

Thanksgiving, - Then & Now.

Letter to Laurence Pofers,

Nov. 26, 1929

Continued of old then

~~Thanksgiving~~

Nov. 26, 1920

Thanksgiving, Then and Now. An After-thought.

Most people have a vague idea that Thanksgiving Day is in some way related to the Pilgrims at Plymouth. They ~~in~~ take it for granted that we have kept up a custom which they started. That is true. What a deep satisfaction it is to run back over the 300 years and think that we ~~are~~ perpetuate a custom, well grounded and of deep import.?

~~During the past week I have noticed in the papers~~ ~~reports~~ During the past week I have noticed in the papers ~~reports~~ reports of a tendency to criticize and resent some of the practises that make up the festivities of our Thanksgiving Holiday. In several instances I have heard very severe criticism and dire warnings for the life of the Nation because we have foot-ball games, athletic sports of various kinds, theatres and dances. It is stated that we should make the day a day of religious services.

The dominating feature ~~of~~ of the day should be the formal worship of God. Unless we cease to fix our attention on Football, dances, and the theatre on Thanksgiving Day, and attend the religious services, the nation is doomed.

Such is the purport of these remarks. I have stated them in extreme form for the sake of bringing out very definitely the point at issue. Personally I enjoy very deeply the religious service. ~~The hour of worship means very much to me.~~ The hour of worship means very much to me. I like the custom of a religious services on Thanksgiving Day. For many people the day has not been a Day of Thanksgiving unless some portion of it has been spent in worship or meditation. The experiences of life run too deep to be passed over with a light recognition of joy. I am glad people like to go to Church service on Thanksgiving Day.

Also I am glad they like the Foot-ball game, the theatre and the dance. I am going to the foot-ball game to-day. I sometimes go to the theatre on Thanksgiving Day, and I have been to dances on that day.

Sometimes I stay at home all day. There may be a diversity of administration but the one spirit.

I wish to enter a protest against this carping criticism of those who enjoy the athletic sports, the festival aspects of Thanksgiving Holiday. I voice this protest for two reasons.

First. The form in which ~~manifesting~~ the feeling of Thanksgiving expresses itself does not determine its character. The ~~mere~~ mere fact that some people attend a religious service on Thanksgiving Day does not prove that their feeling ~~is~~ ^{is} any better, or their influence for the common good is any greater than the feeling and influence of one who goes to a foot-ball game. Two striking facts connected with the First Thanksgiving of the Pilgrims should be noted. They had had a modest harvest, but they were sharing it in such ~~an~~ a way that no one was in want. Each had his share. All had helped to produce it, and all shared in its enjoyment. Second. They were firm in the faith that it is not ceremony but life that counts. "He that hath clean hands and a pure heart, who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity nor ~~sworn~~ sworn deceitfully." Such a one enters into the gates of Thanksgiving. The spirit is what counts. I feel safer for the life of the nation with honest, wholesome men taking part in sports on a Holiday, than I should with the churches filled ^{with} corrupt, cowardly, self-seeking Pharisees. I would feel best of all if honest, wholesome, clean minded men and women enjoyed both the sports and the hours of devotion.

I have a second reason for protesting against this habit of criticising the folk because they wish to go to a foot-ball game, or ~~in~~ the theatre, or the dance. The critics leave the impression that the Pilgrims spent about the entire day at their First Thanksgiving Day in religious services. That is not true to history. They did have games. The early historians ^{tell us} ~~told~~ so. They did feast. So they recorded. But we have no record at all that they held any religious services whatever. I, personally believe that they did have religious services

I could not prove it, nor could you. Says Byington,- "So they appointed their first Thanksgiving. The Governor sent four men to shoot such game as the woods afforded, and these in one day secured ' as much fowl as, with a little help beside, served the company almost a week." They had games, military exercises, and feasts . The Indians came to enjoy the festival with them. The Thanksgiving lasted a number of days, and was probably accompanied by religious services, though these are not mentioned in the earlier records. "

The truth is that those who emphasize the secular aspects of the Holiday are nearer to the Pilgrims form of Thanksgiving than those who emphasize the religious service.

But the real issue lies deeper. The quality of the Pilgrims ,both in Massachusetts and in Pennsylvania , that counted was that they were people of integrity. Whether they were in the houses of worship or on the field of sport, they were men of integrity. They played the game on the level. Our nation's future is determined by the extent to which we maintain our standard of integrity.

Earl C. Davis.

Church of Our Father.