



THANKSGIVING: THE STORY THE NEW TEXTBOOKS REFUSE TO TELL

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Thanksgiving has always been one of my favorite times of the year. I grew up in Tarpon Springs and attended a public school. I believe I learned more about Thanksgiving from school than I did in church. I learned who the Pilgrims were and why they came to America. I learned about the Mayflower, Plymouth Rock, the Indians, and the First Thanksgiving. I remember learning how Squanto taught the Pilgrims how to take a dead fish and fertilize their vegetable gardens. It wasn't against the law then to talk about God and sing Christian songs.

Keith Tradition



Even after Tuelah and I were married and had our own family, Thanksgiving was my favorite time of the year. We always camped, hunted, and

fished. I remember on one Thanksgiving we decided to be just like the Pilgrims. We wouldn't take any food. We took only our frying pan, cooking oil, and cooking utensils. We would catch or kill our food and if we didn't catch or kill anything, we'd do without. Well? If Tuelah hadn't caught some "stump-knockers" in a creek, we would have gone hungry that

Thanksgiving. Tuelah saved day.

Met Robertson Family

It was that experience that resulted in us meeting Robby's family. I was on the radio at that time and I related the story of Tuelah catching "stump-knockers." Robby's dad was listening. He said, "A preacher who knows what a stump-knocker is must be alright." Robby's dad called the station after the broadcast and we made an appointment to hunt together the following Saturday. We did and that was the day Sandy met Robby and Jimmy met Gwen. The rest is history.



Thanksgiving Tail-Gate Party

It didn't stop there. Several of our church families followed the same pattern every Thanksgiving. When the Robbins kids and the Campbell kids were young, we would all meet in the woods and hunt until noon. Then we would meet at a certain place, break out our food and have a Thanksgiving Tail-gate party.

THINGS HAVE CHANGED

There is a growing movement in America to turn America into a secular state. One way to do that is to re-write history and to remove every trace of God, Christ, the Bible, and our Christian heritage from the history books.

- I was taught that in 1492 Columbus discovered America. Students today are taught that Columbus invaded America and there are protests all over America on Columbus Day.
- I was taught that the Pilgrims were a very religious people who came to America to escape persecution and to find a place where they could bring their children up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.
- Students today are taught that the Pilgrims were a bunch of religious fanatics who couldn't get along with anybody.
- They got on a ship, lost their way, and when they landed they didn't know where they were.
- They would have starved to death if it wasn't for the Indians and Thanksgiving was a day the Pilgrims thanked the Indians for saving their lives.
- In return, the Pilgrims brought diseases like syphilis that eventually spoiled the paradise the Indians enjoyed.

SET THE RECORD STRAIGHT

As a pastor and an American, I feel I have an obligation to help preserve our great Christian heritage. That's why I go over these things every year. I do hope you don't take this as a boring "history lesson." If you don't hear these truths in the pulpit - - where will you hear them? I want to remind you, at any given moment, we are only one generation away from paganism. Therefore, let me tell you the story again.

THE PILGRIMS IN ENGLAND

It's almost impossible for people who have grown up in America to even imagine how difficult life was for the Pilgrims to live in a place where there was no religious freedom at all.

- Can you imagine how it would be to live in a country where it was against the law to go to the church of your choice?
- Can you imagine how it would be to live in a country where it was a crime to read the Bible in your own language?
- Can you imagine how it would be to live in a country where preachers had to get a government license or permit to preach?

Those were just some of the things the Pilgrims had to put up with before they came to America.

Three Religious Groups

Back in those days there were three major religious groups in Europe in the 1600S before the Pilgrims came to America. 1) The Roman Catholic Church. 2) The Church of England (Episcopal or Anglican). 3) The Non-conformist, which included the Separatist, Baptists, Presbyterians, and others.

Church of England

The Anglican church was the official church of England and the King of England had full control over it. The King appointed the church leaders. The King taxed the people to build the churches and to pay the minister's salaries. No one could preach without a license and it was even against the law to attend any church other than the "official" church. It was even a crime to read the Bible in public.

Puritans and Separatists

There were two groups of Christians in England that did not agree with the Church of England. They were called "non-conformists."

One group was called The "Puritans." The other group was called the "Separatists."

The Puritans believed they could "purify" the church by remaining in the church.

The Separatists didn't believe the church could be purified or changed, so they Separated from it.

Both Puritans and Separatist came to America, but it is the Pilgrims, who were Separatists, we are focusing on today.

Secret Worship

The Pilgrims were the "Separatists. They were forced to hold their church services in secret, because it was a criminal offense to hold church services anywhere but in the official church. Those brave souls had to hide out and move from place to avoid the authorities. If they were caught holding church services anywhere but the official church, they would have been arrested and thrown in jail.

Example of Illegal Acts

It is difficult for our present generation to even imagine how difficult it was to exercise one's faith under those conditions. It was not uncommon for Christians to be forced to leave their homes. Thousands were put into prison, and hundreds were burned at the stake or hanged.

Thomas Helwys

In 1612, an English Baptist pastor by the name of Thomas Helwys, wrote a book on religious freedom. This was the first book on religious freedom written in the English Language. The pastor had written: "The King is a mortal man and not God, therefore hath no power over ye mortal souls of his subjects to make laws and ordinances for them and to set spiritual lords over them."

King James I sent this pastor to prison for writing this "criminal" book.

The Corporation Act of 1661

This Act made it illegal for a non-conformist to hold public office. Prior this, Baptist and

other non-conformists held many high government jobs.

The Act of Uniformity of 1662

This Act forced all non-conformist out of the schools and out of the established church.

The Conventicle Act of 1664

This Act made it against the law to be absent from the services of the state church or to hold worship services anywhere but the official church.

Pastor John Bunyan

This humble pastor spent 12 years in Bedford Jail for preaching without a license.

Pastor John James

On October 19, 1661, Pastor John James was dragged forcibly from his pulpit. He was charged with treason, convicted, hung, drawn, and quartered on Nov. 26. What did pastor James do that brought such horrible consequences? He had preached: Jesus Christ is King of England, Scotland, and Ireland."

Following his death, the thirty members of his congregation were taken down to a justice of the peace to take the oath of allegiance. Those who refused were committed to Newgate prison."

Five Mile Act of 1665

This Act made it illegal for nonconforming ministers to teach school or conduct religious services within 5 miles of any town.

King James

Many people think **King James I** was a hero of the Christian faith. The truth is, King James I of England hated the non-conformists and was determined to "harry them out of the land or do worse."

King James Hated Geneva Bible

While living in England, the Pilgrims were guilty of another crime which upset King James.

They had a copy of the Geneva Bible, which was in their own language and included footnotes and notes in the both margins. King James opposed the Geneva Bible, mainly because of the those notes. James was especially irritated troubled because the notes were "Calvinistic."

Dedicated Pastor

Perhaps the most famous Pilgrim was William Bradford, an orphan, who had joined the secret group when he was 12 years old.

Bradford was warned to stay away from the non-conformists, but he was so interested in the things of the Lord, he would walk twelve miles to church and twelve miles back every Sunday.

Later in America, William Bradford would become the Pilgrims's second governor. Bradford also wrote the first book ever written on American soil. The name of this book was, Of Plymouth Plantation.

WHY DID THE PILGRIMS LEAVE ENGLAND?

In 1606, the members of the Scrooby congregation made a covenant with each other and God. The pledged to:

"walk according to the light God had given them out of His Word, regardless of persecution or suffering."

When they could no longer tolerate the persecution in England, they decided to relocate in the Netherlands. None of the "Pilgrims" really wanted to leave their homes or their native land. However, it became impossible to live by the Bible and remain in England.

First Attempt Failed

Their first attempt to move failed. They hired an English Ship Captain who agreed to take them to Holland. The Captain betrayed them, kept their money and their possessions, had them arrested and thrown in jail.

Moved to Amsterdam

Finally, the Pilgrims were released and they found a Dutch Sea Captain who agreed to take them to Holland. They enjoyed life in Amsterdam for about a year before moving inland to Leyden, where they lived for the next eleven years.

Although the Pilgrims enjoyed religious liberty in Holland, the Dutch were very worldly. The Pilgrims felt they had to move again because their children were being assimilated by the Dutch culture. The Pilgrim's children were inter-marrying with the Dutch and the parents knew it was just a matter of time before their precious congregation would eventually disappear.

THE VOYAGE TO THE NEW WORLD Pastor John Robinson

The Pilgrims' pastor at that time was named John Robinson. But when the decision was made to move to America, Pastor Robinson was too old to make the trip. So, the group elected a younger man, William Brewster, to lead the congregation to their new home across the ocean.

Two Ships

They secured two ships, the "Speedwell" and the famous "Mayflower." They boarded the tiny ships and bade farewell to their homes forever. However, they'd not gone far when the Speedwell proved to be dangerous and not sea-worthy, so they turned back to England.

The Mayflower



They tried again. This time 102 people crowded into one ship (Mayflower) and set sail again. For the next 65 days they suffered unbelievable agony as they sailed through storm tossed seas. Many of the Pilgrims were sea sick and the Mayflower nearly sank several times.

Provincetown

When they reached the new world - they weren't where they thought they were. They dropped anchor in Province-town and then did they realize their charter was no longer valid. They had a charter from King James I to settle in Virginia, which was miles to the South. There were some rebels on board who tried to take advantage of this and insisted that the leaders had no legal authority over them.

Mayflower Compact



It was then they did a very wise thing. They wrote out an agreement that probably changed the course of American history. It was called the "Mayflower Compact."

- **First Civil Document:** This was the first civil Constitution written on the new continent. This document brought forth the government of this great nation.
- **Written Laws:** The Mayflower Compact set for the concept that in order to have a stable, orderly government, people must have written laws.
- **Will of People:** The Mayflower Compact established the concept that the written laws of the government rested on the will of the people.
- **Townships:** This great document became the basis for the New England system of townships and the basis for the concept of Republican Self-Government.

There is no wonder the Humanist, who are revising American History books, don't like students to read the Mayflower Compact and learn about the Pilgrims. Read the first lines and you will understand why:

"In the Name of God Amen! Having undertaken for the glory of God and the advancement of the Christian faith, and honor of king and country, a voyage to plant the first colony in the Northern parts of Virginia...."

For approximately one month, the Pilgrims explored the coast around Cape Cod, much of the time in freezing rain.

New Plymouth



Then one day, during a blinding snowstorm, the Pilgrims landed at a place they named "New Plymouth," in honor of their home back in England.

The place was covered in snow but they found a fresh-water stream and decided that would be a good place to build their homes. So they cut down timbers and made crude shelters. Little did they realize that the place they had chosen had been an Indian camp that had been wiped out by a small-pox epidemic in 1617. ²

First Year

The first year was terrible! The weather was severe and many of the people were sick. The labor was back-breaking and in the first year alone - one half of the congregation died. It was by the Grace of God that any of them survived.

¹ Article V, Section 4 of the U.S. Constitution, says: "The United States shall guarantee to every state in the union a Republican form of government."

²These were hostile Indians and would have killed the Pilgrims upon landing, had they still been alive.

An Indian Named Squanto



One morning, when Spring arrived, the Pilgrims were surprised when an Indian walked in and introduced himself. He spoke perfect English. His name was Squanto.

Squanto welcomed the people to the new world and he and the Pilgrims made a treaty with the Indians that lasted for 50 years. Squanto also taught the Pilgrims how to grow corn, beans, and squash. He is also the one who taught them to fertilize their vegetable gardens by burying dead fish in the rows.

Bountiful Harvest

In the Autumn of 1620, there was a bountiful harvest and Gov. William Bradford declared a festival which was the first Thanksgiving. There was plenty of food, including wild turkey, venison, and fresh vegetables. The celebration lasted 3 days and was filled with feasting and the giving of thanks.

Patent of 1621

In 1621, the Pilgrims received a patent, which was like a title or deed to the land, which gave them the legal right to be there.

Patent of 1630

In 1630, the Gov. Received another patent³ which placed all of the land in his possession.

Land Deeded to Voters

In 1640, Gov. Bradford deeded all of the land to the male voters of the colony. I forgot to mention earlier, soon after they landed at Provincetown, they had elected Bradford as Governor of the New Plymouth Colony. He held that position for 37 years.

LESSONS FROM THE PILGRIMS

Rather than just a lesson in history and our

American-Christian heritage - are there any lessons we can learn from the Pilgrims.

1. They Were Christians

First and foremost, the Pilgrims were Christians. They believed in Jesus Christ and they believed the Bible was the Word of God. The Pilgrims who settled in America were actually members of a local church congregation. The move to America was a church re-location project.

2. They Had a Purpose

Second, the purpose of the Pilgrim's move to America is very clear. They moved to America to find a place where they could worship and serve God freely and raise their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

3. They Had Convictions

Not only did they believe in Jesus Christ and the Bible, they believed that God was a higher authority than any King. They believed that Jesus, not the King, was the head of the church. These things were not preferences. They were convictions. They were ideas they were willing to suffer and to die for.

4. They loved Freedom

The Pilgrims loved freedom. They did not believe people should have to hide in secret to worship, sing hymns, or to preach the Gospel. They did not believe it was right for a man to have to ask permission and get a license from the government, to preach the Gospel or to pastor a church.

5. Their families Were a Priority

Although they were not persecuted for their faith in Holland, something else began to trouble them. The Bible warns believers "not to learn the ways of the heathen."⁴ Although they were not persecuted for their faith in Holland, as they had been in England, their children were being affected by the culture

³Warfield Patent

⁴ Jeremiah 10:2

there, so they moved for the sake of their children.

Socialism (Communism) Failed

When the Pilgrims first landed, all of the land was owned by everybody (communistic). Some worked and others loafed. Gov. Bradford gave the land to the people and required each owner to work his land and feed his own family.

He passed a law based on a verse written in the Bible: "He that does not work does not eat."⁵ This is how the colony survived.

William Bradford wrote:

"Being thus arrived in a good harbor, and brought safe to land, they fell upon their knees and blessed the God of heaven who had brought them over the vast and furious ocean, and delivered them from all the perils and miseries thereof, and again to set their feet on the firm and stable earth."⁶

FOUR INTERESTING FACTS ABOUT THE PILGRIMS

1. Guided by God's Hand

As we look back over the story of the Pilgrims, it is easy for us to see the hand of God in the entire affair. This writer discovered something interesting about the Mayflower. Let me quote from the late D. James Kennedy:

"Consider God's providential hand during the colonial period. The Mayflower itself was a wine cargo boat.

The wine had penetrated much of the interior of the ship, which prevented many diseases from afflicting the Pilgrims and

⁵ II Thes. 3:10-14

⁶ Kennedy, What if America Were a Christian Nation Again, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2003) page 26

strangers on that historic voyage in 1620.

Death was common on such voyages, yet only one man died on the voyage - a profane, Pilgrim-hating crew member."⁷

2. God's Timing Was Perfect

Sometimes we become impatient with God for not working on our time-table. Do you realize what would have happened if the Pilgrims had come to the new world three years earlier?

Again, let me quote from James Kennedy:

"At the Pilgrim's coming, the shores bristled with tomahawks, arrows, and hostile natives all along the East coast. . .

One of the fiercest of those tribes dwelt near Plymouth and most surely would have slaughtered the Pilgrims in the first few days of their arrival.

However, three years before they arrived, a pestilence destroyed virtually all of the Indians, leaving nothing but their corn they had stored up for the winter - - the same corn that sustained the Pilgrims during their first winter."⁸

3. They Were Blown Off Course

The Pilgrims were blown off course to start with, and later, when they tried to sail south, the severe winds drove them back. This was the hand of God.

There was probably no place on the east coast of America where the Pilgrims could have survived, other than Plymouth. God controlled the winds and sent them exactly where he wanted them to land and settle.

⁷ James Kennedy, P 14

⁸ D. James Kennedy, p 14

4. Squanto

Squanto's real name was "Tisquantum." His story would make a good movie. He was a native American, born in 1590.

In 1605, when Squanto was 15 years old, an English Sea Captain named George Weymouth led an expedition to Massachusetts, where he landed. He kidnaped Squanto and took him to England.

In England, Squanto lived with Sir Ferdnando Gorges, who taught him to speak English and trained taught him to speak English and trained him to be a guide and an interpreter for his sea captains who were exploring the on future expeditions.

In 1614, the sailed to America and began mapping the New England coast with a Captain John Smith.. When a **Capt. Smith** finished his mapping, he left Squanto with a notorious Captain, named Thomas Hunt, to trade with the Indians..

Hunt tricked Squanto and about 20 more Indians and took them to Spain and sold them as slaves.

Some local Catholic Friars saw whet was happening and bought them in view of giving them their freedom. Squanto lived with the Catholics who introduced Squanto to Christianity.

Squanto lived with the Friars until 1618, when he managed to board a ship sailing to Newfoundland. He lived there until he was recognized by a Captain Thomas Dermer, who took him back to England to Ferdinando Gorges.

Then Thomas Dermer and Squanto sailed to America again to initiate trade with the Indians. When they arrived at Squanto's original home, they discovered that his entire tribe had been wiped out by a plague. Squanto was the only survivor. If had not been in England,

he would have died in the plague.

It was after that, when Squanto was free that he became acquainted with the Pilgrims. In fact, not only did he teach the Pilgrims how to plant corn and beans, he found seeds that his own people had stored away before they died in the plague.

The Dark Side of Squanto

Squanto was no "saint." Although he did arrange peace treaties between the settlers and the Indians, he also enjoyed his position of power. One of the ways he persuaded the Indians to make be peace with the settlers was by telling them that the settlers kept "the plague" in the basement with their gunpowder. He told that if the Indians didn't do what he told them, the settlers would "unleash the plague on them and they would all die."

SUMMARY

America has a rich Christian heritage and there is a battle going on to remove every hint of this great heritage from our culture altogether.

This battle is called by some a "Cultural war." There are just two sides in this battle. One side is fighting to preserve our great Christian heritage and the other side is righting to destroy it.

This writer is on the side that is trying to preserve it. Which side are you on?

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