
From: Ed DeVilbiss <eddevilbiss@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, November 25, 2016 1:07 PM
Subject: Thanksgiving

Friends,

A friend sent this as food for thought. Hope you had a great Thanksgiving. We return to the farm Monday and then drive to South Carolina later in the week.

ED

THANKSGIVING

Since history is linear rather than cyclical, one of the responsibilities of every era is to embrace the wisdom of previous generations. Ignoring the wisdom of the ages assures meaningless lives. When a society is only interested in the present, it refuses to appreciate the advantages of recognizing that the one hundred and two Mayflower passengers of 1620 birthed the founding fathers of 1776 and the virtuous patriots of 2015.

Writ large upon the birthright, heritage, legacy and future of America is the DNA of a small courageous folk whose handprints are our own. How did they come to plant such a vibrant spirit in this land? The briefest of answers is that they were persecuted for their religion.

In 1608, a gathering of about one hundred and twenty-five people left the small English village of Scrooby in Nottinghamshire for Holland. Why did they leave? They recognized that the difference between their government's view of religious freedom and their own perspective could not be reconciled. They were called Puritans by their detractors because they so wanted purity in their worship of God that they willingly sacrificed living with their families in their homeland.

These plain country folk set ashore in Amsterdam but soon moved to Leiden where they stayed for eleven years and became about five hundred in number. The problem they encountered was though they had freedom of worship, they could not maintain their English culture – their children were becoming like the Dutch in their language, customs and worldview. Their options were few, so they returned to England where they regrouped and set sail for the Land of Liberty.

These English Puritans, who would become known as Pilgrims, “thought of liberty as the freedom to do what is right, not to decide what is right.”[\[1\]](#) The diminutive Mayflower vessel anchored near Cape Cod with forty-one adult males who signed the 153-word *Mayflower Compact* intended this Constitution to serve future generations as one of the people's founding documents.

The Mayflower families perceived themselves as pilgrims in the sense that this world was not their home. William Bradford, Governor of Plymouth Colony settlement, left his three-year-old son in England because he was going to secure a better country for his heirs. As our national ancestors, these English Puritan-Leiden Pilgrims established a standard for all future generations inhabiting America's sacred soil – and they paid dearly!

The first recorded thanksgiving celebration of 1623 was enjoyed by fifty of those still living who survived the maiden voyage and the first year (in addition to a child who was born aboard the Mayflower after they reached Cape Cod). Due to the harshness of the winters, only three of the fifty-one were older than forty and there were only four married couples who remained.

These early settlers were patient and thankful in difficulty, judicious and thankful in prosperity. Though we never comprehensively know God's perfect will or the implications of His divine providence, we are reminded of Governor William Bradford's insight that he did not know whether God's will was for the Leiden congregation to settle in America, but he did know it was "lawful" and "honourable."[\[ii\]](#) The sweep of American history subsequent to that time beggars our vision, imagination and minds.

America's foundational history battles today's individualistic narcissism, egotism and self-centeredness. Our storied past reveals many blessings. America's former days allow today's Americans to place our lives in the grander story of statecraft and nationhood. The Puritan-Pilgrims were chosen by God "to become His temple in America," His "citadel of light," and were "being led in a path that had been walked by another Chosen People."[\[iii\]](#)

The Mayflower voyagers are part of who we are and we are part of them. They were committed to something so much larger than themselves. They were in covenant with one another and with the generations preceding as well as following them. They faced much difficulty, but their difficulties proved the value of their national character.

Your forefathers were dogged by unruly elements and hardships of every sort. Nevertheless, they were not grander, larger or more gifted than you. Affix your mind upon the mirror of Thanksgiving and describe the face you see. From where you stand, how are you treating your American ancestors and their heirs? Does your life and your address to America honor those around you, those who have gone before and those who will follow you?

Alexis de Tocqueville pronounced the proven truth that "a false but clear and precise idea always has more power in the world than one which is true but complex."[\[iv\]](#) Scores of historical revisionists attempt to re-write

and falsify America's history – they shall not succeed. There is nothing historically confusing or complex about where we came from and who we should be.

Those committed to the America that serves as a model for democratic republics throughout the world follow in the path of their forefathers by being willing to risk all as they challenge the foolishness surrounding them. They (you!) refuse the approach of those claiming so many rights yet share so little responsibility for preserving America's foundational historical rights. A twisted governmental culture and irrational society is fostering a fabricated past that allows a people to escape the humble history of their grand nation.

We are not apologetic for how greatly America has been blessed. On this Thanksgiving, express your thanksgivings for your America to your family and friends. Our covenant commitment must be to bring the true America home to every American. May it be so in our day!

[i] Robert Tracy McKenzie, *The First Thanksgiving* (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP, 2013), p. 108.

[ii] William Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation, 1620-1647*, intro. Francis Murphy (NY: Modern Library, 1981), pp. 364.

[iii] Peter Marshall and David Manuel, *The Light and the Glory* (Old Tappan, NJ: Revell, 1977), pp. 110, 111, 359.

[iv] Alexis de Tocqueville, *On Democracy in America*, ed. J. P. Mayer (1834; repr., NY: Harper-Collins, 1969), p. 164.



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