

The Pilgrims, Seventeenth-Century English Emigrants: Celebrating the Quadricentennial of the Voyage of the *Mayflower*

By Frank J. Smith

They were called Brownists, and Separatists. But we know them today as the Pilgrims. The people whose name is inextricably linked with the founding of New England were indeed on a pilgrimage—a spiritual pilgrimage through this world, which was also bound up with a literal pilgrimage across the Atlantic.

Like the story told in John Bunyan's *A Pilgrim's Progress*, these seventeenth-century English emigrants were on a personal quest for the Celestial City. But their 1620 voyage to the New World illustrated the communal nature of their effort. They were desirous of establishing, in the words of John Winthrop, a leader of the Puritan settlers in Massachusetts Bay a decade later, a city set on a hill. It was not as individuals that they came to America—it was as members of a persecuted sect, seeking not only to escape persecution but also to erect an ideal society centered around their body of believers. Simultaneously, there would be an evangelistic dimension, viz., the propagation of the gospel to the Indians. And it is their story from four centuries ago which inspires us today.

I. THE PILGRIMS' BELIEFS AND PRACTICES

Doctrine

So, who exactly were the Pilgrims? Well, in the first place, they were Christians. As such, they believed that the Bible is the Word of God, holy, inerrant, and inspired. They were Trinitarian, holding that God eternally exists in three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Accordingly, they professed that Jesus Christ is both God and man. These points of doctrine are held in common across a wide spectrum, including Roman Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant.

Pilgrims were Protestants. With Martin Luther (1483–1546), they believed in the five “solas” of the Reformation: *sola gratia* (salvation by grace alone); *sola fides*

(salvation through faith alone); *solus Christus* (salvation based upon Christ alone); *sola scriptura* (as taught in the Bible alone); *soli Deo gloria* (for the glory of God alone). Consonant with these five “solas” is a belief in justification by faith alone, in which an individual is pronounced “not guilty” in God’s courtroom, based upon the imputed righteousness of Christ, and received by faith alone.

Pilgrims were Calvinists—followers of John Calvin (1509–1564). They believed in the sovereignty of God, and particularly in His having predestined His chosen people (the elect) to salvation.

Pilgrims were Covenantalists. They believed that God relates to mankind through covenants, such as the covenant of works and the covenant of grace (which itself has two modes of administration, viz., old covenant and new covenant), and that men and women can thus relate to each other covenantally.

Worship

Pilgrim worship services, like many Protestant worship services, were simple. There was nothing elaborate about the worship they offered. Pilgrim worship featured Bible reading, prayer, singing, preaching, and the sacraments.

And unlike the Anglican Church, from which the Pilgrims separated, there was no elaborate liturgy, such as recitation of set prayers and responsive readings of Scripture.

Pilgrim worship was Word-based—it was not emotionalistic nor a deliberate appeal to the senses. There was no burning of candles or incense, and there was no symbolic use of color, including with respect to vestments.

Speaking of the Bible, though the King James Version

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was published in 1611, the Pilgrims preferred to continue to use the Geneva Bible, which contained commentary promoting a Calvinistic understanding of Scripture.

Pilgrim services were long. The sermon could often stretch for an hour or two. As one scholar has noted, “The Sunday morning worship would last from eight to noon. Being less formal, the afternoon service would often include ‘prophesyings’ (lay preaching), with previously selected male members speaking from Scripture texts assigned by the pastor.”¹

And Pilgrim worship, like the Calvinistic approach to worship, was regulated—seeking to follow the Bible strictly in terms of worship. This viewpoint contrasted with the Roman Catholic and Lutheran perspective, which would allow worship practices that were not specifically prohibited by the Bible. Rather, the Pilgrims believed that any legitimate worship practice had to be positively commanded by Scripture—either by explicit statement, or by good and necessary consequence.

Pilgrims and Worship Music

Pilgrims sang *a cappella*. Not using musical accompaniment matched the reforms promulgated by Zwingli and Calvin, as musical instruments were regarded by the Reformed branch of the Reformation as belonging to the Jewish worship of the Old Testament—ceremonial worship that not only was ethnic specific (in contrast to the universal nature of the New Testament), but also had been fulfilled by the coming of Christ, His death, resurrection, and ascension, and the pouring out of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost.

Pilgrim worship songs were the 150 Biblical Psalms. Part of the reason for this utilization was that the Pilgrims identified with ancient Israel. Like all Calvinists, the Pilgrims understood that believers in the New Covenant were the New Israel of God.²

1. David Beale, *The Mayflower Pilgrims: Roots of Puritan, Presbyterian, Congregationalist, and Baptist Heritage* (Greenville, S.C. and Belfast, N.I.: Ambassador-Emerald International, 2000), p. 71.

2. Even the language of the Jews held fascination for those in the Puritan movement: “Hebrew possessed a special appeal for Puritans. They wished to swim back up the stream of learning and to absorb the wisdom of the Bible from as close to the source as possible, free from what they saw as Roman Catholic duplicity or errors in translation.” Nick Bunker, *Making Haste in Babylon: The Mayflower and Their World: A New History* (New York: Vintage, 2011), pp. 60ff.

3. Henry Ainsworth, *The booke of Psalmes, Englished both in prose and metre with annotations, opening the words and sentences, by conference with other Scriptures* (Amsterdam: Printed by Thomas Stafford, and are to be sold at his house..., 1644).

4. Waldo Selden Platt, *The Music of the Pilgrims: A description of the Psalm-book brought to Plymouth in 1620* (Boston: Oliver Ditson Company, 1921), pp. 10ff.

Psalm singing was not unique to the Reformed Church. For centuries, the Roman and Orthodox churches had sung the Psalms of David, but the standard way of doing so had been by means of chanting—a medium which often required a high level of musical expertise. Accordingly, the performance of church music customarily was done by the “professionals,” such as monks. The Reformed branch of the Reformation developed a unique approach, by which the psalms were set to meter and rhyme. This method was easier to sing than Gregorian chants, thereby making the singing more accessible to the people as a whole.

One of the hallmarks of Protestantism was congregational singing. Rather than leaving this part of worship to a select group, such as priests or monks, the entire congregation was regarded as the “choir.”

The Pilgrims took seriously all of worship, including the music. Indeed, they were very adept in this musical ability. The singing of the original Pilgrims was not only fervent and devout, but also beautiful.

Ainsworth Psalter

The Pilgrims’ psalter was that produced in 1612 by Henry Ainsworth.³ With respect to the tunes, Ainsworth wrote: “I find none set of God: so that each people is to use the most grave, decent, and comfortable manner of singing that they know, according to the generall rule: 1 Cor. 14, 26.40. The singing notes therefore I have most taken from our former Englished Psalmes, when they will fit the measure of the verse; and for the other long verses, I have also taken (for the most part) the gravest and easiest tunes of the French and Dutch Psalmes.”

Ainsworth was obviously following the Calvinist practice of metrical psalmody, with each psalm being put into meter. But in contrast to what characterized English psalmody, there was great variety represented in this psalter. What became known as Common Meter (abbreviated C.M.), with its familiar 8.6.8.6. pattern (that is, eight syllables for the first line, followed by six syllables on the second line), is called “Common” precisely because it became the dominant pattern. However, of the 39 different tunes in the Ainsworth collection, only two were 8.6.8.6. While several of the other fourteen different types of meters were short in length, quite a few were lengthy, reflecting the style in vogue on the Continent.⁴

Three centuries later, a scholar observed that the music of the Ainsworth version “represents the folk-song style with its symmetrical and echoing lines, each with a definite unity and all fused into a total enveloping unity. But it is folk-song that has retained great freedom

Two versions of Psalm 100. The first is from the Geneva Bible, and is designed to be read as part of worship. The other is the metrical version found in the Ainsworth Psalter.

Geneva Bible

Psalm 100. A Psalm of Praise.

- ¹Sing ye loud unto the Lord, all the earth.
- ²Serve the Lord with gladness; come before him with joyfulness.
- ³Know ye that even the Lord is God; he hath made us, and not we ourselves: *we are* his people, and the sheep of his pasture.
- ⁴Enter into his gates with praise, *and* into his courts with rejoicing: praise him *and* bless his Name.
- ⁵For the Lord is good: his mercy is everlasting, and his truth *is* from generation to generation.

Ainsworth Psalter

Psalm 100

- ¹*Shout to Jehovah, all the Earth.*
- ²*Serve ye Jehovah with gladness.*
- Before Him come with singing mirth.*
- ³*Know that Jehovah, he God is.*
- It's He that made us, and not we.*
- His folk, and sheep of his feeding.*
- ⁴*O, with confession, enter yee*
- His gates, His courtyards with praising.*
- Confess to Him, Bless ye His name.*
- ⁵*Because Jehovah, He good is.*
- His mercy ever is the same.*
- And His faith, unto all ages.*

of inner structure.” The tunes were derived “from the vigorous movements of the brightly folk-dance. It may be guessed that the tempo originally was not slow or heavy but lively and sparkling, and that the accents were full and hearty.” Indeed, “these tunes were anything but monotonous or dolorous.” Many of them “turn out to be true works of simple art.”⁵

As Ainsworth recounted, he aimed deliberately to be faithful to the Hebrew text of the psalter, while at the same time “Englishing” the words so as to put the renderings into the common tongue of the people.

The musical instruments of the old economy, such as psalteries, harps, and others, are no longer employed in the new covenant; “yet doth not the ceasing of that music, abolish the singing of psalms with melodie in our hearts: any more than the ceasing of incense, which was burned with prayer, doth abolish now prayer out of the Church.”

Ecclesiology

Though sharing much in common with the Puritans—and indeed, one could consider the Pilgrims as part of a broad Puritan movement in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries—the Pilgrims differed in one key matter: ecclesiology, or, the nature of the church.

While the Puritans were committed to attempt to purify the Church of England, the Pilgrims had concluded

that the Anglican Church was hopelessly corrupt and therefore the only faithful response was to separate. Ecclesiastical separation was the distinguishing mark of the Pilgrims.

This commitment to Separatism manifested itself in other ways. For example, the Pilgrims rejected the idea of an established church (supported by the civil government), and instead promoted the concept of a gathered church with totally voluntary rather than compelled participation. They also came to believe in a Congregationalist viewpoint, in which each congregation was independent and self-sufficient.⁶

One of their key leaders was John Robinson. His academic skill is demonstrated by the fact that the University of Leiden made him an honorary member in 1615. His Reformed theological credentials can be seen from his having participated in debates that preceded the Synod of Dordt (1618–1619). More than that, Robinson was a skilled and loving shepherd—a quality which was “in striking contrast to Separatist squabbling elsewhere.” Accordingly, he was a popular credible apologist “for the Separatist way.”⁷

5. *Ibid.*, pp. 16, 19.

6. Beale, *The Mayflower Pilgrims*, pp. 11–12.

7. Timothy George, *John Robinson and the English Separatist Tradition* (Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 1982), p. 90, cited in Beale, *The Mayflower Pilgrims*, p. 81.

Perhaps his more genial spirit led to a separatist position that was not nearly as strict as that of others.

Robinson was willing to fellowship personally with Puritans and Anglicans who lived godly lives.... Robinson allowed for members of Separatist churches to hear sermons preached by godly ministers of the Church of England. Such a milder form of Separatism helps to explain why the New England Pilgrims were not separated enough for Roger Williams and why, on the other hand, they got along so well with the Massachusetts Puritans.⁸

Nevertheless, Robinson was “a staunch advocate of Separatist ecclesiology in all of its essentials, and consistently refused to recognize any parish in England as a true visible Church.”⁹ This separatist position earned the opposition of both Anglicans and Presbyterians. For instance, a Church of England clergyman, Joseph Hall, took him to task for abandoning his spiritual mother. “This unnaturalness is shameful; and more hainous [*sic*] in you, who are reported, not parties in this evill, but authors.”¹⁰

Representing the Scottish Presbyterian viewpoint, Samuel Rutherford also argued against the Separatists, offering an extensive rebuttal to their arguments. In answering Robinson on one of his contentions, the Scotsman wrote: “There are great odds between a forward generation professedly Christ to be come in the flesh, as the Jews (*Act. 2*), and between a church where there are many wicked persons, who in their life and conversation deny Christ, and yet do believe soundly or orthodoxly the fundamental points of salvation, and hold to profession the orthodox faith; for though we are to separate from the bad conversation of such a generation, yet are we not to separate from the church worship, and church society of such a generation.”¹¹

These separatist views not only were repudiated by churchmen committed to established religion, but they also led to intense persecution in England, including

fines, imprisonment, torture, and death. Quite a few Separatists risked everything to flee to Leiden, the Netherlands, in 1608, where they could practice their faith freely.

However, they eventually felt uncomfortable in their adopted country, and they traveled back to England—from whence many of them would embark on a voyage to the New World.

II. THE PILGRIMS’ VOYAGE TO AMERICA *Why Did They Come to America?*

Every schoolchild knows why Christopher Columbus sailed the ocean blue in 1492—for the 3 G’s of God, gold, and glory. For the Pilgrims, though there were factors such as promoting the kingdom of England and bringing honor to the settlers, the motivation primarily was for God and His glory.

One aspect of the religious dimension was that of religious liberty. Given the persecution of the Pilgrims in England for their faith, escaping that oppression is the obvious answer for their wanting to come to America, and reflects their conscientious commitment. Faced with persecution, in which they either had to give up their beliefs, or suffer for them, going to the New World was one way out of their dilemma. But it is not the whole story.

The proclamation of the gospel was another concern. Akin to one of the goals for the founding of Jamestown, Virginia, in 1607, the evangelizing of the natives was a major reason for the Pilgrims’ voyage.

And more broadly, we can say that the Pilgrims wanted to build Christ’s kingdom. Similar to the Puritans’ desire to establish in New England a “city set on a hill,” the Pilgrims likewise sought to establish a model society.

In 1623, one Pilgrim offered specific “Reasons and Considerations Touching the Lawfulness of Removing Out of England Into the Parts of America.”¹² First, given their daily prayer for the conversion of the natives, it is reasonable to believe that those prayers will be answered through ordinary means rather than “only referred to God’s extraordinary work from heaven.” Also, the land in the colony was common land and largely empty and unused.

And secondly, the “emperor” (Indian chief Massasoit) allowed them to live in his land, not only because they are the servants of King James “whose the land (as he confesseth) is,” but also because the chief had found them “just, honest, kind and peaceable, and so loves our company.”

8. Beale, *The Mayflower Pilgrims*, p. 81.

9. George, *John Robinson and the English Separatist Tradition* (Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 1982), p. 241, cited in Beale, *The Mayflower Pilgrims*, p. 81.

10. John Robinson, *Works of John Robinson with a Memoir and Annotations*, ed. Robert Ashton (London: John Snow, 1851), III:401–420, cited in Beale, *The Mayflower Pilgrims*, p. 81.

11. Samuel Rutherford, “On Separation from Corrupt Churches,” *Naphtali Press: An Anthology of Presbyterian & Reformed Literature*, Vol. 2 n. 2 (Spring 1989): 12.

12. Jordan D. Fiore, ed., *Mourt’s Relation: A Journal of the Pilgrims of Plymouth* (Plymouth, Mass.: Plymouth Rock Foundation, 1985), pp. 77–82.

The Journey on Board the 'Mayflower'

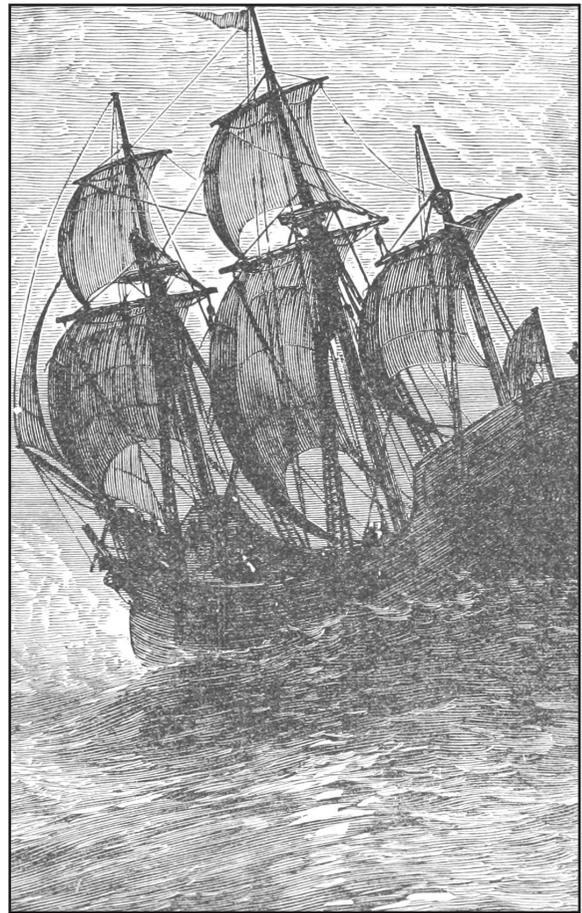
On August 15th, 1620,¹³ two vessels, *Mayflower* and *Speedwell*, sailed out of Southampton, England, carrying settlers bound for the new world. However, the *Speedwell*, which was one-third the size of *Mayflower*, developed leaks, and therefore did not speed very well. The two-ship convoy returned twice to England in what proved to be a futile effort to repair the smaller ship. On September 6th, *Mayflower*, alone, departed Plymouth.¹⁴

Mayflower was not designed as an ocean-going vessel, and it certainly was not a luxury cruise ship. She was a cargo ship, which had plied the waters of the Baltic and North Seas, as she carried salt, hops, vinegar, hats, hemp, wine, and cognac, returning to Britain with fish, tar, and pine planks. She had also crossed the English Channel, transporting cloth to Rochelle and Bordeaux, and returning with fine French wine.

In addition to the 54 Pilgrims, there were another 48 passengers. Of these 102 people, there were 50 men, 20 women, 22 boys, and 10 girls. The crew totaled 12, of which 5 were among the would-be settlers. Thus there was a total of 109 souls on board when she left port. While *en route*, two men died and were buried at sea, and one young man, John Howland, fell overboard and was amazingly rescued by holding onto a rope and being hauled back onto the deck. Meanwhile, a baby boy, appropriately named Oceanus, was born during the voyage, and another boy, Peregrine, was birthed while the ship lay at anchor off of Cape Cod.

The trans-Atlantic journey was extraordinarily difficult. It covered 3,500 miles at an average speed of 46 miles per day, or less than 2 miles per hour. As recounted by William Bradford in his *Of Plymouth Plantation*, "cross winds and . . . many fierce storms" severely shook the ship, "and one of the main beams in the midships was bowed and cracked, which put them in some fear that the ship could not be able to perform the voyage." However, "the mast and others affirmed that they knew the ship to be strong and firm under water; and for the buckling of the main beam, there was a great iron screw the passengers brought out of Holland which would raise the beam into his place." Finally, on November 9th, after 64 days at sea, land was sighted! Two days later, while the ship lay at anchorage at what is currently Provincetown, the Mayflower Compact was drawn up and signed.

On December 18th, 1620, as the Pilgrims landed in the place where they established Plymouth Colony, they stepped onto a boulder which became known as Plymouth Rock. This granite stone was originally much bigger than it is today, as pieces of it were split off over time.



The *Mayflower* at sea. From, *United States; a history: the most complete and most popular history of the United States of America from the aboriginal times to the present day* (1893).

The piece of Plymouth Rock that is displayed outdoors in Plymouth, Massachusetts, is about the size of a dining room table. The year of the landing, 1620, had been chiseled into the rock in 1880.

No one knows exactly what happened to the original *Mayflower*, though strong evidence suggests that she was broken up around 1624. In 1957, a replica, *Mayflower II*, was constructed in England and sailed across the Atlantic—a journey recounted in the *National Geographic* (November 1957). An automated, crewless, solar-powered trimaran of modern design, dubbed *Mayflower Autonomous Ship*, is slated to reenact the voyage in 2021.

13. We will be using the dates then in place, which are Old Style (O.S.). In 1752, England adjusted its calendar in accord with what the rest of Europe had previously done. Using New Style (N.S.), August 15th would have been August 25th.

14. Much of the information regarding the *Mayflower* comes from Beale, *The Mayflower Pilgrims*.



The pilgrims signing the compact, on board the *Mayflower*, Nov. 11th, 1620, by T. H. Matteson, engraved by Gauthier.

The Mayflower Compact

The Pilgrims were supposed to settle in “Virginia,” which then stretched from Jamestown up to the mouth of the Hudson River. *Mayflower*, after a dreadful journey of nine weeks, fought against contrary winds as it reached Cape Cod in present-day Massachusetts, but could not proceed farther south. In effect, the ship was blown off course—a circumstance that would lead to the formulation of an historic document.

Settling in an area outside of where the charter specified put these emigrants in an extra-legal position. Given the possibility of controversy and conflict, there was the need for a formal agreement amongst themselves. Accordingly, one of the leaders drew up what became known as the Mayflower Compact. A pact or compact is like a covenant.

The importance of this document cannot be overestimated. This is the first written constitution in American history. Arguably, it is as significant as other foundational documents such as the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution—especially because

it was the first document that implicitly maintained the notion of the consent of the governed (while still recognizing the rule of King James I). Or, we could say that this document celebrated the principle of self-government.

Relations with the Natives

After a hard winter (1620–1621), the Pilgrims were struggling for survival, when all of a sudden, on March 26th, an Algonkian Indian walked into Plymouth. Chief Samoset had learned English from fishing captains. On April 1st, he returned with Squanto, another English-speaking Indian, the last of the Patuxet tribe, which had been wiped out in a mysterious plague in 1616. It was the Patuxets’ cleared land that the Pilgrims occupied.

Squanto provided invaluable advice which enabled the Plymouth Colony to survive. He and Samoset arranged for a meeting with Chief Massasoit of the Wampanoags, the Pilgrims’ nearest neighbors. The resulting friendship led to a peace treaty that lasted half a century.

The Peace Treaty with Massasoit (1621)

1. That neither he [Massasoit] nor any of his should injure or do hurt to any of our people.
2. And if any of his did hurt to any of ours, he should send the offender, that we might punish him.
3. That if any of our tools were taken away when our people were at work, he should cause them to be restored, and if ours did any harm to any of his, we would do the like to them.
4. If any did unjustly war against him, we would aid him; if any did war against us, he should aid us.
5. He should send to his neighbor confederates, to certify them of this, that they might not wrong us, but might be likewise comprised in the conditions of peace.
6. That when their men came to us, they should leave their bows and arrows behind them, as we should do our peace [firearm] when we came.
7. Lastly, that doing thus, King James would esteem of him as his friend and ally.

III. THE PILGRIMS' LEGACY

A Legacy of Self-government

The Mayflower Compact was key in establishing a principle of people being governed by elected leaders rather than by royalty ruling according to "divine right of kings." Also, significantly, the agreement was in writing.

This policy of self-government was put into practice in both civil and church realms. In terms of civil government, the colonists annually elected a governor. For thirty years, by vote of the people, William Bradford served as governor of Plymouth Colony.

But also in terms of church government, the people selecting their own elders reinforced the principle that rulers should be elected rather than imposed from the top down, as in the Anglican Church with its bishops under the authority of the king.

Thanksgiving

The thanksgiving observance by the Pilgrims in 1621 was not the first in America. Among English colonists, that honor goes to Jamestown, Virginia. Nevertheless, what happened in Plymouth Colony has become the best-known such event—at least in part because of the friendship and sharing between the Pilgrims and the Wampanoags on this occasion.

As with the Puritans, thanksgiving for the Pilgrims

Agreement Between the Settlers at New Plymouth
 IN THE NAME OF GOD, AMEN. We, whose names are underwritten, the Loyal Subjects of our dread Sovereign Lord King *James*, by the Grace of God, of *Great Britain, France, and Ireland*, King, *Defender of the Faith*, &c. Having undertaken for the Glory of God, and Advancement of the Christian Faith, and the Honour of our King and Country, a Voyage to plant the first Colony in the northern Parts of *Virginia*; Do by these Presents, solemnly and mutually, in the Presence of God and one another, covenant and combine ourselves together into a civil Body Politick, for our better Ordering and Preservation, and Furtherance of the Ends aforesaid: And by Virtue hereof do enact, constitute, and frame, such just and equal Laws, Ordinances, Acts, Constitutions, and Officers, from time to time, as shall be thought most meet and convenient for the general Good of the Colony; unto which we promise all due Submission and Obedience. IN WITNESS whereof we have hereunto subscribed our names at *Cape-Cod* the eleventh of November, in the Reign of our Sovereign Lord King *James*, of *England, France, and Ireland*, the eighteenth, and of *Scotland* the fifty-fourth, *Anno Domini*; 1620.

was primarily religious in nature. It was a special occasion for giving thanks to God for His many mercies. It was *not* designed as an annual event—it was to be observed for particular divine blessings. In a similar way, fasts were employed on an occasional basis—whenever divine Providence indicated the need for an intense time for prayer and humiliation before God.

Besides involving acts of worship, such as prayer, singing psalms, and preaching, thanksgiving was also a time for feasting. Chief Massasoit, having been invited to the meal, brought his own guests—90 Indians. He also provided five dressed deer and wild turkey. So, turkey was on the menu, but it would not have been Butterball or Perdue—only the wild variety. Other wildfowl, such as duck and goose, most likely were more prominent. Other foods at that feast could have been carrier pigeon, corn, and seafood, including eel, lobster, clams, and mussels. Beer and wine would have freely flowed. Various fruits would have been featured, including cranberries, which traditionally accompanied game meat. However, there was no cranberry sauce (as that sweetened delicacy was not yet invented).

Thanksgiving has become a quintessential American holiday, and, in many ways, a uniquely American experience. Of course, there are many things today



Detail from "The First Thanksgiving at Plymouth" (1914) by Jennie A. Brownscombe.

associated with the fourth Thursday of November and the weekend following which would not have been practiced in Plymouth Colony: Macy's and other parades, college football rivalries, a mad consumeristic rush on "Black Friday," and a buying spree leading up to Christmas (which the Pilgrims definitely did NOT celebrate, as they viewed it as a superstitious, man-made religious holy day). On the other hand, we can point to items which contain at least a faint echo of the 1621 thanksgiving: church services; perennial Presidential proclamations which call upon the nation to remember the blessings it has received from God; and what might be called an on-going American spirit of thanksgiving.

And so, the Pilgrims helped to create an American observance. At the same time, one must remember that the contemporary Thanksgiving Day, with its sense of coziness, middle-class respectability, and images of Norman Rockwell paintings, differs greatly from the Pilgrims' view of thanksgiving. Thanksgiving for the Pilgrims was not so much a time for a family reunion—after experiencing the horrors of losing half of the colonists that first year, they were giving thanks to God for the family members who had simply survived. The Pilgrims were literally in a life-and-death struggle. And it was in that context that the Pilgrims observed the occasion not merely with feasting but with an outpouring of prayers and psalms of thanksgiving.

The Pilgrims as Inspiration

Plymouth Colony ceased to exist as of 1692, as it was merged into Massachusetts Bay Colony that was peopled by the Puritans. But the Pilgrims left a rich heritage.

For many Christians, the Pilgrims have served as models of inspiration. Congregationalists and Baptists agree with the Pilgrims' view of the church, including

congregationalist church government, and the notion of a voluntary and gathered church. Presbyterians and other Calvinists have sought to emulate the Pilgrims' obvious piety, their simple worship, their psalm singing, their confidence in the gospel, and their Sabbath observance. Believers across a wide theological spectrum appreciate the quest for religious freedom and liberty of conscience, even as some have engaged in their own pilgrimage in fleeing religious persecution.

The Pilgrims have been featured in popular culture—on postage stamps, with monuments and statues, via film, through poetry and literature, and in paintings.

Films about the Pilgrims include *Plymouth Adventure* (1952); *The Pilgrims' Long Journey to the New World* (1955); *Mayflower: The Pilgrims' Adventure* (1979); *Squanto: A Warrior's Tale* (1994); *The Pilgrims* (2015); and *Saints & Strangers* (2015). Some of these flicks, such as *Plymouth Adventure*, are more Hollywood fiction than historical fact. Others are more accurate. *Monumental: In Search of America's Treasure* (2012) was hosted by Kirk Cameron, who used the story of the Pilgrims as foundational to his quest for the nation's real treasure.

For Americans, and indeed for the world as a whole, the story of the Pilgrims is one of faith, adventure, boldness, courage, overcoming obstacles, and friendship across ethnic lines. It is a legacy that still inspires today.

*From my years young in days of youth,
God did make known to me his truth,
And call'd me from my native place
For to enjoy the means of grace.
In wilderness he did me guide,
And in strange lands for me provide.
In fears and wants, through weal and woe,
A pilgrim, past I to and fro.*

Governor William Bradford ■