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## OUR BETTER ORDERING AND PRESERVATION<sup>1</sup>

By Dr. ISAIAH BOWMAN

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THE title of my address is a phrase from one of the earliest documents of American social history, the compact made on board the *Mayflower* before she reached Plymouth harbor. Since the patent under which the company sailed from home was drawn for Virginia and not for New England, whither storms had deflected the ship, it was deemed necessary to have a form of government adapted to the new situation and to frame "laws for the general good"—to prevent a few asocial men in the company from imperiling the enterprise. Before they set foot on the new land of hope and liberty they drew up a document constraining and defining each man's liberty. It was the good of the whole they sought, which implied recognition of the harm that might result from the wayward course of the indi-

<sup>1</sup> Dedication address, Natural Resources Building, Urbana, Illinois, November 15, 1940.

vidual. To "combine ourselves together into a civil body politic, for our better ordering and preservation," was the first requirement. Whatever the new land was to give or to deny, the first problem was the choice of a social and moral order under which they were to live.

It is significant that the text of the compact is brief. They did not know what kind of land it was, whether rich or poor. The winter's privations were before them. They shared the land with unpredictable savages. They did not know how the members of the company would get on together. In short, they had to go forward from day to day, and meet problems as they arose. The important thing, after dedication of self-government to the general good, was *how to agree* on what to do, whatever it was that they would find it good to do. That is the core of the document. If laws were to be for the general good, men were to obey

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