


- The Mayflower Compact was the first civil document of self government. What does that mean?

Cultivating Student Mastery

1. The students may answer the two questions on *Student Activity Page 20-1*.



**Leading
Idea**

“Do . . . covenant and combine ourselves together into a civil body politic. . .”

Student Text, pages 98-99

- Webster defined a compact as “An agreement; a contract between parties; a word that may be applied, in a general sense, to any covenant or contract between individuals; but it is more generally applied to agreements between nations and states, as treaties and confederacies. So the constitution of the United States is a political contract between the States; a national *compact*.” He defines a covenant as “A mutual consent or agreement of two or more persons, to do or to forbear some act or thing.”

- Through an understanding of the Biblical covenants, the early colonists concluded that men could join together voluntarily by compact or covenant.

Daniel J. Elazar of the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs and Temple University wrote of the relationship between the idea of covenants and the American system of federalism in *The American System as a Federal Democracy*. “This notion of covenant, of a lasting yet limited agreement between free men or between free families of men, entered into freely by the parties concerned to achieve common ends or protect common rights, has its roots in the Hebrew Bible. There the covenant principle stands at the very center of the relationship between man and God and also forms the

basis for the establishment of the holy commonwealth. The covenant idea passed into early Christianity only after losing its political implications. Its political sense was restored during the Protestant Reformation, particularly by the Protestant groups influenced by Calvin and the Hebrew Bible, the same groups that dominated the political revolutionary movements in Britain and America in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Much of the American reliance upon the covenant principle stems from the attempts of religiously-inspired settlers on these shores to reproduce that kind of covenant in the New World and to build their commonwealths upon it. The Yankees of New England, the Scots-Irish of the mountains and piedmont from Pennsylvania to Georgia, the Dutch of New York, the Presbyterians, and to a lesser extent, the Quakers and German Sectarians of Pennsylvania and the Middle States were all nurtured in churches constructed on the covenant principle and subscribing to the federal theology as the means for properly delineating the relationship between God, and humanity (and, by extension, between person and person) as revealed by the Bible itself.”²⁰⁻²

Daniel J. Elazar, *Teaching About American Federal Democracy*



For Reflection and Reasoning

- *Suggested Student Activity.* Students read aloud the Mayflower Compact.

During the study of the details of the Mayflower Compact, it will be beneficial for the students to read the entire Compact aloud each day. Frequent reading will help the students retain key ideas of the Compact without specific effort to memorize it.

- How long is the Mayflower Compact? How long does it take to read it? As state and national laws are written today, they are often many pages in length. The writers of the Mayflower Compact were able to declare the basis of their colony's government in simple language that each individual could understand.

- Use *Student Activity Page 20-2* to review the Christian idea of a flow of power in civil government. The students may complete the chart with words or drawings to illustrate the points.

- What is the source of power for civil government? All power flows from God. Read Matthew 28:18.

- How does the individual receive the power from God? We receive the power through the Word of God.

- To whom does God give His power? God gives His power to each person who believes.

- How does civil government receive power? The individual delegates authority to civil government. What does it mean to delegate authority? When does the student receive authority from another for a task? When might the student delegate authority to another individual?

- Reason with the students concerning the Mayflower Compact.

- By what authority could the Pilgrims establish their own civil gov-

ernment? What words express their idea?

- How did the Pilgrims honor the authority of the King, even though they were establishing their own civil government for the new colony?

- Why was this document called a compact? A covenant or compact is an agreement between two or more individuals to do some specific thing.

Using Webster's definition, guide the students in writing a definition of a covenant. Record this definition on *Student Activity Page 20-3*. Why was it appropriate that the Pilgrims stated that they *covenant and combine ourselves*?

- Before the Mayflower Compact, how were civil governments established? In the 1600's, would many people in Europe have been well-prepared to write a document of civil government? Why or why not? Why were the Pilgrims uniquely suited to establish a civil government based on self government?

- The Mayflower Compact states that the people were combining themselves "into a civil body politic." What is a civil body politic?

The word *civil* comes from a root word that means *a citizen*. A civil body is a group of citizens, such as a city, county, state, or nation.

The word *politic* comes from an old word meaning a *city*. We use this today in names of cities, such as Annapolis, Minneapolis, etc.

In the case of the Pilgrims, all the people united to form a *civil body politic*, a colony governed by a certain set of laws.

Cultivating Student Mastery

1. Students complete the questions of the *Student Activity Page 20-3*.