

FROM The Mayflower Compact (1620)

Keeping their distance from the settlers in the South were those immigrants who fully intended to embody the three traits of true godliness, husbandry, and industry. The Pilgrims gave evidence of their intentions in the Mayflower Compact. This group of Protestant separatists, along with some "strangers" who were tolerated for the sake of their martial and other skills, crossed the Atlantic on the Mayflower, and anchored off Cape Cod in November 1620 in the area named New England. Having landed beyond the boundaries of the Virginia Company charter, within which they were supposed to have settled, they believed it necessary to create a legal foundation for their colony. That legal foundation was built out of not only English political precedents but a religious one. Puritans (the Pilgrims were a radical Puritan sect) organized their churches by having all members sign a covenant to which God was deemed a witness: in effect, they established a contract between themselves and God. The Pilgrims, therefore, created a compact of government that echoed and reinforced their church covenant.

Poore, Benjamin P., ed., *The Federal and State Constitutions, Colonial Charters, and other Organic Laws of the United States*, vol. 1 (Washington, D.C., 1878), p. 931.

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*, &c. Having undertaken for the Glory of God, and Advancement of the Christian Faith; and the 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 Politick, for our better Ordering and Preservation, and Furtherance of the Ends aforesaid; And by the Virtue hereof do 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 Colon); unto which we promise all due Submission and Obedience.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What was the fundamental difference between the governing principles expressed by the Plymouth settlers and those established in the early Jamestown settlement?
2. Was government instituted for similar reason* in both of those early colonies? Why or why not?
3. What does this document reveal about the values and commitments of these people?