


The Vision of the Pilgrims

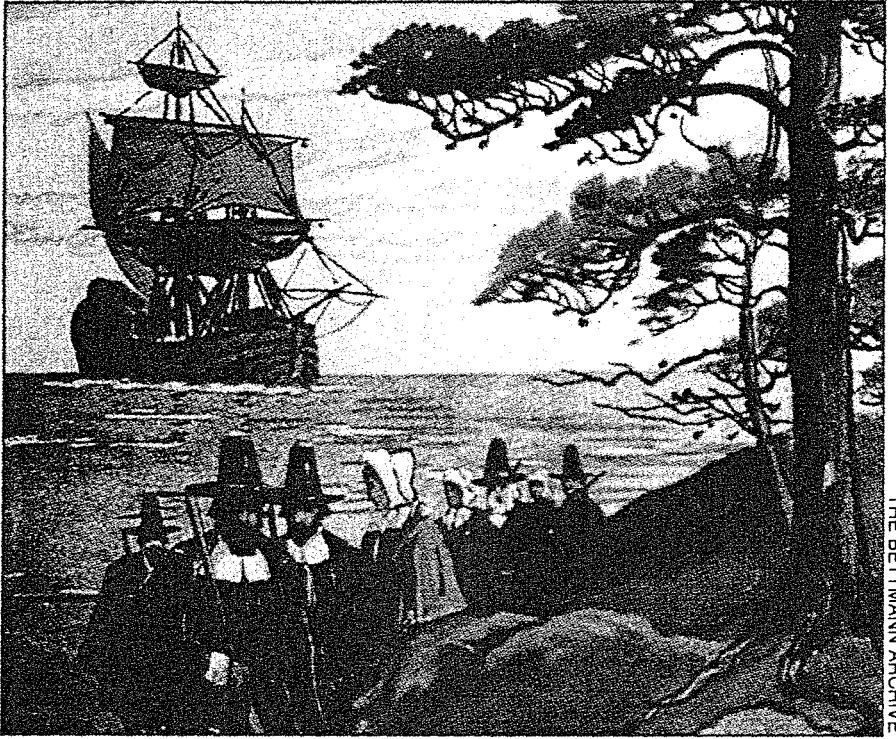
 hat vision guided the Pilgrims aboard the *Mayflower* when 367 years ago they landed in America? What was it that brought them to the shores of the New World?

It was a vision of hope, a vision of freedom. They hoped to form a nation where the government would be established according to the Scriptures.

On November 9, 1620, after a two month voyage braving seas and winds which took them far north of their expected destination, those on board the *Mayflower* wept with joy as they sighted land. Two days later the vessel reached Provincetown bay in Massachusetts. On December 21, 1620, the Pilgrims reached Plymouth. Of their landing Mary Baker Eddy writes:

On shores of solitude, at Plymouth Rock, they planted a nation's heart,—the rights of conscience, imperishable glory. No dream of avarice or ambition broke their exalted purpose, theirs was the wish to reign in hope's reality—the realm of Love. (*Pul.* 10:10)

When first the Pilgrims planted their feet on Plymouth Rock, frozen ritual and creed should forever have melted away in the fire of love which came down from heaven. The Pilgrims came to establish a nation in true freedom, in the rights of conscience. (*Mis.* 176:20)



THE BETTMANN ARCHIVE

“Being thus arrived in a good harbor, and brought safe to land, they fell upon their knees and blessed the God of Heaven who had brought them over the vast and furious ocean, and delivered them from the perils and miseries thereof, again to set their feet on the firm and stable earth.... What could they see but a hideous and desolate wilderness, full of wild beasts and wild men—and what multitudes there might be of them they knew not. The season it was winter. Sharp and violent, subject to cruel and fierce storms. What could now sustain them but the Spirit of God and His grace?” —William Bradford, describing the first landing of the Mayflower at Plymouth that December.




Signing of the Mayflower Compact, 1620

Artist: Percy Moran

Courtesy of the Pilgrim Hall Museum, Plymouth, Massachusetts

“In the name of God, Amen. We whose names are underwritten.... having undertaken for the Glory of God, and Advancement of the Christian faith... a Voyage to plant the first Colony.... Do by these Presents, solemnly and mutually, in the presence of God and of one another, covenant and combine ourselves into a civil body Politick.... In Witness whereof we have hereunto subscribed our names at Cape-Cod, the eleventh of November... Anno Domini 1620.”

The First Thanksgiving

hen the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth in December, many were sick. The few able-bodied among them had to build huts. Rowing from the *Mayflower* to shore they had to wade the last few yards through frigid waters. In wet wool and canvas clothing they labored on the frozen snow-covered ground from dawn till dark, cutting trees for log huts. Gradually the Pilgrims moved from the cold *Mayflower* into these even colder log huts.

That first terrible winter was a saga of suffering. Nearly half of the Pilgrims—including their first governor, John Carver—died of malnutrition, cold, and other causes. Therefore survival was the major issue of the first year until the fall crops brought in a good harvest. Their steadfast trust in God brought them the blessings of an Indian friend named Squanto who taught them many things, and helped them plant corn.

With autumn, and another winter approaching, instead of begging God for more blessing, their profound faith in God led Governor William Bradford to set aside a day for public Thanksgiving in gratitude for the blessings already received. The Pilgrims heeded the many Bible references to the importance of “thanksgiving.” History tells us that Chief Massosoit was invited. He brought 60 braves, 5 dressed deer and a dozen wild turkeys. Even popcorn helped to celebrate this first great Thanksgiving Day, which in 1621 lasted three whole days, so deep-felt and abounding was their gratitude to God.

Thus did this sturdy remnant “On shores of solitude . . . plant a nation’s heart—the rights of conscience, imperishable glory . . . their’s was the wish to reign in hope’s reality—the realm of Love.”