

JAMESTOWN AND PLYMOUTH: America's Parent Colonies

By Dr. Paul Jehle March 2, 2007

America's Quadracentennial provides a time when Americans of all persuasions can rejoice together that the seeds planted at her birth were of such quality as to bring forth the civil liberty we still enjoy today. Yet, those conducting the "commemoration" (one cannot say celebration these days) of America's four hundredth birthday find it difficult to give honor to whom honor is due.

It is common today to view all the European settlements, especially Jamestown and Plymouth, as an invasion. Since we must come to conclusions based upon a bias of historic interpretations (all have such a bias), it may be important to highlight the biased assumptions of some of today's historians. **Assumption # 1** – The *motives* of European exploration was intentionally evil and should be called an **invasion**.

Under this assumption, the historian looks for as many evidences of greed and dishonest gain as possible, magnifying the evil in order to distort any pure motives. To be sure, since human beings were involved, there is a good amount of evil to be seen, highlighted and magnified.

However, to call an exploration an invasion implies a motive of aggressive war for the sake of conquering an enemy for no just cause. The Jamestown 2007 Committee, in defending its position of banning the term *celebrate*, has stated that "*you can't celebrate an invasion.*" That is because, as it is stated, the Indian tribes "*were pushed back off of their land, even killed.*"^[1]

Atrocities are usually committed by both sides, but it appears that the term invasion has pre-determined which side is innocent and which side is guilty before the facts are even rehearsed.

Assumption #2 – The *consequences* of European settlement was disease, death and war, in essence, **genocide**.

In order to evaluate the significance of events, we always look at the consequences. The quality of the result usually helps us identify the quality of the seed planted in the first place, whether that seed was an idea, the character of individuals, or the event itself. However, we can also view certain consequences in isolation of the seed that planted them.

Even England weighed in against the distortion of history at this year's 400th commemoration:

"England's first successful colonists in America have been branded as rapists and murderers who imported slavery and oppressed the local Indian population"^[2]

By taking every negative consequence and attributing it to the settlement as a whole, a distorted view of reality is created. After all, we all know that evil consequences are the result of either evil intentions or the unintended result of a purer motive. How do we discern the difference? We take history in context, painting it in reality.

The truth is, there were negative consequences, precisely because we are dealing with human beings, many of whom did not practice what they had either proclaimed, or were not in heart agreement with the proclamations. But that does not change the positive consequences from pure intentions.

Assumption #3 – The *religious* motives or proclamations are not important and are swept away as **propaganda**.

When attempting to rebut the influence of the religious intentions of the Jamestown settlers, one interpreter at the historic church in Jamestown stated “*at best, conversions to Christianity were a secondary, or even tertiary purpose*”^[3]

Today’s modern American minimizes the religious motives of our founders because they interpret the past with the premises of the present. Just because today’s society gives little credence to religious motives, or ignores the ones we all carry, does not mean the settlers of the 17th century did so.

Religion, especially the beliefs of the heart that motivated people to take such risky adventures, was not always as sincere in some as it was in others. However, it was so dominant that virtually every area of life was interpreted from a religious bias in the 17th century.

An honest historian will recognize that pitting the commercial interests of the colonists in isolation to their religious ones is dishonest at best, and revisionist at worst. Making a profit was prominent as in any business adventure. However, in harmony with that, and not in isolation from it, was their Christian motive for spreading the gospel of Christ. It was two sides of the same coin.

The Challenge and Opportunity of our Quadracentennial

Not all natives were treated fairly. Slavery is a blight on our history. While these things are true, and form a part of the tapestry of our past, no people are perfect, and the fact that blemishes exist does not remove all that was good. In fact, it ought to help us learn from the past and reduce mistakes in the future.

If we take the assumptions previously noted, it appears that the only way to right the wrong is for those who came from Europe to go back. Of course, they are no longer alive, so do we send all of their descendents home? Or do we insist on some form of reparation?

In all fairness, the European should take their technology back as well, for we must assume that no native benefited from anything brought by the European anyway. The truth is, however, *both benefited from each other*.

The real intent of those who are ashamed of our past and do not wish to celebrate our four hundredth birthday, may be a disdain for the Bible, God's Providence, and everything that has grown from the seeds of Christianity.

The truth is, it was the interchange of *both* cultures that eventually improved *both*, checking the excesses and errors of each side in order for peace to exist. Sins were committed by *both* sides, and the different religious views of each culture must be understood in order to clearly see the fruit from each.

Jamestown and Plymouth: *Parent Colonies of America*

Though the seeds planted at America's birth were Christian, the two parent colonies were different in their expression of the same faith. It is this *diversity* of gifts, so to speak, that brought our nation into being in 1776 with *national* and *federal* nature.

As the Scripture suggests, no one individual defines the church or body of Christ. It would follow then, that no one colony could define the birth of a nation, either. Just as it takes many individuals with diverse gifts to fully express Christ within the church, so it takes the same level of diversity to fully express a nation built on Biblical principles.

In 1907, during the time when Jamestown celebrated its 300th anniversary, a war began to rage as to which colony, Jamestown or Plymouth, was the true birthplace of America. The battle was precisely over the relationship of the commercial interests and religious motives of each settlement.

It is claimed that in Jamestown, the commercial interests took center stage, and religion a back seat. In Plymouth, by contrast, religion took a front seat, and commercial interests a back one. In rebuttal to the perceived second place seat of Jamestown, the *William and Mary Quarterly* observed:

"As the parent settlement, Jamestown may claim as its product not only the present Virginia and Southland, but all the other English colonies along the Atlantic Coast. She is the mother of the United States. She furnished the inspiration of all and is entitled to the credit of all."^[4]

The article further claims that without the Jamestown settlement, there would have been no New England one.^[5] When viewing this battle over the preeminence of Jamestown or Plymouth, which has raged for decades, a providential perspective should embrace *both* Jamestown and Plymouth as different aspects of what became the character of the United States of America.

Both Jamestown and Plymouth had religious motives. *Both* had commercial imperatives as well. Shouldn't we see how both contributed to what became the United States? In this way, by embracing a *both-and* rather than an *either-or* mentality, might we give honor to whom honor is due?

Jamestown was indeed the *first* permanent English colony, but Plymouth brought unique elements that Jamestown did not possess, and thus was *first* in other areas. As I hope to show,

both colonies have produced unique blessings all Americans can celebrate in this, the beginning of America's 400th birthday.

Jamestown: America's Birthplace

From its inception, the Jamestown settlement appears to have a role in birthing our national character as a nation. As David Kiracofe states in his article on The Jamestown Jubilees "*as the oldest English settlement in what became the United States, Virginia had an obvious source of identity as the birthplace of the American experience.*"^[6]

To delineate the national characteristic of the Jamestown settlement is not to entirely ignore its local character. However, one cannot overlook the legacy Virginia, the "old dominion" state, brought forth key leaders for our nation at the time of the Revolution.

(1) Jamestown: Our National Mission

The Charter of 1606 cannot be ignored or relegated to a minor portion of the story of America. It was the legal proclamation of both the mission and purpose for *both* the Jamestown and (at first the Popham) and then the Plymouth settlements.

The Charter, sealed by King James, clearly indicates "*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...*"

Although this one Charter was to be implemented by two Companies, one in the south, the London Company, and one in the north, the Plymouth Company, it was the London Company that began first to start a colony under the mission of the Charter. Thus, Jamestown is the colony that was first begun in order to fulfill our national mission as a nation.

The dedication prayer of Pastor Robert Hunt, kneeling by the wooden cross placed in the sand at Cape Henry, is a case in point. It is a dedication prayer, not just for Jamestown or Virginia, but for our nation as a whole.

"May this Covenant of Dedication remain to all generations, as long as this earth remains, and may this Land, along with England, be Evangelist to the World."^[7]

To ignore our national mission proclaimed at our birth in 1607 is like trying to sail a ship without a rudder. Regardless of whether Americans today agree with our national mission, it is a fact of history that cannot be ignored. It was this Charter that was referenced at the time of our Revolution and Independence as our source of rights.

Though the mission of Jamestown in essence recreated the ecclesiastical form of the Church of England in America from which the Pilgrims would later flee, the proclamation was strong, but practicing the faith proclaimed was a bit more difficult.

We must make the distinction that Jamestown was the first to proclaim, but its proclamation was much louder than its practice. Many of the colonists did not have the character to live out the proclamation, though they did practice their religion daily.

The daily routine of the Christian religion in Jamestown cannot be ignored. As John Smith related:

"...we had daily common prayer morning and evening, every Sunday two sermons and every three months the holy communion (till our minister died), but our prayers daily, with an homily on Sundays. We continued two or three years after till more preachers came, and surely God did most mercifully hear us till the continual inundations of mistaking directions, factions, and numbers of unprovided libertines near consumed us all, as the Israelites in the wilderness."^[8]

Many of those who place religion as minor in Jamestown would be hard pressed to relate how daily praying and hearing two sermons on Sunday is insignificant!

(2) Jamestown: *Our National Law*

When the colonists at Jamestown arrived, the seeds of the Christian common law came with them, but it took a good deal of time to sprout.

As Justice Story has noted, *"the common law of England is not to be taken, in all respects, to be that of America. Our ancestors brought with them its general principles, and claimed it as their birthright; but they brought with them and adopted only that portion which was applicable to their situation."*^[9]

Jamestown was ruled as an extension of the monarchy in England, with little liberty for the people. *"At first there was a period of popular, untechnical law in which only the barest outlines of English justice can be discerned. There were no written laws until the arrival of Lord Delaware in 1610 The power of life and death over the colonists was often held by one or two councilors, private property was unknown, and a code of martial law was in force for a number of years."*^[10]

It was the subsequent Charters of 1609 and 1612, largely written by Sir Edwin Sandys, that allowed the seeds of the Christian common law from England to truly begin to sprout in Jamestown. Finally, the Ordinance of 1618 brought forth more of the true fruit of the Christian common law in the formation of America's first legislative assembly.

Again under the guidance of Sir Edwin Sandys, *"his ideals of government included greater religious toleration, the abolition of the relics of feudalism, the establishment of freedom of trade together with the overthrow of monopolies, and the limitation of monarchical institutions, particularly the king's prerogative."*^[11]

Finally, on July 30, 1619, the governor, six councilors and twenty burgesses met in the church at Jamestown for the first legislative assembly in America. Thus Jamestown provides the source of our *national law* and the fact that America is a "government of law and not of men."

Though the Charter of Virginia was revoked in 1624, the seed of Christian self-government based upon the common law continued to flourish in the hearts of its leaders, and the subsequent colonial assemblies of America would provide the constitutional force of resistance to England during the Revolution.

(3) Jamestown: *Proclamation of Racial Harmony*

When the settlers arrived in Jamestown, they were under martial law. This military law had punishments that often did not fit the crime. These punishments included unlicensed trading with the Indians (including theft). It also contained laws punishing those who refused to attend church.^[12]

In other words, there was, in essence, a military protection of Indian rights. However, the proclamation was again much larger than the practice. In one instance, however, the practice equaled the proclamation, and that was the conversion of Pocahontas and her subsequent marriage to John Rolfe.

Rarely is it noted that in addition to Pocahontas being the first native convert to Christianity as a fulfillment of our national mission in bringing the gospel to these shores, *her subsequent marriage to John Rolfe provides for us a model of racial equality and harmony.*

From the time Pocahontas had saved John Smith's life in the fall of 1607, to her conversion, discipleship in the Christian religion, and marriage to Rolfe, life in Jamestown had stabilized. However, the marriage of John Rolfe and Pocahontas, not surprisingly, brought to bear a number of questions.

Should an Englishman marry an Indian? Are interracial marriages acceptable in the sight of God? In addition, accusations that John Rolfe was simply a carnal man that had to marry so he didn't commit fornication were necessary to answer.

John Rolfe provided such a treatise in his letter to Sir Thomas Dale. Basically, he refuted the fact that his intentions were carnal, and stated that since Pocahontas had been converted and was being disciplined in the Christian religion, he was truly equally yoked as the Scriptures enjoin.

"...her great appearance of love to me, her desire to be taught and instructed in the knowledge of God, her capableness of understanding, her aptness and willingness to receive any good impression, and also the spiritual (besides her own) incitements stirring me up thereunto..."^[13]

In other words, racial equality finds its meaning in the sight of God, not man. Since all are made in the image of God, all have the capacity to be regenerated and learn more of the Lord they have come to love in the pages of Scripture. The races are co-equal! What a national proclamation from Jamestown!

(4) Jamestown: *The Bible and America*

The Rev. Alexander Whitaker, who came to Jamestown in 1611, aiding in the conversion of Pocahontas, along with her baptism and subsequent discipleship, writes an amazing treatise called *Good News from Virginia* in 1612. It is a commentary on Ecclesiastes 11:1 “*Cast thy bread upon the waters; for after many days thou shalt find it.*”

It serves as an example of the tremendous knowledge of Scripture that the chaplains and ministers had in instructing the colonists at Jamestown. It also serves as a reminder that the source of all the mission, proclamations, law and potential racial harmony was none other than the Bible itself.

One cannot minimize that Jamestown, and Virginia, became the first colony to house the *Geneva* edition of the Bible. The Bible was the assumed source of wisdom for every area of life, and remained so until after the Civil War in America.

The treatise ends with the following words “...*go forward boldly, and remember that you fight under the banner of Jesus Christ, that you plant His kingdom who hath already broken the serpents head... And you my brethren, my fellow laborers, send up your earnest prayers to God for His Church in Virginia, that since His harvest here is great, but the laborers few, He would thrust forth laborers into His harvest. And pray also for me that the ministration of His Gospel may be powerful and effectual by me to the salvation of many and advancement of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ to whom, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, be all honor and glory forevermore. Amen.*”^[14]

Plymouth: America's Hometown

If the legacy of Jamestown is the seed of our *national* mission, law, harmony and Bible, Plymouth is the legacy of local Christian *self-government*. While the first is like a centrifuge, thrusting it out to the circumference of the nation, the latter is centripetal, drawing in local control close to the center of the heart.

While the proclamation of Jamestown was loud, and its personal practice among the common colonist a bit weak, Plymouth was just the opposite. Its practice was loud, and its proclamation at times unnecessary. These characteristics were foreseen in the first attempt at colonizing New England.

The Popham Colony, planted in August of 1607, had, from its inception, a centripetal nature to it. The problem was, its focus was often entangled with different motives than its selfless leader, George Popham. Though Popham desired to stay the course, having laid the foundation in Christ similar to Jamestown, after he died factions and self interest eventually submerged the colony in defeat, and it was abandoned 13 months later.

Not that the Popham Colony did not leave a powerful legacy. The first Fort built in New England is now archeologically being restored in southern Maine. The first ship called Virginia was produced by the colony in only a few months, and sailed the Atlantic many times.

Perhaps the greatest legacy of the Popham Colony was its foothold in New England, serving as a stepping stone for the forthcoming Pilgrims 13 years later. The Plymouth Company, having endured such a set back, waited patiently for another group to attempt a settlement in the climate and conditions of New England. They needed people who would not quit, having internal convictions of faith and family.

(1) Plymouth: *A Hometown Vision*

The Charter of 1620 that gave the Pilgrims their mission was the replacement of the original 1606 Charter due to the abandonment of the Popham Colony in 1608. As part of its vision, it stated...

“We trust to his Glory, We may with Boldness go on to the settling of some hopeful a Work, which tendeth to the reducing and Conversion of such Savages as remain wandering in Desolation and Distress, to Civil Society and Christian Religion, to the enlargement of our own Dominions”^[15]

Due to the fact that the voyage was blown off course, and they landed where no Patent or Charter had been secured, they had to draw up their own, securing a legacy of self-government that would sprout as a flower later on. The subsequent writing of the Mayflower Compact restated the vision.

“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 ...”^[16]

The Mayflower Compact began with the words *“In the Name of God, Amen”* signifying that rights were given by God to individuals, and then delegated to governmental authorities such as the King. This was monumental as a pillar for Christian self-government later to be restated in the Declaration of Independence in 1776.

Thus, we see that Plymouth’s legacy is a *hometown vision*, where God-given rights, Christianity and self-government were to be practiced by individuals. The Pilgrims came as families, as a church, and founded a town. The colonists of 1607 came as representatives of their nation, planting a church and colony that replicated the nation of England.

(2) Plymouth: *Law and Equity*

The Mayflower Compact, though officially replaced by the Pierce Patent of 1621, was the source of their self-government and the origin of their Constitution of 1636. That constitution, rooted in the law of God, but administered by a common law jury, laid the foundation of law and equity for the individual.

The unique part of this code of laws was its representative nature. It went further than the legislative assembly at Jamestown, which was a miniature of the English system of government. Here individuals were represented, and justice was to be equal to all through due process. This *law and equity* laid the foundation for individual civil liberty in America.

The fundamental laws or rights concluded with this exhortation *“That whereas the great and known end of the first Comers in the year of our Lord, 1620. leaving their dear Native Country, and all that was dear to them there; transporting of themselves over the vast Ocean, into this remote wast Wilderness, and therein willingly conflicting with Dangers Losses Hardships and Distresses... might with the liberty of a good Conscience enjoy the pure Scriptural worship of God, without the mixture of human inventions and impositions; and that their Children after them might walk in the Holy wayes of the Lord”*^[17]

The laws of Plymouth gave more liberty to the individual in the early years than did those at Jamestown. It is another confirmation that Plymouth was for the individual what Jamestown became to the nation. Though it took years for colonists to practice the outworking of the proclaimed faith of those in Virginia, Plymouth residents practiced this liberty much earlier on.

(3) Plymouth: Economic Equality

While Plymouth provided a more local vision of embracing self-government and justice, where no experiments of martial law were practiced, one of the most remarkable legacies of the Pilgrims was their economic prosperity and equality.

According to the original agreement from the Plymouth Company, the Pilgrims were bound to a seven year agreement of a common stock, or an arrangement where they had a common store and everyone was paid according to need regardless of how much they personally worked.

By 1622 the Pilgrims were starving. When Weston sent more than sixty passengers to Plymouth with no food, their provisions were spent, and as Bradford states *“they were in great want”*.^[18]

Bradford continues, *“amidst these straits, and the desertion of those from whom the had hoped for supply, and when famine began now to pinch them sore, they not knowing what to do, the Lord, (who never fails His) presents them with an occasion, beyond all expectation; this boat which came from the eastward brought them a letter, from a stranger of whose name they had never heard before”*^[19]

Where was the boat from? The boat was from Virginia (Jamestown)! The supplies procured by Edward Winslow on board this ship on their behalf was a *“double benefit”* as Bradford related.

“First a present refreshing by the food brought and, secondly they knew the way to those parts for their benefit hereafter. But what was got, and this small boat brought, being divided among so many came but to a little; yet by God’s blessing it upheld them till harvest...”^[20]

So at a most critical time, the two parent colonies in America touch each other with a blessing of provision! However, it was later in 1623, during a famine, that Bradford relates a different course to practice a greater equality economically.

“The experience that was had in this common course, and condition, tried sundry years, and that amongst godly, and sober men, may well evince, the vanity of that conceit, of Plato’s, and other ancients, applauded by some of later times: that the taking away of property, and bringing in

community, into, a commonwealth; would make them happy, and flourishing; as if they were wiser than God. For this community, (so far as it was) was found to breed much confusion, and discontent, and retard much employment, that would have been to their benefit, and comfort... ”^[21]

What were they to do? Bradford relates that they left the communal arrangement and divided up the land by families. He states:

“At length after much debate of things, the Governor, (with the advice of the chiefest amongst them) gave was that they should set corn every man for his own particular, and in that regard trust to themselves; as in all other things to go on in the general way as before. And so assigned to every family a parcel of land, according to the proportion of their number... This had very good success; for it made all hands very industrious, so as much more corn was planted, than otherwise would have been.”^[22]

Both Jamestown and Plymouth experimented with the socialistic idea of communal living, and found it wanting, but the Pilgrims made each local family responsible for its own productivity, and each year they planted more acres of corn. Eventually John Jenney would own his own Grist Mill outside the palisade walls, enjoying individual productivity!

(4) Plymouth: Biblical Literacy

Plymouth was not just the home of the Bible, it was used to instruct the children in literacy and a common knowledge of the ways of the Lord. Once again, the legacy of Jamestown was a national home for the Bible, but in Plymouth, it found a home within the family, the heart for both church and state.

If one were to judge merely by the written letters, as well as the inferences to catechizing the children, literacy was a bit higher in Plymouth among the common family member than in most colonies planted in the new world. When the Pilgrims were accused of not teaching their children to read in 1623, Bradford replied:

“Objection: Children not catechized, nor taught to read. Answer: Neither is true; for divers take pains with their own as they can, indeed we have no common school for want of a fit person, or hitherto means to maintain one; though we desire now to begin.”^[23]

Though the Pilgrims had no formal school, they did teach their children to read at home. The main book of study was of course the Bible.

Conclusion

Jamestown is our national birthplace. Here key legacies have been left that have swept our nation, and given us our nationalism. Plymouth is our hometown birthplace. It established Christian values at the heart of who we are as a nation – faith and family.

FIRST LANDING

Cape Henry: Spiritual Roots of a Nation

By Craig von Buseck
CBN.com Contributing Writer

CBN.com – It was a warm, clear day in April, 1607, as an Anglican priest named Robert Hunt led a group of English colonists up a windswept dune to where they had erected a rough-hewn cross, carried over from England. The sound of the pounding surf contrasted with the high-pitched calls of the seagulls overhead as they walked through the sands of what they named Cape Henry – after the son of their King James. Lifting his eyes toward heaven, Hunt led them in a providential prayer that would forever mark the future of the nation that would rise from these shores – and would impact the destiny of other nations around the world.

But this prophetic moment in time came, in part, as a result of more than half a century of labor and prayer by another Englishman – another Anglican priest who was also one of the world's leading experts on exploration. His name was Richard Hakluyt.

Born in 1552, and orphaned at a young age, Hakluyt became the ward of his older cousin of the same name. The elder Richard Hakluyt was a lawyer and a noted geographer who helped pave the way for the lad to become a Queen's Scholar at Westminster school.

While there, he visited his elder cousin, who had a passion for navigation and cosmography. As young Richard explored the home, he discovered books and maps lying open in the study. The elder Hakluyt noticed his interest and began explaining the ways of exploration – opening the eyes of the younger to the exciting study of ocean travel and worldwide exploration.

Later the younger Hakluyt would write of his learned cousin:

[He] began to instruct my ignorance and pointed with his wand to all the known seas, gulfs, bays, straits, capes, rivers, empires, kingdoms, dukedoms, and territories.

From the map, he brought me to the Bible and turning to the 107th Psalm, directed me to the 23rd and 24th verses, where I read, that 'they which go down to the sea in ships, and occupy [their business in] great waters, these see the works for the Lord, and his wonders in the deep.'

The words of the prophet, together with my cousin's discourse ... took in me so deep an impression, that I constantly resolved, if ever I were preferred to the university ... I would by God's assistance prosecute that knowledge and kind of literature, the doors whereof ... were so happily opened before me.

His enthusiasm for “certain books of cosmography ... and the Bible” so enthralled the younger Hakluyt that he determined to “prosecute that knowledge, and kind of literature.” Enrolling at Christ Church in Oxford, “his exercises of duty first performed,” he spent the rest of his time pursuing his new-found interest in exploration – a passion that would hold his interest for the rest of his life.

His other passion was the Word of God.

Young Richard Hakluyt earned his master’s degree from Oxford and became both an Anglican priest and one of England’s foremost experts in geography. He read all the accounts he could find of both foreign and English explorations. He interviewed numerous sea captains and sailors – especially those who had been to the New World – and published his research in books that quickly became immensely popular.

Over time, he began to realize the importance of a permanent English settlement in the New World. In 1497, John Cabot discovered and claimed North America for England. But no permanent colony had been established and the continent was being explored and settled by the Spanish and the French. At the same time, the Spanish had established a vast and prosperous empire throughout South America, Central America, Florida, Cuba, and the Philippines.

The aggressive Spanish King continually threatened an invasion of England – and had the plundered wealth of the New World with which to carry out his threat. Hakluyt knew that in order for Protestant England to be preserved, the nation needed to begin growing beyond the relatively tiny British Isles.

Richard Hakluyt set out on a lifelong quest to see the vast North American continent explored, settled, and by God’s grace, evangelized by the English people.

In 1583, Hakluyt wrote a passionate and eloquent plea, the *Discourse Concerning Westerne Planting*, calling for the commitment of Queen Elizabeth and the government to approve English settlements in the New World. More than any other person in that time, Richard Hakluyt prepared the public mind for action on colonization.

“Preacher Hakluyt,” as he was known by friends, gathered the world’s most comprehensive collection of maps and information concerning this land called Virginia. He wrote extensively on the subject and argued his case before Queen Elizabeth I. Ironically, the queen was so focused on the threat of war from Spain that she would not allow herself to consider Hakluyt’s arguments.

In 1578, she was finally persuaded and granted a private patent to Sir Humphrey Gilbert, the brother of Sir Walter Raleigh – the man who named the vast territory Virginia in her honor. But Gilbert died when his ship sank off the coast of Newfoundland in 1583. Elizabeth then granted a patent to Raleigh, who sponsored five expeditions to Roanoke Island in modern-day North Carolina.

All of the Raleigh expeditions ended in failure. The final tragedy became known as the 'lost colony' of Roanoke – 110 men, women, and children who mysteriously disappeared without a trace. When King James came to the throne, Raleigh lost favor and eventually was imprisoned and executed.

Richard Hakluyt sensed that the time was right to once again make his case before the royal court. He gathered a group of like-minded merchants and explorers to form the Virginia Company. The group received an audience with King James I, a serious and scholarly monarch, committed to the Christian faith and the future of the newly united kingdom.

The new king looked favorably upon their request and worked with the Virginia Company to draft a charter for the endeavor. The chief writer for the charter was Richard Hakluyt.

Amidst the language of the original charter from King James for Virginia was a declaration of the spiritual aspect of the venture:

We greatly commend and graciously accept 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 a settled, quiet government.

Along with the expansion of the kingdom, and the search for natural resources and gold to build the empire, a major aspect of the stated mission of the Virginia Company included concern for spiritual things. This priority was presented in a tract published by the group titled, A True Declaration of the State of Virginia:

First, to preach and baptize into Christian religion and by the propagation of the Gospel, to recover out of the arms of the devil a number of poor and miserable souls wrapped up into death in almost invincible ignorance; to endeavor the fulfilling and accomplishments of the number of the elect which shall be gathered from out of all corners of the earth; and to add to our myte the treasury of heaven.

The British saw this missionary aspect of the endeavor as a way to extend to others the same gospel message that came to them. In the days of Roman conquest, the native Britons were a group of loosely-organized tribes, similar to

In response to the vision of the two Richard Hakluyt's – a vision that had been adopted by many of these original settlers – Rev. Robert Hunt stood as a representative of the King, the Church, and the people of England, in a sacred moment, and dedicated the new continent to the purpose of God.

This was the first official act by the English in the New World.

In covenantal language he declared, "...from these very shores the Gospel shall go forth to not only this New World, but the entire world."

Jamestown became the first successful and permanent English colony. The first Protestant church services were held there by Robert Hunt under an old sail until the first church building was erected. In Jamestown, colonists came together for prayer three times a day and the church was at the center of the town. It was also the site of the first representative government in North America, the Virginia General Assembly, which is now the third oldest continuous legislature in the world.

Long before the original settlers landed at Cape Henry, the Holy Spirit was at work through a godly man, preparing the way for a continent to be dedicated to His glory and for His purposes. Of Hakluyt, it has been said, "England is more indebted for its American possession than to any man of that age."

As Rev. Robert Hunt prayed on that fateful day in April, 1607, their "plantation" was not "rooted up." From these humble beginnings, and later through other English colonies planted throughout North America, freedom flourished, allowing for unprecedented prosperity and peace. And by God's providence, Rev. Hunt's prayer continues to bear fruit, "...from these very shores the Gospel shall go forth to not only this New World, but the entire world."

[Reclaiming the Covenant Special Section](#)

[Download and print this commemorative article – Cape Henry: Spiritual Roots of a Nation](#)

[First Landing Movie Web site](#)

[The Assembly 2007 -- Rededicating America to God](#)

[More Church History on Spiritual Life](#)

[More from Craig von Buseck on CBN.com](#) [More from Spiritual Life on CBN.com](#)