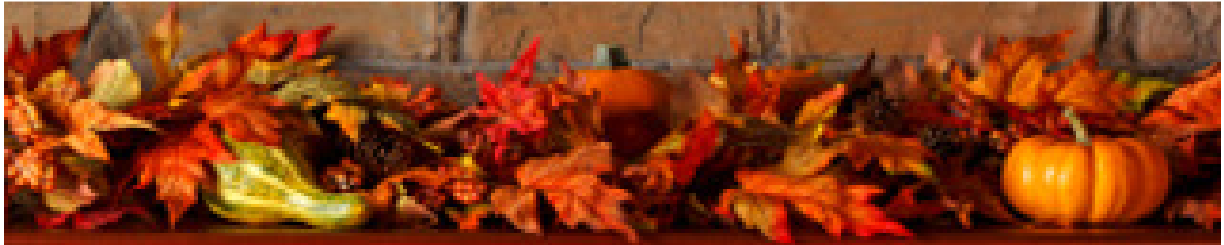


Frederick William Dame

## A THANKSGIVING DINNER IN 2014



### Setting the Table<sup>1</sup>

In May of 1541, the Spanish were the first to hold a Thanksgiving-like celebration. "Francisco Vasquez de Coronado led 1,500 men in a thanksgiving celebration at the Palo Duro Canyon. Coronado's expedition traveled north from Mexico City in 1540 in search of gold. The group camped alongside the canyon, in the modern-day Texas Panhandle, for two weeks in the spring of 1541. The Texas Society Daughters of the American Colonists commemorated the event as the 'first Thanksgiving' in 1959."<sup>2</sup> The Commonwealth of Virginia held Thanksgiving services as early as 1607. Jamestown, Virginia Colony held a Thanksgiving feast in 1610.<sup>3</sup>

On December 4, 1619, at Berkeley Hundred located in Virginia Colony, the 38 English colonial settlers who had arrived there on that day executed a provision of their charter that stipulated the day of arrival be observed yearly as a "day of thanksgiving to God." Captain John Woodlief (1584-1637) held the service of Thanksgiving stating, "We ordaine (sic: ordain) that the day of our ships (sic: ships') arrival at the place assigned for plantacon (sic: plantation) in the land of Virginia shall be yearly and perpetually kept holy as a day of thanksgiving to Almighty God."<sup>4</sup> The first, true,

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<sup>1</sup> The Thanksgiving garland is from [http://files.idealhomegarden.com/files/commons/how\\_to\\_decorate\\_a\\_fireplace\\_mantel\\_for\\_fall\\_pumpkin\\_squash\\_leaf\\_garland.jpg](http://files.idealhomegarden.com/files/commons/how_to_decorate_a_fireplace_mantel_for_fall_pumpkin_squash_leaf_garland.jpg), accessed on 10 November 2014.

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/presentationsandactivities/presentations/thanksgiving/#, Thanksgiving Timeline](http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/presentationsandactivities/presentations/thanksgiving/#,Thanksgiving_Timeline), accessed on 10 November, 2014.

<sup>3</sup> Ann Morill, *Thanksgiving and Other Harvest Festivals*, Infobase Publishing, New York: 2009, p. 33.

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.patje.de/2013/11/thanksgiving-und-erntedank/>, accessed on 10 November 2014.

Calvinist Thanksgiving in the United States of America was during the era of the British Colonies in North America. The Pilgrims celebrated a long-standing English custom that honored the positive harvests of the year by giving thanks to God for His providing for them.



*The First Thanksgiving* painted in 1914 by the American painter Jennie A. Brownscombe (1850-1936). Source: <http://www.artcom.com/Museums/vs/mr/569.jpg>. The reproduction of this work of art is in the public domain.

## The Pilgrims

"began now to gather in the small harvest they had, and to fit up their houses and dwellings against winter, being all well recovered in health and strength and had all things in good plenty. For as some were thus employed in affairs abroad, others were exercised in fishing, about cod and bass and other fish, of which they took good store, of which every family had their portion. All the summer there was no want; and now began to come in store of fowl, as winter approached, of which this place did abound when they came first (but afterward decreased by degrees). And besides waterfowl there was great store of wild turkeys, of which they took many, besides venison, etc. Besides, they had about a peck a meal a week to a person, or now since harvest, Indian corn to the proportion. Which made many afterwards write so largely of their plenty here to their friends in England, which were not feigned but true reports."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> William Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation, 1620–1647*, edited with an introduction and notes by Samuel Eliot Morison, Alfred A. Knopf, New York: 1952, p. 90.

Furthermore, with

"Our harvest being gotten in, our governor sent four men on fowling, that so we might after a special manner rejoice together after we had gathered the fruits of our labor. They four in one day killed as much fowl as, with a little help beside, served the company almost a week. At which time, amongst other recreations, we exercised our arms, many of the Indians coming amongst us, and among the rest their greatest king Massasoit (sic: Massasoit), with some ninetie (sic: ninety) men, whom for three days we entertained and feasted, and they went out and killed five deer, which we brought to the plantation and bestowed on our governor, and upon the captain and others. And although it be not always so plentiful as it was at this time with us, yet by the goodness of God, we are so far from want that we often wish you partakers of our plenty."<sup>6</sup>

### **Selected Appetizers**

According to historical sources, the national observance of Thanksgiving was officially proclaimed by United States President George Washington (1732-1799, President 1789-1797) in 1789. He designated Thursday, November 26 of that year as a day on which "thanksgiving and prayer" should be devoted to "the service of that great and glorious Being who is beneficent Author of all the good that was, that is, or that will be." President George Washington placed emphasis on personal, intellectual, moral, and political devotions that make American self-government in a democratic republic possible. In essence, President Washington with his proclamation established a non-sectarian attitude toward a national day of thanks by rising above and beyond conflicting standpoints over the proper role of religious observances in politics. The First Amendment to the *Constitution for the United States of America* guarantees the separation of church and state. This does not mean that aspects of religion and political questions are mutually exclusive of each other. Indeed, religious guidelines to political problems are necessary for the establishment of ethics and morals as they are presented in the laws passed by the various state legislatures and the federal government. Religion and politics thus bolster each other. It is good that this is the case. Americans, their presidents and congresses, have always recognized the sacredness

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<sup>6</sup> Edward Winslow, *Mourt's Relation, or Journal of the Plantation at Plymouth*, p.133, at <http://factreal.files.wordpress.com/2009/11/heritagepilgrimsmourtsrelationjournalbywinslow.pdf>, accessed on 10 November 2014.

and the need for various religious practices and beliefs. Therefore, there has always been the presence of non-sectarian prayers for the achievements of American goals, whether they be in defense of the nation or for the rights of peoples living under dictatorships.

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By the President of the United States of America,  
a Proclamation.

Whereas it is the duty of all Nations to acknowledge the providence of Almighty God, to pay him due gratitude for his benefits, and humbly to implore his protection and favor - and whereas both Houses of Congress have by their joint Committee requested me to recommend to the People of the United States a day of public thanksgiving and prayer, to be observed by acknowledging with grateful hearts the many signal mercies of Almighty God especially by affording them an opportunity peaceably to establish a form of government for their safety and happiness -

Now therefore, by my command and advice I have thought proper that the 26<sup>th</sup> day of November next to be devoted by the People of these States to the service of that great and glorious Being who is the beneficent Author of all the good that was, that is, or that will be - that we may then all unite in rendering unto him our sincere and humble thanks - for his kind care and protection of the People of this Country previous to their becoming a Nation - for the signal and manifold mercies, and the favorable interpositions of his providence, which we experienced in the course and conclusion of the late war - for the great degree of tranquillity, union, and plenty, which we have since enjoyed - for the peaceable and rational manner in which we have been enabled to establish constitutions of government for our safety and happiness, and particularly the national One now lately instituted - for the civil and religious liberty with which we are blessed, and the means we have of acquiring and diffusing useful knowledge, and in general for all the great and various favors which he hath been pleased to confer upon us.

And that we may then unite in most humbly offering our prayers and supplications to the great Lord and Ruler of Nations and beseech him to pardon our national and other transgressions - to enable us all, whether in public or private stations, to perform our several and relative duties properly and punctually - to render our national government a blessing to all the People, by constantly being a government of justice, equity, and constitutional law, sincerely and faithfully executed - to protect and guide all Sovereigns and Nations (especially such as have shown kindness unto us) and to bless them with good government, peace, and concord - to promote the knowledge and practice of true religion and virtue, and the increase of science among them and us - and generally to grant unto all mankind such a degree of temporal prosperity as he alone knows to be best.

Given under my hand at the City of New York the third day of October in the year of our Lord 1789.

G. Washington

## Thanksgiving Proclamation<sup>7</sup>

*Issued by President George Washington, at the request of  
Congress,  
on October 3, 1789*

By the President of the United States of America, a Proclamation.

Whereas it is the duty of all nations to acknowledge the providence of Almighty God, to obey His will, to be grateful for His benefits, and humbly to implore His protection and favor; and—  
Whereas both Houses of Congress have, by their joint committee, requested me "to recommend to the people of the United States a day of public thanksgiving and prayer, to be observed by acknowledging with grateful hearts the many and signal favors of Almighty God, especially by affording them an opportunity peaceably to establish a form of government for their safety and happiness:"

Now, therefore, I do recommend and assign Thursday, the 26th day of November next, to be devoted by the people of these States to the service of that great and glorious Being who is the beneficent author of all the good that was, that is, or that will be; that we may then all unite in rendering unto Him our sincere and humble thanks for His kind care and protection of the people of this country previous to their becoming a nation; for the signal and manifold mercies and the favor, able interpositions of His providence in the course and conclusion of the late war; for the great degree of tranquility (sic), union, and plenty which we have since enjoyed; for the peaceable and rational manner in which we have been enabled to establish constitutions of government for our safety and happiness, and particularly the national one now lately instituted; for the civil and religious liberty with which we are blessed, and the means we have of acquiring and diffusing useful knowledge; and, in general, for all the great and various favors which He has been pleased to confer upon us.

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<sup>7</sup><http://www.heritage.org/initiatives/first-principles/primary-sources/washingtons-thanksgiving-proclamation>, accessed on 10 November 2014. George Washington's hand-written proclamation is at: <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/ammem/GW/gw4.jpg>, accessed on 10 November 2014.

And also that we may then unite in most humbly offering our prayers and supplications to the great Lord and Ruler of Nations, and beseech Him to pardon our national and other transgressions (sic); to enable us all, whether in public or private stations, to perform our several and relative duties properly and punctually; to render our National Government a blessing to all the people by constantly being a Government of wise, just, and constitutional laws, discreetly and faithfully executed and obeyed; to protect and guide all sovereigns and nations (especially such as have shown kindness to us), and to bless them with good governments, peace, and concord; to promote the knowledge and practice of true religion and virtue, and the increase of science among them and us; and, generally, to grant unto all mankind such a degree of temporal prosperity as He alone knows to be best.

Given under my hand at the City of New York the third day of October in the year of our Lord 1789.

G. Washington

The author of the nursery rhyme *Mary Had a Little Lamb*, the American writer and influential editor of the *Ladies' Magazine*, Sarah Josepha Hale (1788-1879) conducted a successful campaign for the creation of Thanksgiving as a national holiday.<sup>8</sup> As a result, in 1863, with the presidential proclamation by Abraham Lincoln (1809-1865, President 1861-1865), "Thanksgiving and Praise to our beneficent Father who dwelleth (sic: dwells) in the Heavens", was celebrated on the same day in all states of the United States of America.<sup>9</sup> The customary date had always been the final Thursday in November. Lincoln's primary goal was to attempt to provide a basis of American unity between the Northern States and the Confederate States of America during the Civil War (1861-1865). However, the final recognition of the last Thursday in November as a national Thanksgiving holiday was not recognized in the complete United States of America until the 1870s and the era of the reconstruction of the states after the Civil War.

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<sup>8</sup> Sarah Josepha Hale was also influential in the completion of the Bunker Hill Monument in Charlestown Massachusetts, which was erected to commemorate the Battle of Bunker Hill, that battle on June 17, 1775 being the first major conflict between the British Army and Patriot Colonial forces in the American Revolutionary War. Erected between 1827 and 1843, the Bunker Hill Monument is a granite obelisk 221-foot (67 m) high. One has to climb 294 steps to get to the top.

<sup>9</sup> President Lincoln's proclamation is at <http://www.archives.gov/press/press-releases/2012/nr12-29.html>, accessed on 10 November 2014.

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Dec 3, 1863

By the President of the United States of America.

*A Proclamation.*

The year that is drawing towards its close, has been filled with the blessings of fruitful fields and healthful skies. To these bounties, which are so constantly enjoyed that we are prone to forget the source from which they come, others have been added, which are of so extraordinary a nature, that they cannot fail to penetrate and soften even the heart which is habitually insensible to the ever watchful providence of Almighty God. In the midst of a civil war of unequalled magnitude and severity, which has sometimes seemed to foreign States to invite and to provoke their aggression, peace has been preserved with all nations, order has been maintained, the laws have been respected and obeyed, and harmony has prevailed everywhere except in the theatre of military conflict; while that theatre has been greatly contracted by the advancing armies and navies of the Union. Needful diversions of wealth and of strength from the fields of peaceful industry to the national defence, have not arrested the plough, the

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shuttle or the ship; the axe has enlarged the borders of our settlements, and the mines, as well of iron and coal as of the precious metals, have yielded even more abundantly than heretofore. Population has steadily increased, notwithstanding the waste that has been made in the camp, the siege and the battle-field; and the country, rejoicing in the consciousness of augmented strength and vigor, is permitted to expect continuance of years with large increase of freedom. No human counsel hath devised nor hath any mortal hand worked out these great things. They are the gracious gifts of the Most High God, who, while dealing with us in anger for our sins, hath nevertheless remembered mercy. It has seemed to me fit and proper that they should be solemnly, reverently and gratefully acknowledged as with one heart and one voice by the whole American People. I do therefore invite my fellow citizens in every part of the United States, and also those who are at sea and those who are sojourning in foreign lands, to set apart and observe the last Thursday of November next, as a day of Thanksgiving and Praise to our beneficent Father who dwelleth in the Heavens. And I recommend to them that while offering up



the ascriptions justly due to Him for such singular deliverances and blessings, they do also, with humble penitence for our national perverseness and disobedience, commend to His tender care all those who have become widows, orphans, mourners or sufferers in the lamentable civil strife in which we are unavoidably engaged, and fervently implore the interposition of the Almighty Hand to heal the wounds of the nation and to restore it as soon as may be consistent with the Divine purposes to the full enjoyment of peace, harmony, tranquillity and Union.

In testimony whereof, I have herewith set my hand and caused the Seal of the United States to be affixed.

Done at the City of Washington, this Third day of October, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, and of the Independence of the United States the Eighty-eighth.

Abraham Lincoln

By the President:

William H. Seward,

Secretary of State.

Washington, D.C., October 3, 1863

By the President of the United States of America.

A Proclamation<sup>10</sup>

The year that is drawing towards its close, has been filled with the blessings of fruitful fields and healthful skies. To these bounties, which are so constantly enjoyed that we are prone to forget the source from which they come, others have been added, which are of so extraordinary a nature, that they cannot fail to penetrate and soften even the heart which is habitually insensible to the ever watchful providence of Almighty God. In the midst of a civil war of unequalled magnitude and severity, which has sometimes seemed to foreign States to invite and to provoke their aggression, peace has been preserved with all nations, order has been maintained, the laws have been respected and obeyed, and harmony has prevailed everywhere except in the theatre of military conflict; while that theatre has been greatly contracted by the advancing armies and navies of the Union. Needful diversions of wealth and of strength from the fields of peaceful industry to the national defence (sic), have not arrested the plough, the shuttle or the ship; the axe has enlarged the borders of our settlements, and the mines, as well of iron and coal as of the precious metals, have yielded even more abundantly than heretofore. Population has steadily increased, notwithstanding the waste that has been made in the camp, the siege and the battle-field; and the country, rejoicing in the consciousness of augmented strength and vigor, is permitted to expect continuance of years with large increase of freedom. No human counsel hath devised nor hath any mortal hand worked out these great things. They are the gracious gifts of the Most High God, who, while dealing with us in anger for our sins, hath nevertheless remembered mercy. It has seemed to me fit and proper that they should be solemnly, reverently and gratefully acknowledged as with one heart and one voice by the whole American People. I do therefore invite my fellow citizens in every part of the United States, and also those who are at sea and those who are sojourning in foreign lands, to set apart and observe the last Thursday of November next, as a day of Thanksgiving and Praise to our beneficent Father who dwelleth (sic: dwells) in the

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<sup>10</sup> <http://www.abrahamlincolnonline.org/lincoln/speeches/thanks.htm>, accessed on 10 November 2014.

Heavens. And I recommend to them that while offering up the ascriptions justly due to Him for such singular deliverances and blessings, they do also, with humble penitence for our national perverseness and disobedience, commend to His tender care all those who have become widows, orphans, mourners or sufferers in the lamentable civil strife in which we are unavoidably engaged, and fervently implore the interposition of the Almighty Hand to heal the wounds of the nation and to restore it as soon as may be consistent with the Divine purposes to the full enjoyment of peace, harmony, tranquillity (sic) and Union.

In testimony whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Seal of the United States to be affixed.

Done at the City of Washington, this Third day of October, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, and of the Independence of the Unites States the Eighty-eighth.

By the President: Abraham Lincoln

William H. Seward, Secretary of State

Franklin D. Roosevelt (1882-1945, President 1933-1945) signed a joint resolution of Congress on December 26, 1941. This joint resolution, not a proclamation, changed the national Thanksgiving Day holiday from the last Thursday in November to the fourth Thursday in November. The goal of President Roosevelt and Congress was to have an earlier celebration of the holiday, which it was thought would give the country an economic boost.<sup>11</sup>

## **The Dinner**

In the post-modern age Thanksgiving is a representation of collaboration between nations, races, and political and social security. Thanksgiving is remembered with turkey dinners. The celebrations are held practically in all American families for various reasons. Yet, it appears that Thanksgiving celebrations have become disconnected

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<sup>11</sup> All presidential proclamations concerning Thanksgiving are at [http://www.whatsoproudlywehail.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/Thanksgiving-Day-Proclamations-1789\\_Present.pdf](http://www.whatsoproudlywehail.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/Thanksgiving-Day-Proclamations-1789_Present.pdf), accessed on 10 November 2014.

from the original purpose of giving thanks to the Creator. Therefore, it is necessary to highlight the events surrounding Thanksgiving and the meaning of the festivities encountered by Americans in the twenty-first century. It is of utmost importance to explore the symbolic meaning of Thanksgiving today, and ask if it a legitimate celebration that should be continued for the next generations?

### **The Commercialization Platter**

According to the folklorist Jack Santino, Professor of Popular Culture at Bowling Green State University, Bowling Green, Ohio, not only Thanksgiving is commercialized; all holidays in America are commercialized. Indeed, when examining the process of commercialization, "the fact that the United State is a capitalist country is fundamental."<sup>12</sup> In capitalist countries, free markets consider holidays as an opportunity to sell goods related to the event or traditions surrounding the event in question. All businesses selling consumer goods benefit from Christmas shopping, and millions of Christmas trees are sold in November-December worldwide. Pumpkins can be purchased in October. Santino explains that commercialization is triggered by the demand for items; therefore, it is not a bad thing: "customs originate with the people themselves, are recognized as potentially profitable and exploitable by various industrial interests, and are commercialized as a result."<sup>13</sup> Simply because companies and businesses take advantage of increased demand for holiday items, this does not mean that celebrations should not be discontinued. If Americans decided to stop celebrating Thanksgiving for being a commercialized holiday, Americans could also stop celebrating Christmas, Halloween, and even Independence Day, which, by the way, has had an Independence Day Barbie Doll!<sup>14</sup>

Most of the merchandise that is related to Thanksgiving celebrations is not related to the meaning of the holiday. For many Americans there is a true meaning of Thanksgiving proven by the fact that it is a traditional day when families are re-united

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<sup>12</sup> Jack Santino, *COMMERCIALISM, CAPITALISM, AND CELEBRATION* in *Traditiones*, 34/2, 2005, at [http://isn.zrc-sazu.si/files/file/Traditiones/Traditiones\\_34\\_2\\_separati/TR342%20043-054%20Santino.pdf](http://isn.zrc-sazu.si/files/file/Traditiones/Traditiones_34_2_separati/TR342%20043-054%20Santino.pdf), accessed on 10 November 2014, p. 44.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 49.

and give thanks to God for their prosperity and security by having the family sit around the dining table for a turkey dinner and meet for Thanksgiving festivities.

Commercialization of holidays can be viewed according to different aspects. The commercialization can be labeled as *bad*, and many people state that people lose connection with the real meaning of the holiday. While this might be true in some cases, it is also evident that commercial products that feature characters or items related to the holiday make it a part of the popular culture. This means that more people will be encouraged to celebrate the date, and they will become interested in the background, official events, and public programs as a result.

Claiming that commercial holidays should be omitted from the calendar can infer that all holidays should be omitted. Americans do not stop celebrating birthdays because hotels and restaurants offer birthday packages, and because birthday decorations and cakes are available for purchase. Americans should continue to celebrate Thanksgiving and promote the values of the American society concerning this important day.

### **The Atheist Side Dish**

In a recent article the reformed evangelical Bible educator, writer, and pastor John F. MacArthur Jr. argues that Thanksgiving is a universal holiday and "thankfulness is one of the distinguishing traits of the human spirit."<sup>15</sup> This means that one does not need to be Christian, or even a believer of any God or Allah, (although Muslims would contend that everyone should be thankful to Allah only – perhaps due to their *pro-luna* beliefs). According to MacArthur, it is purely human to be able to connect to the message of Thanksgiving. Indeed, when the Pilgrims celebrated their rich harvest that was made possible through the help of indigenous natives, they did so because they were grateful not only for the gifts of God, but also for the ability to work together in understanding and putting differences aside. In this form Thanksgiving is not a religious celebration, but a festivity that celebrates humankind's ability to agree, work together, and help each other. Because different cultures had valuable input creating the resulting

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<sup>15</sup> John MacArthur, *The Atheist's Thanksgiving Dilemma. Whom to Thank When There's no Recipient?* In *The Washington Times*, November 21, 2012, at <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2012/nov/21/the-atheists-thanksgiving-dilemma/?page=all>, accessed on 11 November 2014.

harvest, Thanksgiving is also a symbol of collaboration and equality. Even though the Native Americans were considered to be evil savages, the Native Americans and the Pilgrims accepted and helped each other in various times of need, thus proving the goodness of the Biblical rule *love thy neighbor as thyself*. Accepting each other and helping fellow human beings is an attitude to which all people can relate; independently of one's religion. However, problems may arise regarding relationships with cults.

MacArthur points out that people can be grateful for many things. Atheists usually express their gratitude saying that they are grateful for their lucky stars, or people who help(ed) them. But this same gratitude is shared among all people celebrating Thanksgiving. Verily, the fact that families gather around the dining table at Thanksgiving shows that members of the family groups are expressing their appreciation of each other. Even atheist people love and appreciate their families. Therefore, there is no reason why they cannot connect with the Thanksgiving celebration. In modern times, as MacArthur explains, "atheists can be grateful to farmers for the food we eat, to doctors for the health we enjoy, to engineers for the advantages of modern technology, to city workers for keeping our environment clean and orderly".<sup>16</sup>

Atheists claiming that Thanksgiving is not something to which they can relate are making a mistake. The religious aspects of Thanksgiving are not as prevalent as they once were. Yet, even those who do not believe in God say thanks and are grateful. They tip waiters and waitresses for an excellent service, and express thanks for their good fortune in achieving their goals. Indeed, many Americans celebrate Thanksgiving without a religious festivity. They simply gather around the table with their friends and family and say thanks for the support of the people around them and their achievements. Any atheist or leftist can relate to being grateful and valuing people who are important for us. If a person cannot be grateful, that person, atheist or not, has a major personal deficiency in their character.

Therefore, the atheist attack on Thanksgiving as a holiday is meaningless. Thanksgiving, indeed, does not only celebrate God's gifts, but those provided by humans: family support, the cohesion of society, and order. Claiming that Thanksgiving

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

is only about God would be unwise and unreasonable. Surely this is an attribute of being an atheist, who fail to realize the irony of there being a *theist* in being an *atheist*, and thus they debase their own pseudo-logic and their own personalities.

### **The Muslim Side Dish**

The website *muslimmatters* has created several argumentative articles that are related to Muslims and Thanksgiving. Many Muslims, truly all Muslims if they devoutly follow the teachings of the Koran and Muhammad, regard Thanksgiving as it is celebrated in America, just like Independence Day: both are symbols of the *Western Evil*. Of course, everything that is not Islamic is evil because the Koran and Muhammad say it is such. According to devout Muslims, the representation of the historical background of America's Thanksgiving is that the American nation is built upon lies and the taking advantage of other nations. As one commenter on the website *muslimmatters* states: "Because of the true origins of thanksgiving, (sic: Thanksgiving) being the European settlers (sic: settlers') feast day for the savage conquering and massacre of Native Americans (ironically because of the mixing of them and African explorers that [sic: who] settled there before Columbus, some of which [sic: whom] were Muslim): i (sic: I) think it would be respectful to Allah and them that you at least make a *dua* for them with your family".<sup>17</sup>

This statement itself includes lies. For example, the origin of Thanksgiving is not "the European settlers feast day for the savage conquering and massacre of Native Americans" and "because of the mixing of them and African explorers that settled there before Columbus, some of which were Muslim" has not been unequivocally proven by archaeologists and anthropologists to be the case. Thanksgiving festivities were common among many European cultures long before the Pilgrims came to America and long before Islam came into existence. In fact, many Native Americans had some way of observing and giving thanks for a prosperous year. It is interesting to note that Imam Luqman Ahmad links Thanksgiving to the annihilation of the Native Americans by

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<sup>17</sup> Imam Luqman Ahmad, *The Islamic ruling regarding celebrating Thanksgiving Day*. *muslimmatters.org.*, November 22, 2013, at <http://muslimmatters.org/2013/11/22/islamic-ruling-regarding-celebrating-thanksgiving-day/> accessed on 11 November 2014. A *dua*, *du'ā'* in Arabic: دُعَاء, plural: 'ad'iyah أَدْعِيَة; which is also transliterated as *Doowa*, literally means *invocation*, an *act of supplication*.

Whites, but easily forgets that his Islamic cult exists because it has murdered non-believers throughout the centuries since the creation of the Islamic cancer.

Furthermore, Imam Luqman Ahmad's argument would be valid only if Thanksgiving today was celebrating the victory over Native Americans and the killing of innocent people, which is what Muslims do during their Ramadan celebrations and at every opportunity they encounter. It is a statistical fact that Muslims kill at least 29 non-believers per day in religiously motivated (read cult-motivated) attacks.<sup>18</sup>

However, none of the speeches that are written to officially celebrate the Thanksgiving holiday include references to the Colonial Americans killing Native Americans and that the Colonists should be praised for it. Today, this lie creates confusion about the holiday and the real meaning of Thanksgiving.

Nevertheless, Imam Luqman Ahmad states that Islam allows the celebration of Thanksgiving, and confirms that today it is more of a cultural-American holiday than a religious one. Even though it was started in the American Colonies by Christians – of course infidels – the significance of this fact today is of much less importance than it used to be. The expert of the cult known as Islam also states that the Koran commands that good Muslims need to maintain family ties and keep their family close. Further, Muhammad commanded that "Whoever does not thank people (for their favors) has not thanked Allah (properly), Mighty and Glorious is He!"<sup>19</sup> This is nothing more than subtly insinuating that the praying for Grace and giving thanks are of Islamic origin!

Islam allows for celebrating with family members and close friends. Indeed, it is encouraged, but prohibited when any form of alcohol is consumed. Imam Luqman Ahmad concludes that – under some conditions – Muslims are allowed to celebrate Thanksgiving, and there is nothing sinful about observing the festivities, either. These conditions are described as: avoiding over-eating and indulgence, giving thanks to Allah, not wasting food, and not consuming alcohol. These conditions are in line with the teachings of Islam, and – provided that people adhere to them during the celebrations – Islam allows Muslims to take part in the national American holiday.

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<sup>18</sup> [http://wikiislam.net/wiki/Persecution\\_of\\_Non-Muslims](http://wikiislam.net/wiki/Persecution_of_Non-Muslims), accessed on 12 November 2014.

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.call-to-monotheism.com/the-profound-teachings-of-prophet-muhammad-by-ansar-al-adl>, accessed on 12 November 2014.



When Muslims pray, they give thanks to Allah. Just because their Allah is different – how true! – from God, Whom the Pilgrims worshiped hundreds of years ago, does not mean that Muslims cannot join in a Thanksgiving celebration. It is within the parameters of probability that Islam's subtle participation the American Thanksgiving is for the long-term goal of Islamizing the United States of America.

Being a national holiday in the United States of America, Thanksgiving represents different values to which humans from any religion and even cults can relate: such as solidarity, family cohesion, helping each other, and caring for those who are vulnerable.

It is evident that today's emphasis in Thanksgiving is more about universal human values, which Americans often forget are manifestations of the Judeo-Christian cultural principles. Thanksgiving celebrates family, togetherness, solidarity, and helping each other. This means that it can be celebrated by Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, and atheists as well. What does Imam Luqman Ahmad conclude? Muslims do not celebrate "Christmas, Easter, or Halloween, since all of these celebrate (sic: celebrations), commemorate, or invite to disbelief, or glorifies evil, as in the case of Halloween. If you don't want to have anything to do with the Thanksgiving Day, then leave it alone completely; there is no blame in that, as long as you fulfill your other obligations to Allah. *Wal Al-humdu lillaahi Rabbil aalameen.*" (*All the praises be to Allah, the Lord of the worlds.*) (In other words, in Imam Luqman Ahmad's subtle view it is thus better to have nothing to do with Thanksgiving!)

### **The Leftist Side Dish**

Kevin Boyd emphatically states that "leftists clearly hate Thanksgiving."<sup>20</sup> The most likely reason for this hatred is that Thanksgiving is the symbolical triumph of capitalism over communism and democratic republicanism over dictatorship. Yet, Boyd concludes that the main reasons for this leftist attack on the holiday lies in the historical background of the first Pilgrim Thanksgiving. He quotes Robert Jensen, professor of journalism at the Austin College of Communication of the University of Texas. Robert Jensen states Thanksgiving is "the day when the dominant white culture (and, sadly,

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<sup>20</sup> Kevin Boyd, *Why leftists Hate Thanksgiving* in *Liberty Papers* at <http://www.thelibertypapers.org/2005/11/24/why-leftists-hate-thanksgiving/>, accessed on 12 November 2014.

most of the rest of the non-white but non-indigenous population) celebrates the beginning of a genocide that was, in fact, blessed by the men we hold up as our heroic founding fathers."<sup>21</sup> Supportive of Jensen is Mitchel Cohen, the American author and political essayist who already in 2003 wrote,

"Yes, I am an American. But I am an American in revolt. I am revolted by the holiday known as Thanksgiving. I have been accused of wanting to go backwards in time, of being against progress. To those charges, I plead guilty. I want to go back in time to when people lived communally, before the colonists' Christian god was brought to these shores to sanctify their terrorism, their slavery, their hatred of children, their oppression of women, their holocausts. But that is impossible. So all I look forward to (is) the utter destruction of the apparatus of death known as Amerika (sic: America)—not the people, not the beautiful land, but the machinery, the State, the capitalism, the Christianity and all that it stands for. I look forward to a future where I will have children with Amerika (sic: America), and they will be the new Indians."<sup>22</sup>

It is apparently evident to everybody except Cohen and Jensen that nobody in the United States of America gives accolades to genocide of whatever color to celebrate Thanksgiving. Indeed, during their church services Christians do not celebrate the genocide that took place during the various crusades of the Middle Ages. On the other hand, Imams clearly pay honor to the violence and the killings of millions of non-believers as commanded by Muhammad and the Koran throughout Islamic history!

No nation is without sin. Surely people and governments make mistakes. Kevin Boyd even argues that Native Americans themselves also engaged in what he terms "genocide". This might also mean that no holidays that involve killing other people should be celebrated. This excludes Independence Day, and most of the celebrations that are related to war. On Independence Day Americans do not celebrate killing the enemy, but what America achieved in defeating Great Britain in the Revolutionary War.

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Mitchel Cohen, *First Genocide, Then Lie About It Why I Hate Thanksgiving* at <http://www.counterpunch.org/2003/11/27/why-i-hate-thanksgiving/>, accessed on 12 November 2014.

Likewise, on Thanksgiving, Americans do not celebrate that they killed Native Americans, but that the American nation together as one unit succeeded in its life.

Boyd confirms that some leftist writers attack the capitalist values that are – according to them – represented by Thanksgiving. Indeed, some argue that when people shared the work and harvest, there was no starving, but when selfish capitalist methods were introduced in America, poverty appeared. Some authors use this argument based on some historical facts to prove that communism is a more successful approach towards economy and society than capitalism. However, the contrary is true. When the Pilgrim Fathers introduced and permitted the private ownership of land, rich harvests provided for both Colonial Americans and Native Americans: the production of food increased. This proves the opposite of what the leftist authors say. Indeed, people who own their land or have possessions are more motivated to succeed than those who simply work for the *common good* under communism, the paradise of the leftists.

## **A Second Helping**

James W. Baker in his book *Thanksgiving: The Biography of an American Holiday*<sup>23</sup> states that Thanksgiving is somewhat different from other holidays that are celebrated in America. Today it symbolizes the formation of the nation and a national togetherness founded on constitutional law. Indeed, Baker admits that the majority of the celebrations are commercialized, but the essence of commemorating an important step towards the *American Dream* is still present.

In the past 300-plus years, Thanksgiving has achieved a universal meaning and symbolism. It has been celebrated by immigrants, Native Americans, Christians, and those of other religions and cults. Today, the holiday does not only commemorate a historical event; it allows people to celebrate values of humanity. Sharing work, harvesting, loving, and belonging are as equally important as the religion of the first Pilgrims who celebrated the 17<sup>th</sup> century Thanksgiving and the conflicts that took place before the Native Americans helped the settlers. Indeed, the arguments contending that Thanksgiving means mass killing for any American is neither logical nor steadfast.

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<sup>23</sup> James W. Baker, *Thanksgiving: The Biography of an American Holiday*, University of New Hampshire Press, University Press of New England, Lebanon, New Hampshire: 2009.

Thanksgiving has legitimacy in American culture because the nation as a whole is proud of its achievements and likes celebrating success. America is a success-oriented country. The forefathers of today's citizens were immigrants, settlers, slaves, and Native Americans who fought for their futures. Independent of race, religion, sexual orientation, or language, Thanksgiving provides all Americans an opportunity to celebrate family values and national achievements. Every country celebrates its national success whether that success was established on fear and genocide, or by the free development of moral traditions.

The various arguments that Thanksgiving is commercialized today do not hold their ground. In America – and generally in the Western World – all national holidays are commercialized, including the ones that are related to religion. The most important meaning of a holiday is symbolic: it cannot be represented by merchandise or dinner budgets. Commercialization is a positive development in the free market economies of the Western World. Birthdays have already been mentioned. Moreover, would it be wise to stop organizing wedding parties for the reason that weddings are simply superficial representations of the unions of two people? Of course, not! Christians would not stop celebrating Christmas just because sales go up and consumers spend more money than during any other time of the year.

Americans live in a capitalist society that is based on consumption. People generally consume more goods and buy merchandise when they celebrate something; let it be a graduation, national holiday, or birthday. Shops indeed take advantage of people's increased shopping budget during Thanksgiving, but do they not do the same during Christmas? Even Black Friday, the day after Thanksgiving that was created to discourage people from visiting shops, is commercialized today. Soon after the day was named as the one when consumers are supposed to avoid Christmas shopping, stores found out that if they offer huge discounts on that day they will be able to increase their profits. The source of the increased consumption during Thanksgiving is not the festivity itself, but people's attitude toward shopping. Because it is difficult to determine how much one would consume, shoppers tend to buy more food before national holidays, anyway, and people generally like staying home or going away for holiday for a few days, particularly during the Christmas and Easter holidays.

The argument that people from different religions cannot relate to the holiday of Thanksgiving is also unfounded. Thanksgiving celebrates universal human values. While several religious peoples from Protestant backgrounds claim that Thanksgiving is their celebration, it is also recognized as a national festivity. Truly, being a national holiday, Thanksgiving can be celebrated by anybody who lives in America or can associate with American values. Building a nation from nothing is an achievement to which all people around the world can relate. The Hebrew tradition has the celebration of Passover and the celebration of the liberation of Jewish people from Egyptian slavery. Muslims celebrate Hajj, the pilgrimage to Mecca. Even this is similar to Thanksgiving although Muslims insinuate that such behavior in Thanksgiving was dictated and established by Muhammad. They commemorate belonging to a world community of Islamic people – the Umma – who believe in the same values and way of living. The American Thanksgiving is definitely very different in that traditionally Americans thank God, not Allah, for their blessings.<sup>24</sup>

The feelings of homeland and national emotions create a high level of sentiment in people. When they celebrate the Thanksgiving holiday Americans feel a sense of achievement as a nation and a sense of belonging. They share the table with their family members, and those who are close to them, just like Jesus shared the bread and wine with His disciples. As the Last Supper commemorated the building of a church or community, Thanksgiving dinners commemorate the unity of the nation and the American families. Without Thanksgiving, there would be possibly less pride in America as a nation and an American's national identity would be much weaker, or in the long-run, become non-existent.

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<sup>24</sup> Allah was the name of one of the pagan Meccan deities. "The name Allah was used as the *personal* name of the moon god, in addition to the other titles that could be given to him. Allah, the moon god, was married to the sun goddess. Together they produced three goddesses who were called 'the daughters of Allah'. These three goddesses were called Al-Lat, Al-Uzza, and Manat. The daughters of Allah, along with Allah and the sun goddess were viewed as 'high' gods. That is, they were viewed as being at the top of the pantheon of Arabian deities." Robert Morey, *The Islamic Invasion*, Harvest House Publishers, Eugene, Oregon: 1977, pp. 50-51. Moreover, the meaning is that "the naming of Allah shows that He (Allah) is Who is to be idolized and worshipped." This does not indicate that Allah is the same as God, but only states that the meaning is that Allah is to be idolized and worshiped. Although Allah may have the attributes of a pagan godliness and the necessity of requiring submission from all of those who deify him, Allah, regardless of the interpretation, is not the Christian God or the Hebrew Jahwe. Refer to [http://www.islam.gov.my/sites/default/files/kalimah\\_allah\\_0.pdf](http://www.islam.gov.my/sites/default/files/kalimah_allah_0.pdf), accessed on 12 November 2014,

## Dessert

Several demonstrations have been held on Thanksgiving Day in an attempt to stop the celebrations on a national level. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, they have all been without success. Prime examples are the National Day of Mourning held by New England Indians annually since 1970 in Boston, Massachusetts and the Unthanksgiving Day, also known as the Indigenous Peoples Sunrise Ceremony, held annually on the island Alcatraz in San Francisco Bay since 1975. Both events attempt to deny the cultural legitimacy of the Thanksgiving holiday. The demonstrations have not been successful for several reasons. First of all, they are not well organized. Secondly, the demonstrations are held on the day when people gather to celebrate. Holding a demonstration against Thanksgiving on the day when it is celebrated is not the best of decisions. The combination does not fit!!! Thirdly, the reasoning behind the slogans calling for the nullification of Thanksgiving are not strong enough to change hundreds of years of traditions.



This is the classic Norman Rockwell (1894-1978) painting of the American Thanksgiving titled *Freedom from Want*, oil on canvas painted in 1943. Source: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Freedom\\_from\\_Want\\_%28painting%29](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Freedom_from_Want_%28painting%29). The image is in the public domain.

Not many undertakings would be strong enough to wipe out Thanksgiving from the American society. Everyone has a personalized way of celebrating and developing

customs within the family. Everything is laid out: menus, activities, who is invited, who says the prayers, and so on. Even non-religious people in America can relate to family values and togetherness. They comprehend Thanksgiving as a celebration of positive values, and this means that if it was suddenly *anceled* people would feel deprived of their right to celebrate a tradition to which they can relate. The meaning of Thanksgiving has changed throughout the centuries, but its legitimacy is stronger than ever. Thanksgiving is still a day when the disintegrating American family, Black, White, Red, or Yellow can have an opportunity to stop the collapse of their family core.

I suggest that the readers of this essay do what the author does nightly and with renewed emphasis on Thanksgiving Day: Regardless of where you are, Thank Almighty God for Everything!

**Prayer of Thanksgiving<sup>25</sup>**  
by  
Reverend Vienna Cobb Anderson

God of all blessings,  
source of all life,  
giver of all grace:

We thank You for the gift of life:  
for the breath  
that sustains life,  
for the food of this earth  
that nurtures life,  
for the love of family and friends  
without which there would be no life.

We thank You for the mystery of creation:  
for the beauty  
that the eye can see,  
for the joy  
that the ear may hear,  
for the unknown  
that we cannot behold filling the universe with wonder,  
for the expanse of space  
that draws us beyond the definitions of our selves.  
We thank You for setting us in communities:

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<sup>25</sup> <http://www.beliefnet.com/Prayers/Christian/Gratitude/Prayer-Of-Thanksgiving.aspx#LH0Y6cWva7ozg4m4.99>.

for families  
who nurture our becoming,  
for friends  
who love us by choice,  
for companions at work,  
who share our burdens and daily tasks,  
for strangers  
who welcome us into their midst,  
for people from other lands  
who call us to grow in understanding,  
for children  
who lighten our moments with delight,  
for the unborn,  
who offer us hope for the future.

We thank You for this day:  
for life  
and one more day to love,  
for opportunity  
and one more day to work for justice and peace,  
for neighbors  
and one more person to love  
and by whom be loved,  
for Your grace  
and one more experience of Your presence,  
for Your promise:  
to be with us,  
to be our God,  
and to give salvation.

For these, and all blessings,  
we give You thanks, eternal, loving God,  
through Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.



I wish all of you a meaningful Thanksgiving!<sup>26</sup>

Frederick William Dame  
Patriotic, Steadfast, and True  
November 25, 2014

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<sup>26</sup> The autumn garland is at <http://www.aeroflora.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/holiday-fall-garland1/A08D1671.jpg>, accessed on 10 November 2014.