

From: Christians for Life and Liberty <CLL@spiritcom.net>
To:
Date: 12/24/2018 3:31:27 PM
Subject: New England Puritans: Christmas has no Scriptural justification; celebration suppressed during 17th until mid-18th Century

\ri600Christians for Life and Liberty (CLL)
aka [Columbia Christians for Life \(CCL \)](#)
Columbia, South Carolina
December 24, 2018

New England Puritans : Christmas has no Scriptural justification; celebration suppressed during 17th until mid-18th Century

Christmas in Puritan New England

https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christmas_in_Puritan_New_England

[Excerpts; emphasis, comment added]

Christmas celebrations in **New England** were **illegal** during parts of the 17th century, and were culturally taboo or rare in former Puritan colonies from foundation until the mid-18th century. The **Puritan** community found no **Scriptural** justification for celebrating **Christmas**, and associated such celebrations with **paganism** and **idolatry**.

continued...

The Puritan view of Christmas

In Puritans at Play (1995), Bruce Colin Daniels writes "Christmas occupied a special place in the ideological religious warfare of **Reformation Europe** ." Most **Anabaptists**, **Quakers**, and **Congregational** and **Presbyterian** Puritans, he observes, regarded the day as an **abomination** while **Anglicans**, **Lutherans**, the **Dutch Reformed** and other denominations celebrated the day as did **Roman Catholics**. When the **Church of England** promoted the **Feast of the Nativity** as a major religious holiday, the Puritans attacked it as "residual **Papist idolatry**". [2]

Puritans heaped contempt on Christmas, Daniels writes, callin it 'Foolstide' and suppressing any attempts

to celebrate it for several reasons. First, no holy days except the Sabbath were sanctioned in Scripture, second, the most egregious behaviors were exercised in its celebration (Cotton Mather railed against these behaviors), and third, December 25 was ahistorical. The Puritan argued that the selection of the date was an early Christian [CLL: sic] hijacking of a Roman festival, and to celebrate a December Christmas was to defile oneself by paying homage to a pagan custom. [2]. James Howard Barnett notes in The American Christmas (1984) that the Puritan view prevailed in New England for almost two centuries. [3]

continued...

The Plymouth Pilgrims put their loathing for the day into practice in 1620 when they spent their first Christmas Day in the New World building their first structure in the New World - thus demonstrating their complete contempt for the day. [5]

continued...

Massachusetts and Connecticut followed the Plymouth colony in refusing to condone any observance of the day. [2] When the Puritans came to power in England following the execution of King Charles I, Parliament enacted a law in 1647 abolishing the observance of Christmas, Easter, and Whitsuntide. [2] [5] The Puritans of New England then passed a series of laws making any observance of Christmas illegal, [7] thus banning Christmas celebrations for part of the 17th century. A Massachusetts law of 1659 punished offenders with a hefty five shilling fine. [5] [7]

Legacy

Laws suppressing the celebration of Christmas were repealed in 1681, [5] but staunch Puritans continued to regard the day as an abomination. [7] Eighteenth century New Englanders viewed Christmas as the representation of royal officialdom, external interference in local affairs, dissolute behavior, and an impediment to their holy mission.

continued...

With such an onus placed upon Christmas, non-Puritans in colonial New England made no attempt to celebrate the day. Many spent the day quietly at home.

continued...

Although Christmas celebrations were legal after 1680, New England officials continued to frown upon gift giving and reveling. **Evergreen decoration, associated with pagan custom, was expressly forbidden in Puritan meeting houses** and discouraged in the New England home. [9] Merrymakers were prosecuted for disturbing the peace.

continued...

The first public call by a Congregationalist for a church celebration of Christmas came in 1797.

continued...

In 1856, Christmas became a public holiday in Massachusetts. [10] [11]

continued...

In the aftermath of the **American Civil War**, Christmas became the festival highpoint of the American calendar.

The day became a **Federal holiday** in 1870 under President **Ulysses S. Grant** in an attempt to unite north and south.

continued...

Christmas was reshaped in late 19th century America with **liberal Protestantism** and spirituality, **commercialism**, artisanship, nostalgia, and hope becoming the day's distinguishing characteristics. [14]

Governor William Bradford's Of Plymouth Plantation: 1620-1647

BRADFORD'S HISTORY

"OF PLIMOTH PLANTATION."

FROM THE ORIGINAL MANUSCRIPT.

https://faculty.gordon.edu/hu/bi/ted_hildebrandt/nereligioushistory/bradford-plimoth/bradford-plymouthplantation.pdf
[Excerpt, emphasis added]

Book II

Anno. 1621.

"And herewith I shall end this year. Only I shall remember one passage more,
rather of mirth
then of waight. One ye day called **Christmasday**, ye Govr caled them out to worke,
(as was used,)
but ye most of this new-company excused them selves ..."

"... and said it wente against their consciences to work on y t day. So ye Govr tould
them
that if they made it mater of conscience, he would spare them till they were better
informed.
So he led-away ye rest and left them; but when they came home at noone from
their worke,
he found them in ye streete at play, openly; some pitching ye barr, & some at
stoole-ball,
and shuch like sports. So he went to them, and tooke away their implements, and
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openly."

Of Plymouth Plantation 1620-1647, by William Bradford (Copyright © 1981, by
Random House, Inc.),
Chapter XII, ANNO 1621 [MAYFLOWER DEPARTS AND CORN PLANTED] , p. 107

"All English and Scots Puritans objected to the celebration of Christmas as a pagan revelry, the excuse [sic - reason] being that 25 Dec. was not the correct date of the nativity. Stool-ball is an old country game something like cricket, in which a ball is batted about from stool to stool; said to be still played in Sussex."

E-mail below sent December 18, 2017:

Date: Mon, 18 Dec 2017
From: Christians for Life and Liberty
Subject: New England Puritans: Christmas has no Scriptural justification; celebration suppressed during 17th to 19th Centuries

Christians for Life and Liberty (CLL)
aka **Columbia Christians for Life** (CCL)
Columbia, South Carolina
December 18, 2017

**New England Puritans : Christmas has no Scriptural justification;
celebration suppressed during 17th to 19th Centuries**

Christmas in Puritan New England

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christmas_in_Puritan_New_England

[Excerpts, emphasis added]

Christmas celebrations in **New England** were illegal during parts of the 17th

century,
and were culturally taboo or rare in former Puritan colonies from foundation until the 1850s.
The Puritan community found no Scriptural justification for celebrating Christmas ,
and associated such celebrations with paganism and idolatry . [emphasis added]

continued...

The Puritan view of Christmas

In Puritans at Play (1995), Bruce Colin Daniels writes "Christmas occupied a special place in the ideological religious warfare of Reformation Europe." Most Anabaptists, Quakers, and Congregational and Presbyterian Puritans, he observes, regarded the day as an abomination while Anglicans, Lutherans, the Dutch Reformed and other denominations celebrated the day as did Roman Catholics .

When the Church of England promoted the Feast of the Nativity as a major religious holiday, the Puritans attacked it as "residual Papist idolatry". [1] [emphasis added]

continued...

E-mail below sent December 21, 2016:

iri600Date: Wed, 21 Dec 2016
From: Columbia Christians for Life
Subject: Christmas Suppressed in America's Puritan New England during 17th to 19th Centuries

Columbia Christians for Life (CCL)
Columbia, SC
December 21, 2016

Christmas Suppressed in America's Puritan New England during 17th to 19th Centuries

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[Excerpt, emphasis added]

Book II

Electronic p. 192 of 628

Book text p. 120

Anno. 1621.

Electronic p. 206 of 628

Book text p. 134

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Electronic p. 207 of 628

Book text p. 135

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Footnote 8:

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ri600Date: Wed, 23 Dec 2015
From: Columbia Christians for Life
Subject: Christmas Suppressed in America's Puritan New England during 17th to 19th Centuries

Columbia Christians for Life
Columbia, SC
December 23, 2015

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continued...

E-mail below sent December 23, 2014:

iri600Date: Tue, 23 Dec 2014

From: Columbia Christians for Life

Subject: Christmas Suppressed in Puritan New England during 17th to 19th Centuries

Columbia Christians for Life

Columbia, SC

December 23, 2014

Christmas Suppressed in Puritan New England during 17th to 19th Centuries

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http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christmas_in_Puritan_New_England

[CCL: excerpt]

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E-mail below sent December 18, 2013:

Date: Wed, 18 Dec 2013
From: Columbia Christians for Life
Subject: Christmas Suppressed in Puritan New England during 17th to 19th Centuries

Columbia Christians for Life
Columbia, SC
December 18, 2013
[Edited]

Christmas Suppressed in Puritan New England during 17th to 19th Centuries

Christmas in Puritan New England
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christmas_in_Puritan_New_England
"Christmas celebrations in Puritan New England (1620–1850?) were culturally and legally suppressed and thus, virtually non-existent.
The Puritan community found no Scriptural justification for celebrating Christmas, and associated such celebrations with paganism and idolatry ."
continued...

There is an amusing anecdote illustrating the non-observance of Christmas Day by the Pilgrims (Puritan Separatists), as related in William Bradford's history, "Of Plymouth Plantation":

BRADFORD'S HISTORY "OF PLIMOTH PLANTATION."
<http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/24950>

Anno. 1621.

<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/24950/24950-h/24950-h.htm#a1621>

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"And herewith I shall end this year. Only I shall remember one passage more, rather of mirth then of waight. One ye day called Christmasday,
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E-mail below sent December 14, 2012:

\ri600Date: Fri, 14 Dec 2012
From: Columbia Christians for Life
Subject: Christmas in Puritan New England

Columbia Christians for Life
Columbia, SC
December 14, 2012
[Edited]

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Christmas celebrations in Puritan New England (1620–1850?) were culturally and legally suppressed and thus, virtually non-existent.

The Puritan community found no Scriptural justification for celebrating Christmas, and associated such celebrations with paganism and idolatry.

The earliest years of the Plymouth colony were troubled with non-Puritans attempting to make merry, and Governor William Bradford was forced

to reprimand offenders. English laws suppressing the holiday were enacted in the Interregnum, but repealed late in the 17th century. However,

the Puritan view of Christmas and its celebration had gained cultural ascendancy in New England, and Christmas celebrations continued to be

discouraged despite being legal. When Christmas became a Federal holiday in 1870, the Puritan view was relaxed and late nineteenth century

Americans fashioned the day into the Christmas of commercialism, liberal spirituality, and nostalgia that most Americans recognize today.

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an early Christian hijacking of a Roman festival, and to celebrate a December Christmas was to defile oneself by paying homage to a pagan custom.

James Howard Barnett notes in *The American Christmas* (1984) that the Puritan view prevailed in New England for almost two centuries.

Stephen Innes in *Creating the Commonwealth* (1995) writes that the Puritan calendar was one of the most leisure-less ever adopted by mankind with approximately 300 working days compared to the 240 typical of cultures from **Ancient Rome** to modern America. Days of rest in the New England calendar were few, Innes writes, and restricted to **Sabbath**, election day, Harvard commencement day, and periodic days of **thanksgiving** and humiliation.

Non-Puritans in New England deplored the loss of the holidays enjoyed by the laboring classes in England.

Christmas in Puritan New England

The Plymouth Pilgrims put their loathing for the day into practice in 1620 when they spent their first Christmas Day in the New World building their first structure in the New World – thus demonstrating their complete contempt for the day.

A year later on December 25, 1621, Governor **William Bradford** led a work detail into the forest and discovered some recent arrivals among the crew had scruples about working on the day. Bradford noted in his history of the colony, **Of Plymouth Plantation**:

"On the day called Christmas Day, the Governor called [the settlers] out to work as was usual. However, the most of this new company excused themselves and said it went against their consciences to work on that day. So the Governor told them that if they made it [a] matter of conscience, he would spare them till they were better informed; so he led away the rest and left them."

When the Governor and his crew returned home at noon they discovered those left behind playing stool-ball, pitching the bar, and pursuing other sports.

Bradford confiscated their implements, reprimanded them,

forbade any further reveling in the streets, and told them their devotion for the day should be confined to their homes.

Massachusetts and Connecticut followed the Plymouth colony in refusing to condone any observance of the day. When the Puritans came to power in England following the execution of King Charles I, Parliament enacted a law in 1647 abolishing the observance of Christmas, Easter, and Whitsuntide. The Puritans of New England then passed a series of laws making any observance of Christmas illegal. A Massachusetts law of 1659 punished offenders with a hefty five shilling fine.

Legacy

Laws suppressing the celebration of Christmas were repealed in 1681, but staunch Puritans continued to regard the day as an abomination.

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