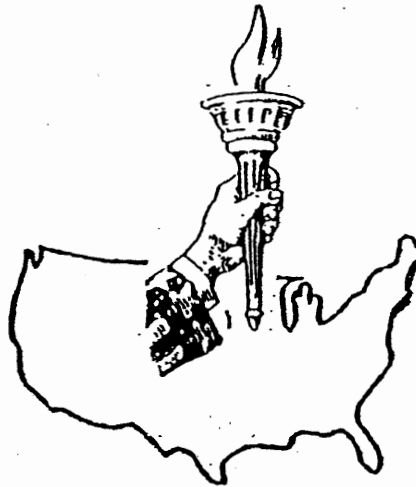
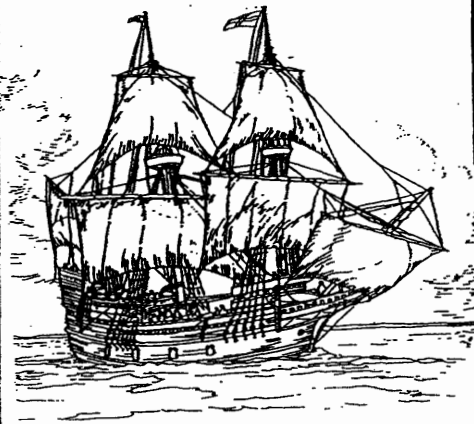


Manfred E. Kober, Th.D.

The Secret of America's Greatness



Church at Austerfield, Bradford's Birthplace.



John Smith.

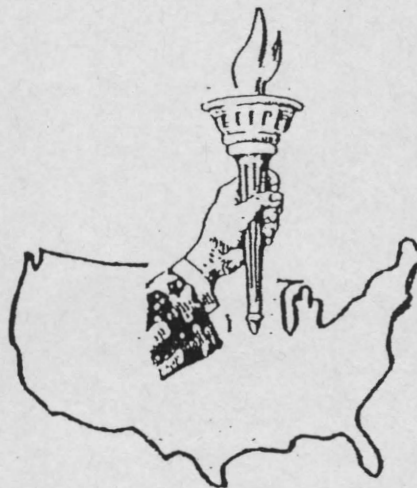
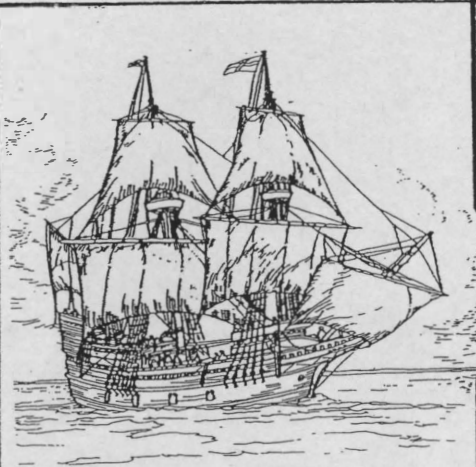


Manfred E. Kober, Th.D.

The Secret of America's Greatness



Church at Austerfield, Bradford's Birthplace.



John Smith.



Manfred E. Kober, Th.D.

The Secret of America's Greatness

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1b. Their determination for purity in worship

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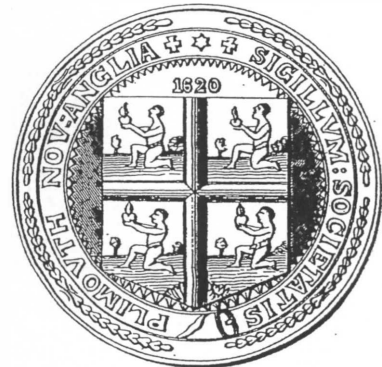
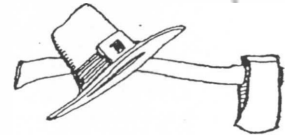
1b. Death of half their number

2b. Drought guaranteeing virtual starvation

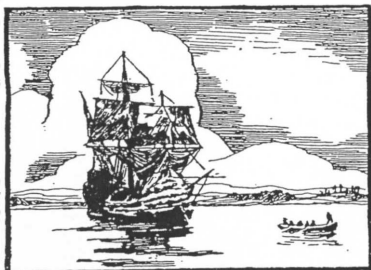
5A. The Evangelical Prominence at Jamestown

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First Seal of Plymouth Colony.



Alexis de Tocqueville

The Secret of America's Greatness

INTRODUCTION: A Forgotten Principle in the Founding of America

God was about to reveal the Ten Commandments to His people at the foot of Mt. Sinai. Here the twelve tribes of Israel were gathered. After 400 years of bondage in Egypt they were about to be fused into a nation. At that time God laid down a most significant principle. This principle is applicable to the foundation of any nation.

Here are the words: Exodus 20:5-6 **Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me;**⁶ **And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.**

The principle, easily deduced from the passage, is this: if a nation commences with an ungodly, idolatrous group of individuals, God will bring curses upon it and future generations. However, should a nation begin with a godly nucleus, He promised to bless it for many future generations.

(Deut. 7:9) **Know therefore that the LORD thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations.**

A little known and frequently denied fact is this: the United States began with a group of godly men and women, perhaps the only nation on the planet with such a commencement, and thus the continuous recipient of God's promised blessings.

The secret of America's greatness is that in its very inception, men and women of God, devoted to His will and Word, laid the foundations of a cluster of settlements which in God's providence merged into the most prosperous and peaceful and powerful nation on earth.

What is the historical proof for the godly roots of our great Republic?

1A. The Enduring Persecution in England:

When Henry VIII broke with the church of Rome, he made himself the head of the English branch of Catholicism, known as the Anglican Church. Soon a movement developed in Anglicanism which attempted to purify the Anglican Church of its Roman Catholic excesses. These reformers, known as Puritans, were greatly influenced by the Protestant Reformation in Germany. They were neither appreciated by the staunch Anglicans nor by the Roman Catholics.



When Mary Queen of Scots (1553-58), an ardent Catholic, ascended to the British throne, she tried to rid Britain of heresy by putting to death the heretics. Thus her by-name, "Bloody Mary."

Queen Elizabeth I ruled moderatingly for 40 years in an effort to please all factions.

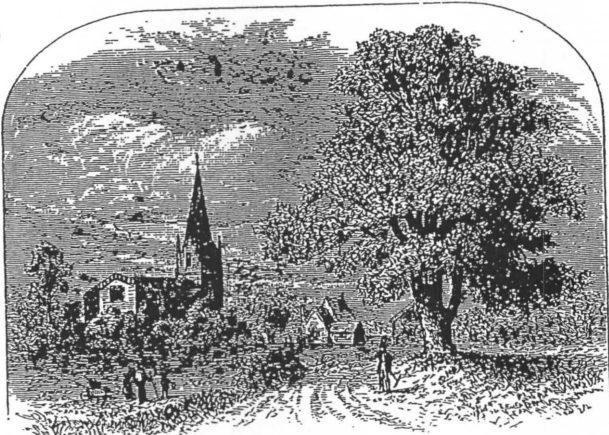
She in turn was succeeded by James I, the king to whom the King James Version of the English Bible was dedicated. While

we applaud him for giving his blessing to the most beautiful and timeless translation of the Word of God into the English language, we deplore his intolerance as an Anglican toward those who were not persuaded of his high church approach.

2A. The Extraordinary Piety of the Pilgrim Fathers:

It was under the reign of James I that severe persecution came to our forefathers who eventually settled in the new world. They did not feel that the Puritans would be effective in purifying the Anglican Church and thus, as separatists, they worshipped in independent congregations.

1b. Their determination for purity in worship:



Site of Scrooby Manor.

Official edicts soon barred them from meeting in churches, thus forcing them to meet secretly. One such band of separatists were barred from their beloved church building, St. Wilfred's, in Scrooby, a small hamlet north of Nottingham. Elder William Brewster provided the congregation with a secret room in a nearby manor house. Both their ancient church, dating from the 14th century, and the vestiges of the manor house can still be visited.

These saints had a burning desire to follow God's Word alone and therefore rejected the ceremonialism and traditionalism of the state church.

2b. Their departure for the continent:

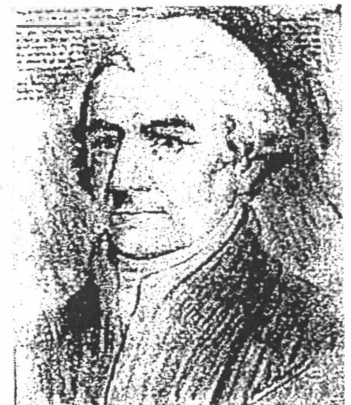
William Bradford, in his classic account of the trials and travels of these Pilgrim separatists, chronicles in his book, *Of Pilgrim Plantation*, their ostracisms and their ridicule by "the profane multitude."

Bradford writes:

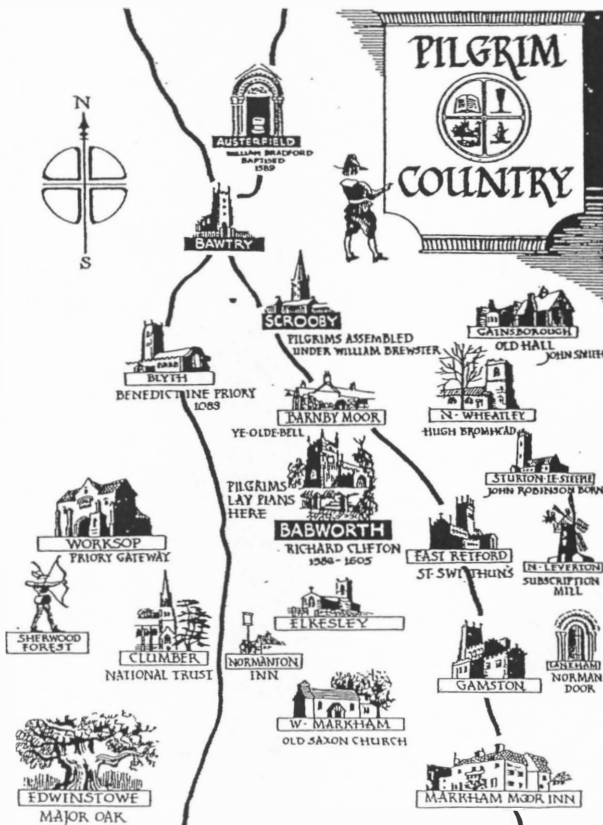
But that I may come more near my intendmente: when as by the travel & diligence of some godly & zealous preachers, & Gods blessing on their labours, as in other places of ye land, so in ye North parts, many became inlightened by ye word of God, and had their ignorance & sins discovered unto them, and begane by his grace to reforme their lives, and make conscience of their ways, the worke of God was no sooner manifest in them, but presently they were both scoffed and scorned by ye prophane multitude, and ye ministers urged with ye yoke of subscription, or els must be silenced; and ye poore people were so vexed with apparators, & pursuants, & ye comissarie courts, as truly their affliction was not smale; which, notwithstanding, they bore sundrie years with much patience, till they were occasioned (by ye continuance & encrease of these troubls, and



SCROOBY CHURCH.



other means which ye Lord raised up in those days) to see further into things by the light of ye word of God. . . So many therefore of these professors as saw ye evill of these things, in the parts, and whose harts ye Lord had touched with heavenly Zeale for his trueth, they shooke of this yoke of antichristian bondage, and as ye Lords free people, joynd them selves (by a covenant of the Lord) into a church estate, in ye fellowship of ye gospel, to walke in all his wayes, make known or to be made known unto them, according to their best endeavours, whatsoever it should cost them, the Lord assisting them. And that it cost them something this ensewing historie will declare. . .



After much patience and endurance, the congregations of several communities resolved to leave their homes and settle on the continent. Their first escape by boat was intercepted by the king's henchmen, when the captain of the boat betrayed them. At last, those jailed were released and as united families they made another desperate attempt to escape to a better life. Incredibly, their journey took them two weeks, as a violent storm seemed to prevent their ever reaching the Netherlands. One wonders if Satan, in premonition of their glorious destiny, was trying to thwart their plans.

3b. Their disappointment in the Netherlands:

The Pilgrim Fathers had good reason to settle in the Netherlands. The first Dutch king, William of Orange, had come to know Jesus Christ in a personal way by reading the Bible.



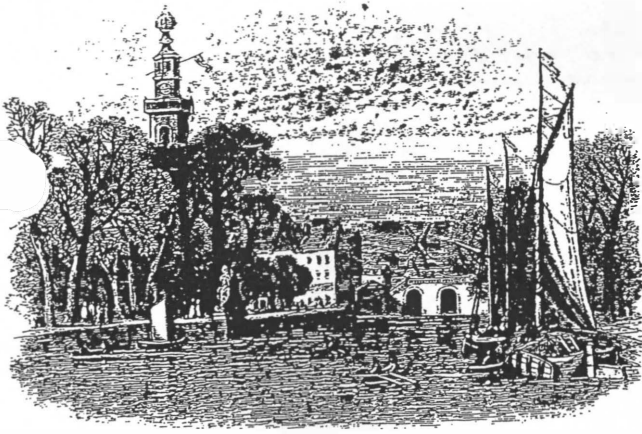
William of Orange

He provided in his country a climate of toleration for those who were religiously persecuted elsewhere.

1c. The conflicts in Amsterdam:

An English congregation had preceded the Pilgrims to Amsterdam. Even today there are English worship services held at the Beginhof, in the Old English Reformed Church.

It appears that during a prayer service, the Pilgrim Fathers received the quiet and settled assurance from God that Holland should not be their final home but that they should launch out to the New World.



Leyden.

Problems among the leadership of the established English congregation prompted the Pilgrims to leave Amsterdam after one year and move to the town of Leyden.



2c. The carnality of the Dutch people:

William Bradford describes the difficult environment in which the Pilgrims, who referred to themselves as Strangers, lived. The learning of a new language and a different trade was extremely difficult. Most disappointing was the spiritual callousness and open carnality of many of the Dutch people who had little appreciation for the spiritual struggles endured by the new arrivals.

3c. Their concern for the next generation:

Bradford expresses the congregation's great concern for the young people in their families who, through their association with certain unsavory youth in Leyden, seemed to forsake the godly path of their parents. The band of Pilgrims was blessed with a godly pastor who encouraged a number of his flock to make arrangements to sail to North America.

3A. The Eventful Passage of the Mayflower:

1b. The farewell message by Pastor John Robinson:



After a final church service in the harbor at Delftshaven, Pastor Robinson and his flock accompanied the 35 Pilgrims to their point of embarkation, as they were about to launch out to North America. We are indebted for a summary of this moving challenge by a concerned pastor to his beloved people on the deck of their frail vessel. (An impressive stained glass window in the Old English Reformed Church in Amsterdam captures this touching scene.)

It should be remembered that with this little band commenced the first permanent English colony in North America. Here's Bradford's summary of Robinson's message:

Brethren, we are now erelong to part asunder, and the Lord knoweth whether I shall live ever to see your faces more: but whether the Lord hath appointed that or not, I charge you before God and His blessed angels to follow me no farther than I have followed Christ. If God should reveal anything to you by any other instrument of His, be as ready to receive it as you ever were to receive any truth by my ministry; for I am very confident that the Lord hath more truth and light yet to break forth out of His Holy

Word. For my part, I cannot sufficiently bewail the condition of the Reformed churches, who are come to a period in religion, and will go no farther than the instruments of their reformation. The Lutherans cannot be drawn to go any farther than what Luther saw, and the Calvinists, you see, stick fast where they were left by that great man of God, who yet saw not all things. This is a misery much to be lamented; for though they were burning and shining lights in their time, yet they penetrated not into the whole counsel of God, but were they now living, would be as willing to embrace further light as that which they first received.

John Robinson's Farewell Letter to the Pilgrims

Sundry other things of importance I could put you in mind of, and of those before mentioned in more words, but I will not so far wrong your godly minds as to think you heedless of these things, there being also divers among you so well able to admonish both themselves and others of what concerneth them. These few things therefore, and the same in few words I do earnestly commend unto your care and conscience, joining therewith my daily incessant prayers unto the Lord, that He who hath made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all rivers of water, and whose providence is over all His works, especially over all His dear children for good, would so guide and guard you in your ways, as inwardly by His Spirit, so outwardly by the hand of His power, as that both you and we also, for and with you, may have after matter of praising His name all the days of your and our lives. Fare you well in Him in whom you trust, and in whom I rest.

An unfeigned wellwiller of your happy success in this hopeful voyage,

John Robinson

2b. Their sailing to the New World:



THE SHIP MAYFLOWER.

After some initial difficulties with the vessel called "Speedwell," two boatloads of passengers, a total of about 135, crowded on the small "Mayflower," whose length hardly exceeded the distance from the pitcher's mound to home plate on a baseball diamond.

The midwinter crossing took 66 long and agonizing days. Finally, after an especially violent storm, land was sighted. To everyone's consternation, it was the tip of Cape Cod in Massachusetts. They had planned to settle near Virginia, close enough to the colony of Jamestown, settled by the adventurer Captain John Smith, to be protected from the colony but far enough away to avoid being under their control.

3b. Their settlement at Plymouth:

When the storm subsided, the passengers of the "Mayflower" did not resume their journey to their original destination hundreds of miles to the south, for they saw in that storm the providential hand of God. Thus they

established a settlement and named it after their last home in England, Plymouth.

This pious band prayed before they left the "Mayflower." Then, as their feet touched the snow-covered New England soil, they fell on their knees again to thank God for the safe voyage and to commit their unknown future into His care.



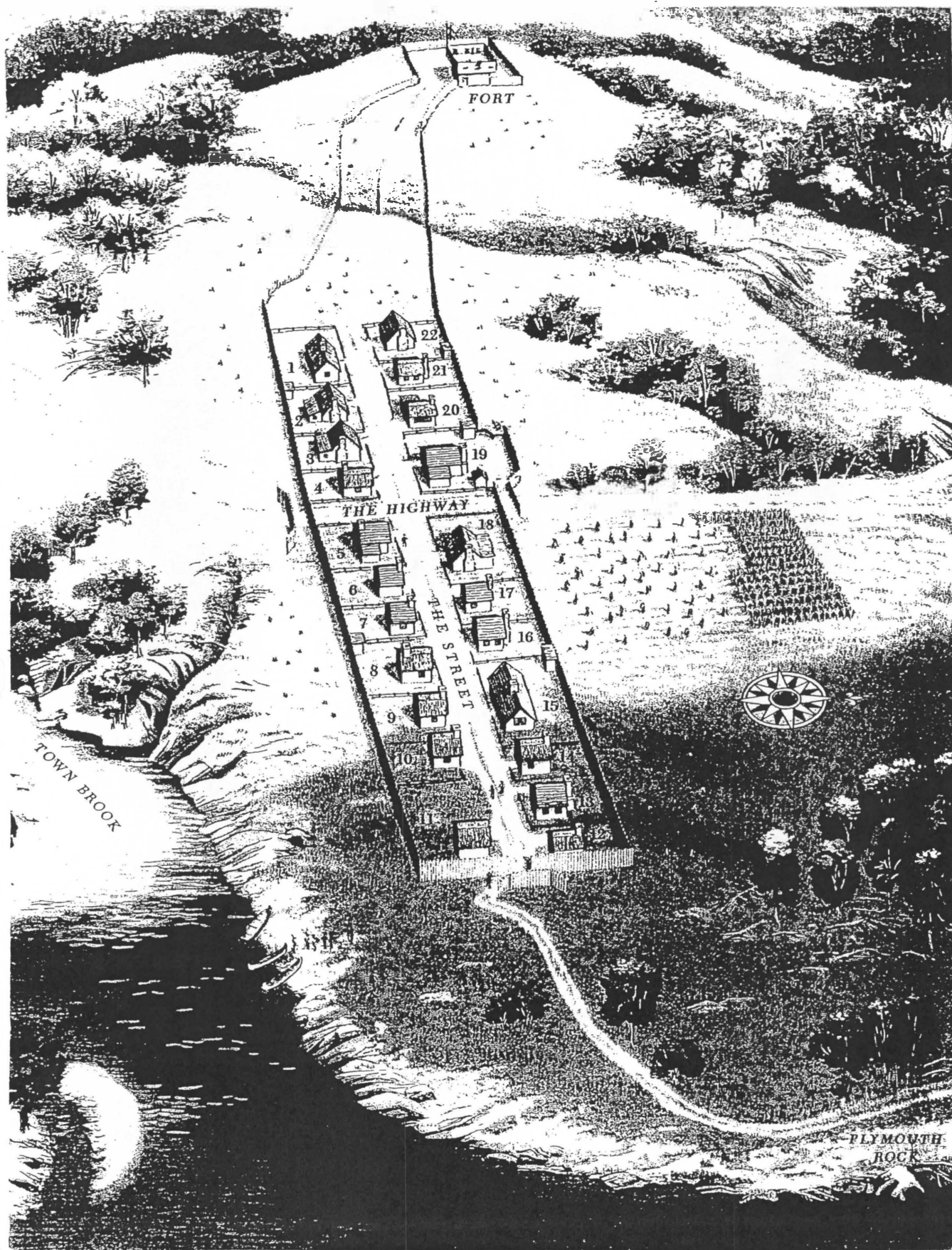
BREWSTER'S CHURCH.

In 1627 there was on Burial Hill, Plymouth, a fort with six 4-pounders on the roof. The lower part of the fort was Elder Brewster's Church.

One would think that upon their arrival around Christmastime in 1620, they would immediately construct shelters to protect them against inclement weather. However, the first building which they constructed was a meeting hall at the top of the hill. Actually, the fort-like structure also served to protect them against Indian attacks. But how telling that their first efforts concerned a place of worship. In Holland, they had experienced religious **toleration** but here they desired to worship God in complete **freedom**. Their faith in God was not some kind of cultural cocoon but their faith governed the very essence of their being.

4b. The drafting of the Mayflower Compact:

Even before an exploration party left the "Mayflower" at Provincetown, the leading men on board sat down and drafted the famous Mayflower



Plymouth Plantation

Compact, one of America's three most important political documents. If anyone questions the Christian beginnings of America, he would do well to read that brief but influential document. The document begins with the name of God and concludes with the name of God: "In the name of God. . .in the year of our Lord 1620."



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 of 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 of November, in the year of the reign of our sovereign Lord, King James of England, France and Ireland the eighteenth, and of Scotland the fifty-fourth. Ano. Dom. 1620.

John Carver
William Bradford
Edward Winslow
William Brewster
Isaac Allerton
Myles Standish
John Alden
Samuel Fuller
Christopher Martin
William Mullins

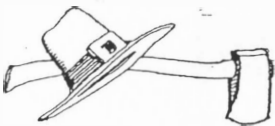
William White
Richard Warren
John Howland
Stephen Hopkins
Edward Tilly
John Tilly
Francis Cooke
Thomas Rogers
Thomas Tinker
John Rigdale

Edward Fuller
John Turner
Francis Eaton
James Chilton
John Crackston
John Billington
Moses Fletcher
John Goodman
Degory Priest
Thomas Williams

Gilbert Winslow
Edmond Margeson
Peter Brown
Richard Britteridge
George Soule
Richard Clarke
Richard Gardiner
John Allerton
Thomas English
Edward Doty
Edward Leister

*Old calendar

Our founding fathers gave three reasons for their voyage to North America, "Having undertaken, for the glory of God, and the advancement of the Christian faith and honor of our King and Country, a voyage to plant a first colony in the northern part of Virginia. . ." It should be noted that the document was signed by all the leading men on board, not just Pilgrims who had left England, live one year in Amsterdam and then 11 years in Leyden.



All the signatories asserted that they came out of 1) a love for God 2) a love for the gospel and 3) a love for their mother country, England. Our founding fathers were loyal to England. (If the king of England had not made it impossible for the colonists by ignoring or suspending every written agreement he had made with them, there never would have been a revolution. In fact, it was the king who 150 years later would revolt against his written compacts and charters with the colonies, so that men like Adams, Jefferson and Washington said that theirs was not a revolution made but prevented. They insisted that the "royal brute of Britain" revolted against his own charters.)



The Mayflower Compact stated that these new settlers came specifically to advance the Christian gospel. But were they not all Christians? To whom would they witness? The fact is that there was a godly nucleus on the vessel, but there were the sailors, soldiers and servants who needed to know Christ. And out in the forest were the noble savages. One of the untold stories of the settlement of North America is how the early believers immediately set out to evangelize the Indians. Much like Martin Luther had done, they put the gospel into songs to teach the Indians, unable to read, certain basic biblical truths. This gospel or good news was that while every man was a sinner, Jesus Christ came to die for all men, and anyone who believes in this substitute Savior becomes in that moment a child of the heavenly Father.

4A. The Ensuing Problems in the New World:

When individuals are committed to glorify God as were the Pilgrims, one would expect God's abundant blessings upon their persons and plans. But God's ways are not our ways.

1b. The decimation of the settlement:

For whatever providential reason, God permitted half their number to perish during that first winter. Bradford chronicles the sad situation without foolishly charging God with indifference. Here is his commentary:

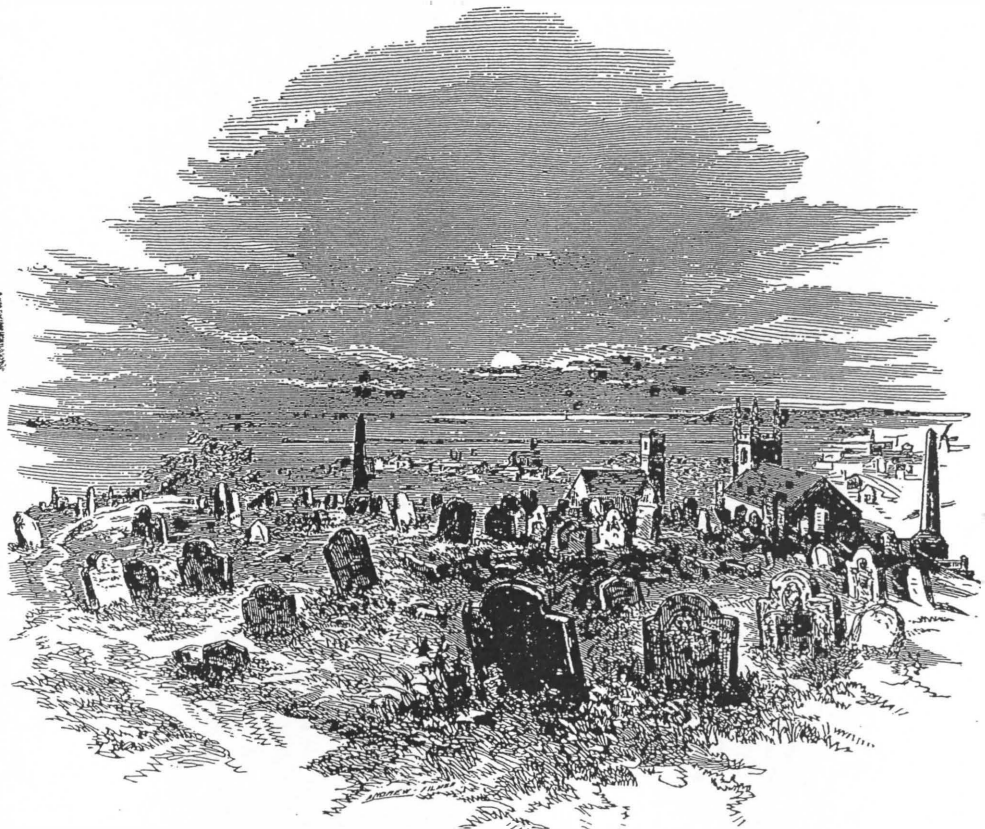
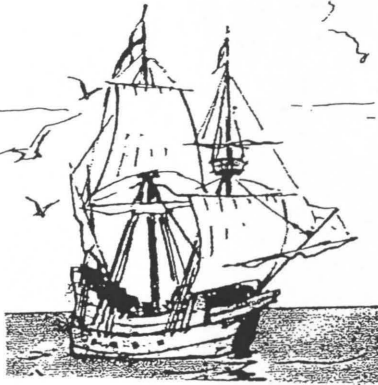
In these hard & difficult beginnings they found some discontents & murmurings arise amongst some, and mutinous speeches & carriages in other; but they were soone quelled & overcome by ye wisdom, patience, and just & equall carriage of things by ye Govr and better part, wch clave faithfully together in ye maine. But that which was most sadd & lamentable was, that in 2. or 3. moneths time halfe of their company dyed, espetially in Jan: & February, being ye depth of winter, and wanting houses & other comforts; being infected with ye scurvie & other diseases, which this long vioage & their incomodate condition had brought upon them; so as ther dyed some times 2. or 3. of a day, in ye foresaid time; that of 100. & odd persons, scarce 50. remained. And of these in ye time of most distres, ther was but 6. or 7. sound persons, who, to their great comendations be it spoken, spared no pains, night nor day, but with abundance of toyle and hazard of their own health, fetched them woode, made them fires, drest them meat, made their beads, washed their lothsome cloaths, cloathed & uncloathed them; in a word, did all ye homly & necessarie offices for them wch dainty & quesie stomacks cannot endure to hear named; and all this willingly & cherfully, without any grudging in ye least, shewing herein their true love unto their friends & bretheren. A rare example & worthy to be remembred. Tow of these 7. were Mr. William Brewster, ther reverend Elder, & Myles Standish, ther Captein & military comander, unto whom my selfe, & many others, were much beholden in our low & sicke condition. And yet the Lord so upheld these persons, as in this generall calamity they were not at all infected either with sicknes, or lamnes.

Had we been in the shoes of our Pilgrim Fathers, we might have concluded that a God of love would not possibly permit us to escape torture or death in England then take our wives and children from us in the new world. Somewhere along the way we must have missed His will.

William Bradford gone?
Signature of William Bradford.

And thus we would retrace our footsteps back to the Netherlands to see where we took the wrong turn in God's plan.

Not so our forefathers. They remembered the maxim, "Never doubt in the dark what God has revealed in the light." When in the spring of 1621 they Mayflower thawed out and returned to England, not a single Pilgrim joined that eastbound voyage. Rather, they gathered on Burial Hill and prayed for the vessel's safe return to England.



BURIAL HILL, PLYMOUTH.

2b. The drought and incipient starvation:

The broken promises of the English merchantmen to send supply ships to the new colony made the settlers eagerly anticipate a good harvest that first fall. It appears that God in His inscrutable wisdom once again sorely tested the faith of that little band. As Bradford reports, God withheld rain from May to September. Just as the crops were about to wither completely, the Pilgrims declared a day of prayer and fasting. In answer to their fervent prayers God sent a refreshing rain, prompting amazement and adoration on the part of the newcomers and natives.

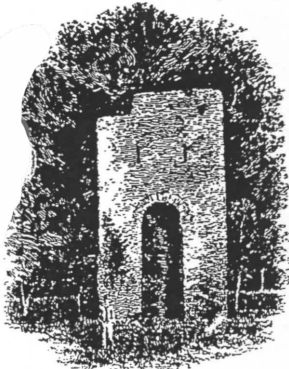
5A. The Evangelical Prominence at Jamestown

It might be argued that while the settlement of Plymouth evidenced genuine piety, this in no way proves that all the earlier colonies evinced such evangelical fervor. Early colonial documents prove the contrary. By way of illustration, one can skip back in time to Jamestown, established as an economic venture by Captain John Smith. But even here genuine Protestant Christianity held a significant place among the adventurers. The First Charter of Virginia of April 10, 1606, declared the following:



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, and may in time bring the infidels and savages, living in those parts, to human civility, and to a settled and quiet government.

God granted the settlers a true evangelical pastor, Robert Hunt, who fervently preached the Word. John Smith wrote the following in his diary about worship in his colony:



JAMESTOWN : RUINS OF CHURCH.

I well remember wee did hang an awning (which is an old saile) to three or four trees to shadow us from the sunne. Our walles were rales of wood, our seats unhewed trees till wee cut planks, our pulpit a bar of wood nailed to two neighboring trees. . . Yet wee had daily common prayer morning and evening, every Sunday two sermons, and every three moneths the holy communion.

As we know, Jamestown eventually disappeared, primarily due to economic hardships and Indian attacks. In preparation of its recent 400-year anniversary, some of the ancient settlement has been excavated, but



visitors through the years could always identify its location by that lone church steeple above the trees, a silent testimony to early colonial Christianity.

Time and space forbid reference to other colonial settlements, all of which give testimony in their written compacts and charters of their faith in Jesus Christ and their desire to make His salvation known. Just one more example must suffice. The New England Charter, comprised of a whole number of settlements, was no less clear in its gospel orientation than the Mayflower Compact:

The New England Articles of Confederation of May 19, 1643, between the plantations under the government of Massachusetts and those under the government of New Plymouth, Connecticut and New Haven begin with these words:



Early New England

Whereas we all came into these parts of America with one and the same end and aim, namely, to advance the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ and to enjoy the liberties of the gospel in purity with peace.

Not that every colonist was a born-again believer, but most of those who laid the foundation of the settlements and drafted their constitutions were God-fearing individuals. The other colonists concurred in the religious orientation of the particular colony.

One can take one further step back in America's history and find evidence of genuine biblical Christianity at the very inception of North American colonization.



Map of New France in Cartier's time

6A. The Earlier Plans of Sir Humphrey Gilbert:

Sir Humphrey (1539-1583) was the half-brother of Sir Walter Raleigh. Independently wealthy and the owner of a castle and large estate, he nonetheless fought fiercely on the Continent in defense of the Huguenots who were under Catholic assault. It seems to this writer that Sir Humphrey finally gave up because of his realization that there would never be a country in Europe where Protestants would truly be free to worship God according to their understanding of Scripture.

While not attested in any documents this writer could find, it appears that Sir Humphrey appealed to the queen of England to grant him rights to colonize the North American continent for the British Crown. His one purpose seems to have been to find a northwest passage to the Pacific, but also perhaps



Queen Elizabeth.

to establish a refuge for the religiously persecuted in Europe. Captain Edward Hayes lauds Gilbert for the efforts, "of planning a Christian habitation and regiment upon the same. . .but nevertheless it's true that in the active brain of Gilbert was first conceived the project which was the germ of the future power of England in the new world, the seed from whence grew the present United States." (Bryant's *Popular History of the United States*, Vol. 1, I, 232-233).

In 1578 Sir Humphrey received from Queen Elizabeth I a charter giving him power for the next six years to discover "such remote heathen and barbarous lands, not actually possessed by any Christian prince or people" (Op. cit., 235).

In his day, with only primitive navigational maps available and horrifying reports of savages on land in the recently discovered continent and monsters at sea, Sir Humphrey set out to establish a colony in Newfoundland. As he was returning to England, someone asked him whether he was not afraid whether he would lose



H. Gilbert
SIR HUMPHREY GILBERT

his life in the uncharted and unpredictable waters of the Atlantic. To this Sir Humphrey replied, "**Sir, I am just as close to God by seas as by land!**" As it turned out, he did perish at sea in a sudden storm. He was last seen from a neighboring vessel, calmly reading his Bible. This is a testimony of faith and fearlessness. Traces of genuine piety can be traced as far back as the early days of exploration.

Indeed, our country had a godly beginning. Our nation is unique in that respect. And God promised blessings to a thousand generations to that country starting with a godly nucleus. It is a singular blessing from God that our nation qualifies for this promise. As we enjoy a measure of God's blessings

upon our nation today, we are mindful that it is not due to our godliness today but a lasting legacy made possible by these saints who settled here for the glory of God and the witness of the gospel. And may we by God's grace pass on this pure gospel to future generations, if Christ delays His return for His own.

7A. The Exceptional Prescience of Alexis de Tocqueville:

The emergence of the United States of America in less than a generation from a cluster of colonies to the foremost nation on earth occasioned both amazement and admiration in Europe. The Frenchman Alexis de Tocqueville, curious as to the reasons for the ascendancy of America, came to North America in 1835 and criss-crossed the United States in search of the reasons for America's greatness. He returned to his native France and penned perhaps the most incisive book any foreigner has



ever written about our country, entitled *Democracy in America*. His conclusion bears repeating:

I sought for the greatness and genius of America in her commodious harbours and her ample rivers, and it was not there; in the fertile fields and boundless prairies, and it was not there. Not until I went into the churches of America, and heard her pulpits aflame with righteousness, did I understand the secret of her genius and power. America is great because America is good.

Thus reads de Tocqueville's conclusion in his classic study. His objective observations are worth noting. Two hundred years after the landing of the Pilgrim Fathers, their biblical faith and fervency were witnessed in churches all across America. To this de Tocqueville attributed America's greatness. While today's spiritual climate in America is vastly different, it should be noted that there are some 17,000 fundamental churches still shining as bright beacons of the gospel in America's villages, towns and cities.

CONCLUSION:

Some decades ago the president of Brazil and American ambassador Roger Babson were engaged in a conversation about their respective countries. The president of Brazil wondered why their two nations, colonized by Europeans about the same time, similar in size and equally rich in raw materials, were so dissimilar. Brazil, said its president, is still one of the most impoverished nations on earth, and yet the United States is the most prosperous and prominent nation on earth. Wherein lies this difference?

Roger Babson put the matter most succinctly. Brazil, he said, was founded by men seeking **gold**. The United States was founded by men seeking **God**.

That is the secret of America's greatness.

