

*American Philosophical Society 49/c*

THE  
MIGRATION OF THE PILGRIMS,  
AND OF  
THEIR POSTERITY,  
CONSIDERED,  
IN  
AN ADDRESS,

READ BEFORE THE NEW ENGLAND SOCIETY OF PHILADELPHIA,  
ON THE 22D OF DECEMBER, 1817;

BY THE REV. EZRA STILES ELY, A. M.

One of their Chaplains.

---

Published at the request of the New England Society of  
Philadelphia.

---

PRINTED AT THE OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES' GAZETTE.

1818.

**AN ADDRESS, &c.***Gentlemen,*

**THE** unerring hand of Infinite Wisdom invariably educes good from evil; and so disposes of human events, that even ecclesiastical dissensions lay the foundation for the rise, progress, and glory of future states and nations. We have a striking exemplification of this remark, in the history of the first settlement of New England by civilized people. Religious dissention has, in the process of time, become the parent of our American privileges. We were born of disputation; and no wonder we are deemed sons of political, legal, ecclesiastical, and literary litigation: no wonder that every farmer in our native states is something of a civilian, a divine, and a scholar.

The history of our origin shall be briefly told; and I would hope, without giving any offence to any of our brethren of the Protes-

tant Episcopal Church; for none is intended; and no blame can be imputed to the present generation, by speaking the truth concerning one which has long since passed away. Henry the eighth, of England, quarrelled with his Holiness of Rome, because the Pontiff would not allow him to put away his old wife, and take a new one when he pleased. This commenced the reformation from Popery in Great Britain. The Pope excommunicated Henry and his kingdom; and Henry, in return for the compliment, excommunicated the Pope.

The church in those days had no sooner lost its ghostly head, than it found a regal one; for the parliament voted to Henry the authority over the Church of England, which had lately been exercised by his Holiness. But good came out of this contention; for the King really reformed many abuses. He confirmed, however, the worshipping of images, prayers for the dead, the seven sacraments, the mediation of the Virgin and other saints, and the ceremonies of the church.

His son, Edward the sixth, in a very short reign, advanced, from apparently pure motives, the reformation, which his father had commenced in his zeal for adultery.

His successour, Mary, by fire and faggots attempted to drive away the light of heaven, which had begun to beam on her kingdom; and raised such a smoke from the funeral pile of the Rev. John Rogers, and a multitude of other victims, that the orb of day veiled his face in tears.

Queen Elizabeth, of grateful memory, was of one mind with the pious young Edward. In her days, the thirty nine doctrinal articles of the Church of England were framed, and adopted by a convocation of the English clergy. These articles were agreeable to the wishes of the ministers of the gospel, with the exception of that concerning rites and ceremonies. "A majority of one vote was made up in the lower house, by the help of proxies, for keeping the ceremonies."\* This, however, would have

\* Holmes.

occasioned no schism, had those who pleased, prayed in a white robe, preached in a black one, and baptized with the sign of the cross, without requiring others, who thought these things unscriptural, to conform to their practice. The non-conformists to the ceremonies of the church were at first willing to continue in that communion, which they thought might be rendered more *pure*; and because they subsequently contended, that the church ought to be wholly purged from every thing not explicitly authorized by the Bible, their opposers styled them, by way of derision, *Puritans*; but the term, like that of *Yankee*, soon became honourable, through the exemplary conduct of those who wore it.

The first congregation of these Puritans was organized in 1602, in "the joining borders of Nottinghamshire, Lincolnshire, and Yorkshire." From this little body of covenanted people, originated the numerous societies of dissenters from the established Church of England, and all the congregationalists of the northern states.

On account of the persecution which some of these Puritans experienced;—and persecution was too common an error of all denominations in those days;—on account of tithes, the compulsion of ministers to subscribe to the ceremonies, imprisonment for worshipping God according to their own judgment of propriety, and fines for not attending the Episcopal church, our fathers removed to Holland. They were exiles, resident in Amsterdam for one year, and in Leyden from 1608 to 1620. It was in July of this last mentioned year, that these pilgrims, who sought a home, and a country for their sons, embarked for America. They came by the way of England, no doubt because they had a captain under Dutch influence; and after many delays and dangers, made Cape Cod, on the ninth of November. It was an unknown land to most Europeans, and an uninviting one, to persons whose contemplated destination was Virginia. The Pilgrims attempted to sail to the southward, after they had touched the eastern margin of the United States; but their naval commander “had been secretly promised a reward in Holland, if he would not carry the English” so far south as

---

Hudson's river: he found it, therefore, no difficult thing to sail all day, and make Cape Cod again at night. Thus we owe it, under Providence, to treachery and the cupidity of some Hollanders, that we are not high-minded Virginians;—for high-minded Yankees we undoubtedly are. We honour our fellow freemen of that 'ancient dominion,' and pity the inhabitants of it who are not free; but we have so much of the true spirit of Yankees, as to prefer for a native land, even while we have forsaken it, a land in which all enjoy the rights and privileges of men. We forget not, at the same time, that Virginia honourably protested against the first introduction of slaves into her territory, when she was a colony; and would now have been without them, had not the mother country forced their introduction.

Before our fathers disembarked, they draughted and subscribed a republican constitution of government for themselves, and proceeded to the election of a governour for one year. Thus, on the eleventh of November, 1620, the first model of our state governments, and indeed of all our representative institutions in

this western world, was formed, and went into operation. The Puritans were the fathers of all the modern republicks: let honour, therefore, be given to whom honour is due. One hundred and ninety seven years ago to day, our Puritan ancestors effected their landing at Plymouth, in the state of Massachussetts. When they left their crazy boat, they set their feet upon a rock: one part of which still retains its native position on the iron-bound shore; but our fathers, or some of their children (wishing still to enjoy stability in the most important things, wherever they reside) have removed, as an emblem, a part of that very rock to the centre of the town of Plymouth. Here on the rock, the very rock on which the feet of Carver, Standish, Winslow, Bradford, and the other weary pilgrims, planted their first steps in America, and said, 'we have found the land of liberty;' the children of future ages may sit, and in commemoration of the landing of their fathers, keep the frugal, but emblematical feast of shells. This day, indeed, we doubt not but many have done it; for the twenty second of December has been

