



PILGRIM PARADIGM FOR THE NEW MILLENNIUM

"For this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting" - 1st Timothy 1:16

By Charles Hull Wolfe, Ph.D

Some thirty years ago, in 1969, when John G. Talcott, Jr. and I first conceived the educational foundation that publishes this *Letter from Plymouth Rock*, John was a member of the Committee preparing to celebrate the 350th anniversary of the landing of the Pilgrims, and I was its executive director.

At the time, the Committee was deeply divided in its view of the Pilgrims and what the anniversary should seek to convey to the American people. The Chairman and a few other Pilgrim descendants had abandoned their forefathers' Calvinist theology and their ancient Congregational church.

Committee in Conflict

While they were eager to present the Pilgrims as bold, brave and virtuous people, they did not want to say anything specific about the Pilgrims' Christianity, their belief in the importance of Christ as one's personal Lord and Savior, or of a living faith that God truly answers earnest prayer.

Nor did they want to emphasize the Pilgrims' upholding of the Bible as the Word of God providing guidance in every aspect of life and society, or the kinship between signers of the Mayflower Compact and twentieth-century Christians who hold to strict constitutionalism.

The majority of the Committee was most of all distressed over John Talcott's proposal that evangelist Billy Graham appear as chief speaker on the big day celebrating the 350th anniversary of the Pilgrims' actual landing at the Rock.

By contrast, some of the minority, (chiefly myself and John Talcott), knew that America had deeply Biblical roots, and believed the Pilgrim anniversary should make that plain. We were impressed with the scholarly work of Verna M. Hall, author of *"The Christian History of the Constitution,"* & the indispensable role of the Pilgrims in that history, as well as their value in providing a superb paradigm (i.e., pattern or model) for those seeking to restore America today.

As Russell Kirk has observed, "Civilization grows out of religion. Government, literature, the arts, the economy, all have a religious origin."

We also believed that an honest and accurate depiction of Pilgrim history, and its underlying Biblical principles, would offer perceptive Americans an antidote to the poisonous radicalism of the decade just then ending, the turbulent Sixties. With its wild and arrogant campus protests, often led by the

New Left organization, SDS, the Sixties expressed the delusions of a worldly utopianism.

As Judge Robert Bork put it, in *Slouching Toward Gomorrah*, in a chapter on the Sixties, "Without reference to a supernatural Being, the SDS was proposing, largely through politics, to bring their secular vision of the kingdom of God to fruition on earth, now."

Some three-and-a-half centuries earlier, another band of idealists was far more successful in their efforts to improve the world, primarily because they were far more sound in their basic belief system, their Christianity.

As one of the twentieth century's great scholars, Russell Kirk, has observed, "Civilization grows out of religion. Government, literature, the arts, the economy, all have a religious origin."

The soundness of the Pilgrims' religion, their trust in the truth of the Bible, their determination to "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness..." all allowed them to form and apply Christian social and political principles, and lay the foundation for a free and orderly civilization.

deTocqueville on the Pilgrims

As the highly esteemed French observer, Alexis deTocqueville, concluded in the 1830's, speaking primarily of the Pilgrims, but also of the Puritans, who followed them

to New England after watching them endure adversity, survive and prosper for a decade:

"It was in the English colonies of the North, better known as the states of New England, that the two or three main principles now forming the basic social theory of the United States were combined.

"New England principles spread first to the neighboring states and then in due course to those more distant, finally penetrating everywhere throughout the confederation. Their influence now extends beyond its limit over the whole American world."

But as John Talcott and I asked each other early in 1969, "How can we tell the American people what they should know about the Pilgrims and their principles if the 350th Committee doesn't want to tell the true story?"

Our answer: form an independent not-for-profit corporation, which we called Plymouth Rock Foundation. John asked me, "Do we have enough solid information to write an authentic script depicting what the Pilgrims believed and just how they worshipped?" I replied in the affirmative and proceeded to write and produce an historical drama staged in a Broadway-calibre set which John Talcott financed.

Thanksgiving 1623 was a realistic recreation of a Pilgrim Sabbath meeting, based on the Pilgrims' Geneva Bible, their Ainsworth Psalter, William Bradford's *Of Plymouth Plantation*, and Rev. John Robinson's theological writings.

It compressed what in historical reality was an almost day-long service into two hours, divided by an intermission simulating the Pilgrims' lunch break. Our documentary was presented again

and again to appreciative crowds, and revealed important truths which the official anniversary committee wanted to hide away.

Executive Director Fired

But the conflict within the committee continued, and one evening the chairman fired me - because, he frankly said, of our conflict over what the anniversary should say about the Pilgrims.

The next morning I dropped in to say good-bye to the committee's vice chairman, Jim Leland, a big, warm deeply Christian man with the courage of his convictions. Jim blurted out, "The chairman has no right to fire you! You were appointed by the entire anniversary committee, and they alone can fire you! It's the *chairman* who should be fired!"

Jim contacted every member of the committee and made this recommendation, together with my proposal that John Talcott be made the new chairman. By then several committee members had resigned, and God had largely changed the hearts of the others.

The climax came in an inspiring address by Billy Graham, and staging of a shortened version of our Pilgrim Sabbath meeting, every hour on the hour in Plymouth's jam-packed Memorial Hall.

Every member agreed to relieve the current chairman of his duties, to reinstate me, and make John Talcott the new chairman! From this point on, within the limitations of our modest budget, we were free to create an authentic anniversary program - with a grand opening parade, excellent lecturers and seminars, entertaining history based shows, and public service radio announcements which told

Americans in all 50 states about the Pilgrim anniversary.

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The Big Reenactment

Most exciting to the crowd that thronged the Plymouth waterfront that cold December morning was the reenactment of the historic landing, which I narrated on a loudspeaker from a tall, shaky wooden platform erected alongside Plymouth Rock.

The Pilgrims' shallop was manned by a band of costumed oarsmen who had been hostile to our conservative world view. Their boat was so late in arriving at the waterfront, I had to ad lib beyond my prepared remarks, and wondered whether they would even show up.

Finally, the shallop appeared in the distance. At the moment of landing, as a costumed Pilgrim stood up in a dramatic gesture, with one foot on the wet gunwale, he slipped and fell into the icy waters, evoking from the crowd a mixture of audible gasps and uncontrollable laughter!

The Foundation's History

Plymouth Rock Foundation was conceived in 1969, incorporated in 1970, and for years conducted a low-profile program with Verna Hall and Rosalie Slater of the Foundation for American Christian Education conducting annual Christian heritage seminars, in which Professor Jordan Fiore (of Bridgewater State College) and I also participated.

At first we focused on very distinguished audiences of solemn Christian school teachers,

college presidents, pastors and theologians, but we enjoyed more fruitage when we turned our attention to Christian school teachers, introducing the Principle Approach as explained in Rosalie G. Slater's classic work, *Teaching and Learning America's Christian History*.

Russ Walton Appointed

Then in 1977 John G. Talcott appointed the richly talented and highly dedicated Christian journalist, author and former Ronald Reagan speech writer Russell S. Walton as its executive director.

Russ moved the Foundation to Marlborough, New Hampshire, and also into high gear. Year after year, for more than a quarter century, he built an intensely loyal membership featuring his insightful *Letters from Plymouth Rock, Leadership Alerts*, books by Russ and others, many vigorously active Christian Committees of Correspondence, as well as annual seminars, and big essay contests.

After Russ passed away on October 6th, some of us who have long been involved with this great man and his work attended his beautiful funeral in Marlborough at a church packed with his grieving local friends, and held several subsequent meetings in Plymouth to discuss the future of the Foundation.

It was agreed that John G. Talcott would continue as President, that Paul Jehle, the Foundation's gifted Education Director would serve as acting Executive Director, and that three veteran Christian educators, John Eidesmoe, Archie Jones, and I, would join the Board of Directors. While Plymouth Rock Foundation

is by no means limited to conveying America's Pilgrim heritage and its meaning to the people of this country, perhaps more than any other organization it has both expertise on this subject, and good reasons to focus on it.

Why is it so important that this little band of believers be better understood and seen as forming a remarkably vivid paradigm for what this nation could and should be? Because the American Ship of State today seems virtually without charts or compass, lacking knowledge of this country's history or principles.

I believe it is an historical fact that the Pilgrims first embodied America's unique identity as a covenanted Christian people committed to strictly limited civil government and liberty under law. They illustrate, most dramatically, how the essence of America first appeared, long before the Founding Era.

Six Steps to Liberty

Recently, while looking at a reproduction of the famous painting of the Pilgrims marching through the snow, it occurred to me that they had taken *six bold steps to liberty*, that these are steps which each generation of Americans must continue to take, that they begin with the most important step of all, gaining a degree of spiritual liberty or freedom from sin, that the other steps followed in a logical, almost inevitable sequence, and that together these six aspects of liberty, resulting from the application of six facets of the principle of Christian self-government, form a beautiful, realistic paradigm or pattern for an enduring, free and orderly America.

1. Spiritual Liberty - 1600

At first the Pilgrims had no thought of seeking political freedom, and no desire to leave the Church of England or their beloved native land. All they wanted was to be true believers, to be what all genuine Christians should be, which they soon found entailed considerably more than mere church attendance, nominal adherence to a creed, and outward rituals.

They were guided in taking this first step by a brave and devout pastor, Richard Clyfton, in the little village of Babworth, and by a brilliant younger teacher, Rev. John Robinson, who convinced them they had a God-given right to own and study their own Bible (then against the law) and a pressing need to obey Christ's command, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness..."

The Pilgrims found this meant receiving Christ as Lord as well as Savior, to be governed by Him from within, thus self-governed, having no need for intrusive, overbearing and costly government from without.

Governor Bradford describes their spiritual experience this way: "When as by the travail and diligence of some godly and zealous preachers... many became enlightened by the Word of God and had their ignorance and sins discovered unto them, and began by His grace to reform their lives and make conscience of their ways..."

No wonder historian Samuel Eliot Morison, speaking of Bradford's history says, "It is this story, told by a great human being, that has made the Pilgrim Fathers in a sense the spiritual ancestors of all Americans."

2. Religious liberty - 1606

When the Church of England dismissed both Clyfton and Robinson for preaching such "dangerous doctrines" as salvation by faith and the right to own, study and interpret your own Bible, the Pilgrims concluded that God wanted these men to remain in active Christian service, just as the Pilgrims wanted to remain under the wing of these inspired men.

To make this possible, they formed their own church, knowing it was against the law of man but believing it was in keeping with the command of God, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers.... Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord..." (2 Corinthians 6:14,17)

The Pilgrims' political philosophy: Civil government is needed but has always claimed excessive powers, including control over the citizen's religion.

Rev. Clyfton was their preacher, Rev. Robinson their teacher. By the providence of God, they had a fine church home, the Scrooby manor house of elder William Brewster, where they worshipped in secret. All members framed and signed a precedent-making church covenant, in keeping with the ancient tradition which the Protestant Reformation restored. As Gov. Bradford recalled:

"Many... Whose hearts the Lord had touched with heavenly zeal for His truth... Shook off the yoke of antichristian bondage, and as the Lord's free people joined themselves (by a covenant of the Lord) into a church estate, in the fellowship of the Gospel, to walk in all His ways made known, or to

be made known unto them, according to their best endeavors, whatsoever it should cost them..."

As is well known, the Pilgrims were "caught" worshipping on their own, arrested, imprisoned, found guilty, then released and persecuted even by the local townsfolk.

They escaped to Holland, gained religious freedom; but within a decade found that the worldly Dutch culture was corrupting their children. And so they sailed for the New World, where they could build a new and more truly Christian society.

In Alexis deTocqueville's words: "It is not just a little party of adventurers going forth to seek their fortunes overseas; it is the scattering of the seed of a great people which God with His own hands is planting on a predestined shore."

3. Political Liberty - 1620

While still aboard their ship, anchored in Provincetown harbor, the Pilgrims followed this counsel from their pastor John Robinson: "You are become a body politic... and are to have only them for your.. governors which yourselves shall make choice of." This was in keeping with Calvin's dictum, "Men have a God-given right to control any government to which they are subject."

In turn, the Pilgrims transmuted their covenant for church self-government into the world's first charter for local civil self-government, the Mayflower Compact.

It was "democratic" in the sense that it was signed by all adult males (who represented their wives), both the Pilgrims and the Strangers (non-Pilgrims who felt a kinship with them, and were

invited to join the expedition because of special skills needed by a wilderness community.)

The Pilgrims' political philosophy: Civil government is needed but has always claimed excessive powers, including control over the citizen's religion. To maintain religious freedom, men must have political freedom, and take on political responsibility. That is, they must have the right to form and control their own civil government, and assume the duty of framing and obeying its laws, and giving due respect to the officials they elect, *in the name of God....*

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4. Defense of Liberty - 1620-21

The Pilgrims understood that the God who gives man liberty requires "eternal vigilance" in its defense. Before sailing they chose a highly professional soldier, Myles Standish, who had served in the Netherlands, as their military head. When they first landed at Cape Cod, Standish and his men sought peace but wore coats of mail, carried cutlasses, erected a barricade, and proved themselves crack shots.

In the famed "First Encounter," the Indians attacked fiercely, and without provocation. One "lusty" Indian withstood "three shots of a musket, till one taking full aim at him made the bark or splinters of the tree fly about his ears, after which he gave an extraordinary shriek and away (the Indians) went, all of them," as Bradford recalled. Thus, they learned that the Pilgrims were not to be "messed around with."

When the Indians and Pilgrims began to trust one another, the Pilgrims ministered to their chief, Massasoit, even nursing him back to health. Earlier, the settlers made and kept a peace treaty with the Indians throughout their lifetimes (for half a century), but believed, and proved, that when a righteous people are militarily strong, bold and prepared, such strength can help prevent war.

5. Economic Liberty - 1623.

The popular picture of the first Thanksgiving presents a people feasting on the fruits of an abundant harvest. But such was not the case. As Governor Bradford recalled, "Now the welcome time of harvest approached, in which all had their hungry bellies filled. But it arose but to a little..."

Why were the Pilgrims on the brink of starvation throughout their first two years in Plymouth? The investors in their expedition foolishly insisted that the settlers practice communal agriculture, that they own and farm the land in common. No matter how much or little each produced, all took out the same from the common storehouse.

The settlers had protested this arrangement at the outset. They knew that it violated the great economic law, "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." (Galatians 6:7), and that it failed to motivate men to achieve their productive potential.

They also realized that Christians are to be God's stewards, and can act responsibly only when they have clear-cut property rights, the right to own, buy and sell, via voluntary (i.e. mutually agreeable) exchanges,

such as Abraham's purchase of a burying place for his wife Sarah.

Hence the basic Old Testament private property laws: "Remove not the ancient landmark," and not one but two confirmations in the Decalogue, "Thou shalt not steal" and "Thou shalt not (even) covet."

"Why were the Pilgrims on the brink of starvation?"

The investors foolishly insisted on practicing communal agriculture.

Finally, on the brink of starvation, Gov. Bradford and his advisors decided that they "should set corn every man for his own particular, and in that regard trust to themselves."

This they did in 1623, switched to the private property system and individual enterprise. *Each family was free at last to own its own land, and keep its own production. The result, a tripling of the best previous output!*

Look at how much they planted year by year:

- In 1621, 26 acres;
- In 1622, 60 acres;
- In 1623, 184 acres!

Do not these six phases of liberty, each a consequence of practicing a corresponding phase of Christian self-government, together form a magnificent pattern for restoring and maintaining a free and righteous America in the new millennium?

Gov. Bradford in turn commented on "that conceit of Plato's and other ancients... That the taking away of property... Would make them happy and flourishing, as if they were wiser than God."

6. Constitutional Liberty - 1636

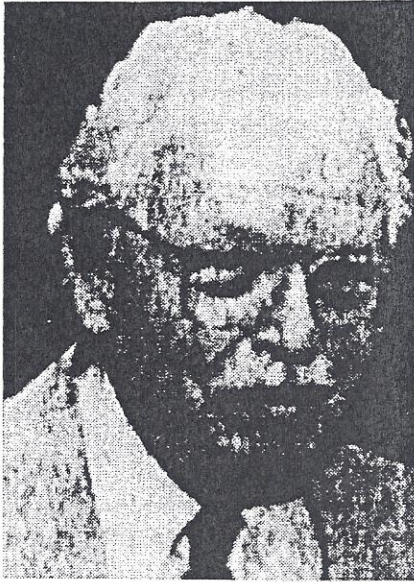
Political scientist Daniel Elazar tells us that "just as the heart of the covenant of ancient Israel consists of two parts, the Decalogue or Ten Commandments with its electrifying statement of fundamental principles and the Book of the Covenant with its more detailed framework of basic laws, so too does that of the American covenant consist of two basic documents serving the same purposes - the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution."

Where does this two-part covenanting pattern first appear on our shores? In the life of the Pilgrims!

The Mayflower Compact can be rightly compared to the Declaration of Independence; both are clear statements of a political philosophy asserting the right to self-government, to which all participants agreed.

By the same token, the more formal and comprehensive 1636 *Book of the General Laws of New Plimoth* has been compared with the United States Constitution.

Says scholar Donald S. Lutz in *The Origins of American Constitutionalism*, of the 1636 Code: "The document not only contains all the covenant elements, but with the addition of the last foundation element, the description of institutions, the Pilgrim Code of Law becomes the first modern constitution. A free, self-governing people used a deliberative process based upon their consent to create a government. The government was centered upon a representative assembly beholden to a virtuous people as measured by God's law."



Note about the author: The son of a Marxist-Leninist professor of history and economics at Columbia University, Charles Wolfe rejected his father's secularism and left-wing world view on becoming a Christian at age nineteen. Studying what the Bible had to say about nations and economics, its respect for the individual as the image and likeness of God, its assertion that "where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty," and a great many related truths, Dr. Wolfe quite naturally became an advocate of a Christian free society. Charles did undergraduate work at Arizona State University, the National University of Mexico, and the College of the City of New York before earning graduate degrees from Whitefield Theological Seminary. After studying under Verna Hall and Rosalie Slater of the Foundation for American Christian Education, and co-founding the Plymouth Rock Foundation, Charles became President of the American Economic Foundation, co-founder of Enterprise America, a writer and researcher for D. James Kennedy and Coral Ridge Ministries, President of Restore the Republic, and most recently, a member of the Board of Directors of the Plymouth Rock Foundation.

SPECIAL NOTES TO THE PLYMOUTH ROCK FOUNDATION FAMILY

DO YOU HAVE OUR CORRECT PHONE NUMBERS? In the process of updating data, we inadvertently advertised the wrong phone, fax and e-mails for the Foundation. Are you ready? Here are the **real numbers**: 1-800-210-1620; 508-833-1189; fax 508-833-2481; e-mail info@plymrock.org; web www.plymrock.org.

CHRISTIAN COMMITTEES OF CORRESPONDENCE survey is being conducted by Paul Goedecke of the PRF staff and the first *Correspondent* newsletter will be sent to all current members within the next month. If you are currently a member of CCom/Cors and you do not receive this newsletter by the end of March, please contact us. We are in a large project of compiling and updating data and may have missed you! We hope to get updated information and data on all CCom/Cors throughout the U.S. in the hands of CCom/Cor directors and our PRF family members.

NATIONAL JULY 4 ESSAY CONTEST is finally underway! We apologize for the delay, but again our task has been somewhat overwhelming. The **theme** this year is "**LAWFUL RESISTANCE TO TYRANNY**". The essay is to focus on the meaning of "lawful resistance" as well as "tyranny". Did the colonists use lawful means to resist England? How is this expressed in the Declaration? What is a tyrant? What is tyranny? How do the accusations of King George that take up two thirds of the Declaration define tyranny and tyrants? What application might this have for us today? Remember your essay is to be 250 to 500 words, and will be graded for content (focusing on the theme), mechanics (spelling, punctuation, word usage and vocabulary) and care with which it is written. We have three categories again; 1) Home school students, 2) Christian school students, and 3) Christians in the public school. **Deadline:** All essays are to be postmarked by **May 1!** (If you want to register, send for an application and instruction sheet right away!)

ANNUAL CHRISTIAN HERITAGE CONFERENCE TO BE HELD IN PLYMOUTH! If you want to be inspired on our nation's heritage, this conference is for you! Registration materials will be available by the end of April. We will begin with a banquet on **Thursday, November 9** and end with a Pilgrim Sabbath Church Service on **Sunday morning, November 12**. This conference will feature special student orations, essay contest winners, updates on various PRF projects, and special themes for *Veterans Day* and *The International Prayer for the Persecuted Church*. You don't want to miss this. Send for more information.

CHRISTIAN HERITAGE WEEK is once again being promoted for Thanksgiving Week, 2000, November 19-25. Please support local (state) efforts and write to your Congressmen! For more information please contact *Bruce Barilla*, Nationwide Promoter, 5025 W. 139th Place, Unit 507; Crestwood, IL 60445; (708-489-2101); www.achw.org; and you can e-mail him at barilla@achw.org.

AN UPDATED CATALOG of materials is available upon request. Also, we are attempting to build up our capital in order to put back valuable books back into print. Let us know if you wish to invest in this project!

MEET THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS! - John T. Talcott, Jr., President, Paul Jehle, Acting Executive & Education Director, Charles Wolfe (VA), Archie Jones (FL), John Eidesmoe (AL), Ralph Bullard (OK), John Adams (VA).