

The American Dream

Jamestown and the 400th Anniversary of the American Christian Republic

By Stephen McDowell

The uniqueness of the United States in history

America has been different than any nation in history. America has been exceptional. This has not been due to any inherent value of her people, but has been due to the valuable ideas upon which she was founded.

These include such ideas as: valuing the individual; freedom of worship; opportunity for all to labor and benefit from the fruit of their labor; freedom to elect representatives; freedom of expression of ideas; freedom to own property; freedom to get ideas, start businesses and create wealth; limited jurisdiction of civil government; the central role of the family.

These ideas produced great liberty, justice, prosperity, charity, virtue, and knowledge. They made America powerful. This power and wealth has been used, not for conquest, but for good — for furthering liberty in the world.

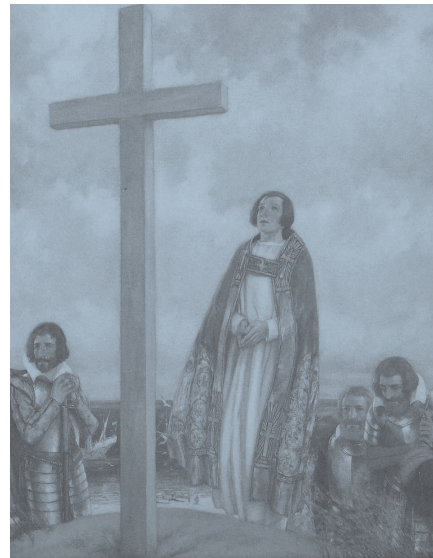
Throughout America's history, people have flocked to her shores to experience the fruit of her liberty and prosperity.

Early Americans recognized the special nature of the nation in history

John Adams said that: "I always consider the settlement of America with reverence and wonder, as the opening of a grand scene and design in Providence for the illumination of the ignorant, and the emancipation of the slavish part of mankind all over the earth."¹

Many of the early colonizers

of America came with the vision of establishing a unique nation in history. John Winthrop wrote of the Puritan's desire to be "A Model of Christian Charity,"— "as a city upon a hill," where all the people of the earth would look upon and say of their own nation, "the Lord make it like that of New England."² William Penn said that God gave him the land that became Pennsylvania so that he could set up a model state — "a holy experiment" — "which should open its doors to every kindred" and be a refuge for men of all creeds.³



Rev. Robert Hunt leading the Virginia colonists in prayer at Cape Henry, April 1607.

Pressure to abandon unique founding principles

There is a call today for America to be like other nations. Yet, we do not want to be like tyrannical nations, nor those with a dictator or one-party ruling. Neither do we

want to be like secular and socialistic European nations, with increasing loss of religious and civil freedoms and more government control and taxation. America's problems today have come as we have abandoned our founding principles and embraced secular and statist ideas.

The source of America's founding principles

America was founded by a people providentially prepared and greatly influenced by the Protestant Reformation, by a people of the Book. The founding ideas came from the Bible. The early settlers of America carried these seed ideas with them as they colonized the nation in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. These ideas were planted, grew, and began to bear great fruit. This seed determined the fruit of the American Christian Republic. It produced America as an exceptional nation, the most free and prosperous in history.

The importance of Virginia and remembering the 400th anniversary

Virginia was the planting of the first seed of America. Why is remembering the 400th anniversary important? It is a starting place to see God's hand in the founding of the nation and to learn the ideas that made America powerful. We must remember so we can return America to her foundation of freedom and keep this nation a place of liberty, truth, and prosperity. This is for our good, but also that of our posterity, and for those people throughout the

world who seek to establish freedom in their nations.

The vision for founding Virginia

No man was more influential in the establishment of the American colonies than Rev. Richard Hakluyt. This minister, who from Biblical inspiration became the greatest English geographer of the Elizabethan epoch, compiled the records of numerous European explorations, voyages, and settlements with the view of encouraging England to establish colonies in the new world. True to the calling God had put into his heart, the spreading of the gospel and establishment of the Christian faith in new lands was at the forefront of his motives in undertaking this great task. Hakluyt also foresaw America as a land where persecuted Christians could find refuge.

Early attempts at colonization for purely economic reasons had failed. Hakluyt wrote that if past attempts

had not been led with a preposterous desire of seeking rather gaine than God's glorie, I assure myself that our labours had taken farre better effecte. But wee forgotte, that Godliness is great riches, and that if we first seeke the kingdome of God, al other things will be given unto us, and that as the light accompanieth the Sunne and the heate the fire, so lasting riches do wait upon them that are jealous for the advancement of the Kingdome of Christ, and the enlargement of his glorious Gospell: as it is sayd, I will honour them that honour mee.⁴

In 1584 Hakluyt presented

his *Discourse on Western Planting* to Queen Elizabeth where he set forth the principal reasons for colonization. First and foremost was the religious reason. He said

Wee shall by plantinge there inlarge the glory of the gospell, and from England plante sincere relligion, and provide a safe and a sure place to receive people from all partes of the worlds that are forced to flee for the truthe of Gods worde.⁵



Pocahontas providentially saved John Smith's life.

Hakluyt was an original incorporator of the Virginia Charter and a member of the governing body overseeing colonization. His ideas were written into the First Charter of Virginia, April 10, 1606:

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 propagat-

ing 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.⁶

Propagation of the Gospel

Orders and instructions given to the first colonists by the London Council emphasized the religious motive. They wrote: "We do specially ordain, charge, and require" those concerned "with all diligence, care and respect" to provide that the "Christian faith be preached, planted, and used, not only within every of the said several colonies, and plantations, but also as much as they may arouse the savage people which do or shall adjoin unto them"; and that every one should "use all good means to draw the savages and heathen people. . . to the true service and knowledge of God."⁷

According to a statement published by the Virginia Company, entitled *A True and Sincere Declaration*, the "principal and main ends," of the settlers, "were first to preach and baptize into the Christian religion, and by propagation of the Gospel, to recover out of the arms of the Devil, a number of poor and miserable souls, wrapt up unto death in almost invincible ignorance; to endeavor the fulfilling an accomplishment of the number of the elect which shall be gathered from all corners of the earth; and to add our mite to the treasury of Heaven."⁸

Sir Walter Cope wrote in 1610: "The eyes of all Europe are looking upon our endeavors to spread the gospel among the heathen people of Virginia, to plant an English nation



The first church services were held under the trees while the church building was being constructed inside the fort at Jamestown.

there and to settle a trade in those parts.”⁹

Ralph Hamor lived in Virginia in the early years and wrote *A True Discourse of the Present Estate of Virginia*, published in 1615. Hamor wrote that the work in Virginia would be for “setling and finishing up a Sanctum Sanctorum an holy house, a Sanctuary to him, the God of the Spirits, of all flesh, amongst such poore and innocent seduced Savages . . . to lighten them that sit in darkenes, and in the shaddow of death, and to direct their feete in the waies of peace.”¹⁰

“A business so full of piety.”

Virginia was a business adventure, but not solely, nor even primarily, according to many involved. Hamor wrote that the Virginia endeavor was “a business so full of piety.”¹¹ He begins his *Discourse* by saying that the work in Virginia is important and they must “proceede in a business so full of honour, and worth,” even “if there were no secondary causes,” [like business concerns] because “the already publisht ends, I meane the glory of God in the conversion of those Infidels, and the honour of our King and country” were sufficient reasons in themselves. Thus, Hamor puts the pious motives as primary, and other things as secondary.¹²

Planting the seed at Jamestown

When the first 104 Colonists landed at Cape Henry on April 26, 1607, they erected a wooden cross where Rev. Robert Hunt led the men in prayer. Then they sailed across the bay and up a river that was named the James in honor of the king. On May 13 they reached

the site they felt would be good for their settlement and called it Jamestown.

They put up tents until houses could be built and they stretched a sail between two trees as a place for worship. According to John Smith, “For a Church we did hang an awning (which is an old sail) to three or foure trees to shadow us from the sunne. Our walls were rales of wood, our seats unhewed trees, till we cut plankes, our Pulpit a bar



After her conversion in 1614, Pocahontas was baptized in the church at Jamestown by Rev. Alexander Whitaker.

of wood nailed to two neighboring trees.”¹³

It was here that the founder of the first Protestant church in America, Rev. Robert Hunt, conducted services until the church was built. This good and courageous clergyman preached twice each Sunday, read the morning and evening prayers, and celebrated communion once every three months. A special prayer was composed for the colonists that was repeated each morning and evening:

Almighty God,. . . we beseech Thee to bless us and this plantation which we and our nation have begun in Thy fear and for

Thy glory. . . and seeing Lord, the highest end of our plantation here is to set up the standard and display the banner of Jesus Christ, even here where Satan’s throne is, Lord let our labour be blessed in labouring for the conversion of the heathen. . . . Lord sanctify our spirits and give us holy hearts, that so we may be Thy instruments in this most glorious work.¹⁴

There is a shrine honoring Rev. Hunt at historic Jamestown today.

Fulfilling the vision in early Jamestown

The vision to propagate the Christian faith was most notably fulfilled in the life of Pocahontas. This daughter of the Indian Chief Powhatan had providentially saved John Smith’s life when he was about to be clubbed by her tribesmen, by taking his “head in her armes and laid her owne upon his to save him from death.”¹⁵ She also helped secure peace between the Indians and settlers as well as obtain needed food. Smith said that she was “next under God . . . the instrument to preserve this colony from death, famine, and utter confusion.”¹⁶

In 1614 Pocahontas renounced her paganism, confessed her faith in Jesus Christ, and was baptized in the church at Jamestown. Not long afterward, she changed her name to Rebecca and was married to John Rolfe, which he said would be for the “good of this plantation, for the honour of our countrie, for the glory of God.”¹⁷

Tercentenary Monument

In 1907 a monument was constructed at Jamestown Historical Park in honor of the 300th anniver-

sary of the founding of Jamestown. Engraved on the monument are the concluding instructions to the colonists from the London Council's *Instructions for the Intended Voyage to Virginia*:

Lastly and chiefly, the way to prosper and achieve good success is to make yourselves all of one mind for the good of your country and your own, and to serve and fear God, the Giver of all goodness, for every plantation which our Heavenly Father hath not planted shall be rooted out.¹⁸

America's Providential Purposes

The founders of America saw she had a providential purpose. That purpose, revealed in the writings of Rev. Hakluyt, include:

1. "Inlarge the glory of the Gospel" — that is, be a nation that produces the fruit of obedience to God's truth (which is liberty, justice, prosperity, charity, virtue, and knowledge) and then spread that truth throughout the world.

2. **Be a place of refuge and freedom** for the persecuted from many nations.

3. **Be an example of liberty** — all kinds of liberty: personal, religious, civil, economic, political.

4. **Propagate the Gospel to the lost** — which has been greatly fulfilled since, "today a majority of Native people call themselves Christians."¹⁹

To fulfill the providential purposes of America and to make the American Dream a reality for ourselves and our posterity, we must remember what God has done in our history, repent of our apathy and

ignorance, prepare ourselves and all citizens in the ideas that made us powerful, and return our nation to its original Godly covenant. This begins by understanding the story of the American Dream.

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For More Information

The excerpts in this brochure were taken from a soon to be published book, *The American Dream, Jamestown and the Planting of the American Christian Republic*, by Stephen McDowell and Mark Beliles. The Providence Foundation will be giving Christian history tours of Jamestown April 28 and 29, 2007. See page 6 for more details.

For information about the book, see page 7, or to schedule a presentation on Jamestown see page 5.^{PP}

End Notes

1. B.F. Morris, *The Christian Life and Character of the Civil Institutions of the United States*, Philadelphia: George W. Childs, 1864, p. 109.

2. John Winthrop, *A Modell of Christian Charity*, 1630, Old South Leaflets, No. 207, Boston: The Old South Association.

3. William Penn, *Letter to James Harrison, August 25, 1681, Remember William Penn*, compiled by the William Penn Tercentenary committee, Harrisburg: Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, 1945, p. 77.

4. E.G.R. Taylor, editor, *The Original Writings and Correspondence of the Two Richard Hakluyts*, Vol. 2, London: Hakluyt Society, 1935, p. 178.

5. Taylor, p. 318.

6. "The First Charter of Virginia," in *Sources of Our Liberties*, Richard L. Perry, editor, American Bar Foundation, 1952, pp. 39-40.

7. Matthew Page Andrews, *The Soul of a Nation*, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1944, p. 54.

8. Benjamin Hart, *Faith and Freedom, The Christian Roots of American Liberty*, Lewis and Stanley, Dallas, 1988, p. 139.

9. *A True Discourse of the Present State of Virginia*, Ralph Hamor, 1615, reprint by The Virginia State Library, 1957, p. xi.

10. Raphe Hamor, "To the Reader", Preface to *A True Discourse of the Present State of Virginia*, Ralph Hamor, 1615, reprint by The Virginia State Library, 1957.

11. Preface "To the Reader" of *A True Discourse of the Present State of Virginia*.

12. *A True Discourse of the Present State of Virginia*, p. 1-2.

13. John Smith, *Advertisements for the Unexperienced Planters of New England, or Anywhere: Or, the Path-Way to Experience to Erect a Plantation*, p. 32. cited in *Pocahontas* by Grace Steel Woodward, University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, 1969, p. 52. Also in, Bishop Meade, *Old Churches, Ministers and Families of Virginia*, Vol. 1, Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1857, p. 66.

14. In Woodward, p. 57; Meade, p. 74; and *For the Colony in Virginea Britannia, Lawes Divine, Morall and Martiall, etc.*, compiled by William Strachey, edited by David H. Flaherty, The University Press of Virginia, Charlottesville, 1969, pp. 93-101.

15. John Smith, *The Generall Historie of Virginia, New-England, and the Summer Isles...*, Book IV, p. 122, in *Travels and Works of Captain John Smith, Part II*, edited by Edward Arber, Edinburgh: John Grant, 1910, p. 400.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 532.

17. Woodward, p. 163.

18. Engraved on the Monument. Also in, John Fiske, *Old Virginia and Her Neighbors*, Vol.1, New York, Houghton, Mifflin, and Co., 1897, p. 76.

19. From the Native People Museum in Washington, D.C., section on the Native Americans and Christianity.