

# Pilgrims and Progress: How Magazines Made Thanksgiving

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## I. A CONTRAST IN COVENANTS

William Bradford wrote, at the beginning of his history *Of Plymouth Plantation*, "I must begin at the very root and rise" of the story, setting events down "in a plain style, with singular regard unto the simple truth in all things."<sup>1</sup> He intended to produce an accurate and clear account of the way the Plymouth settlers' lives unfolded. Readers after postmodernism may note with skepticism the governor's claim that his portrayal set down only the perfectly discoverable truth of the matter. Yet certain sparsely depicted moments in his history lead us to accept the description "the simple truth" as the only one appropriate to his work.

If, for example, Bradford deployed an agenda in describing the first pilgrim harvest—what is now celebrated in the U.S. on the fourth Thursday of November—he hid it well beneath a disguise of utter inconsequentiality:

They 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 a 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 that 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>2</sup>

1. William Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation, 1620–1647*, ed. Samuel Eliot Morison (New York: Knopf, 1952), 3.

2. *Ibid.*, 90.

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The modern reader in search of "The First Thanksgiving" would easily pass over Bradford's account, if not for editor Samuel Eliot Morison's insertion of explanatory subheadings and footnotes.<sup>3</sup> Bradford's report bears little resemblance to what twenty-first-century Americans know as Thanksgiving Day.

This essay will argue that our Thanksgiving—traveling home to turkey and all the trimmings—was "invented" not in seventeenth-century Massachusetts, but in nineteenth-century Philadelphia in the pages of the nation's most widely circulated magazines and in response to the changing American scene.<sup>4</sup> Two hundred years after the Pilgrims' quiet commemorations, Thanksgiving developed a uniform national profile, impelled by its promoters' ideals about republican identity, ideals diffused by a publishing industry with increasingly national reach.

What circumstance made Bradford's retelling adequate? The Pilgrims that the governor described were a covenant people. Covenant—between God and believers, among believers as members of church, families, and community—provided the nail from which the rest of Pilgrim life was suspended. Understanding their community as a beachhead for the Kingdom of God, Pilgrims, in their public and private duties, their civil and religious activities, expressed belief in their particular chosenness for the task given them by God.<sup>5</sup> Their lives, centered on the covenant relationship, enacted over and over again the pervasive "redemptive drama" of human sin, divine grace, and eternal salvation.<sup>6</sup>

Believers in a provident God, steeled for the harshness of life by a "cosmic optimism," the Pilgrims recognized both trials and blessings as issuing from the same divine hand.<sup>7</sup> This belief showed itself in the

3. *Ibid.* The celebration, as Morison noted (90 n. 8), was more fully described in a letter of Edward Winslow's, included in a collection of extracts from Winslow's and William Bradford's journals known as *Mourt's Relation*, by the otherwise unknown author of its preface, G. Mourt (Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation*, 64 n. 2).

4. On "inventing traditions," see the chapter by Eric Hobsbawm by that title in Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 1–14. On Thanksgiving's origins, see Diana Karter Appelbaum, *Thanksgiving: An American Holiday, An American History* (New York: Facts on File Publications, 1984); *The Folklore of American Holidays*, ed. Hennig Cohen and Tristram Potter Coffin (Detroit, Mich.: Gale, 1987), 331–51; George William Douglas, *The American Book of Days* (New York: H. W. Wilson, 1937).

5. Charles E. Hambrick-Stowe, *The Practice of Piety: Puritan Devotional Disciplines in Seventeenth-Century New England* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982), 102.

6. *Ibid.*, 22, 135.

7. The phrase comes from Perry Miller, *The New England Mind: The Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, Belknap, 1939), 37.

practice of Puritans in the New World—and Puritans in England before them—of observing days of public thanksgiving or fast. Declared fast days responded to emergencies or prepared the community for significant undertakings by reawakening the sense of dependence upon God in all things. Condemning a fixed celebration of thanksgiving as presumptuous, Puritan leaders declared thanksgiving days in response to specific instances of God's "favor and mercy," such as a good harvest.<sup>8</sup> These celebrations functioned, therefore, to maintain the church covenant, the relational foundation upon which all other connections were built.<sup>9</sup>

These observances, which could be initiated by either civil or religious authorities,<sup>10</sup> wove themselves into the seamless covenantal fabric of Puritan life and belief. And so Governor Bradford's account of the harvest as a mere blip of God's goodness in a whole history of providential tending was quite fitting and quite easily understood by a covenant people who saw themselves as particularly destined, particularly guided, even sometimes particularly chastened. In this context, Bradford's matter-of-fact picture, framed by the assumption of covenant, called for no elaboration. He intended not to establish an institution, but only to note the passing of yet another providential moment among many. He wrote for people who knew what, or rather Who, bounded and tended their lives.

In recent years, scholars have scrutinized the origins of holidays and their transformation into central mechanisms for the cultures that observe them. Stephen Nissenbaum's book *The Battle for Christmas* and Leigh Eric Schmidt's study of *Consumer Rites*, for instance, take celebration seriously.<sup>11</sup> Nissenbaum follows the transformation of Christmas from an unruly celebration to an orderly commercial and domestic one. Schmidt treats Valentine's Day, Christmas, Easter, and Mother's Day. Surprisingly, he has little to say about Thanksgiving, even though he attributes a "striking transformation of festival" to a national market consciousness.<sup>12</sup> Schmidt discerns a "new economy of celebration" fashioned "out of a potpourri of romantic, genteel, consumerist, domestic, religious, and civic sensibilities."<sup>13</sup> In examining the nineteenth-century establishment of the Thanksgiving institution,

8. Hambrick-Stowe, *Practice of Piety*, 100, 102, 135. See also Appelbaum, *Thanksgiving*, 32.

9. Hambrick-Stowe, *Practice of Piety*, 127.

10. Appelbaum, *Thanksgiving*, 25, 33.

11. Stephen Nissenbaum, *The Battle for Christmas* (New York: Knopf, 1996); Leigh Eric Schmidt, *Consumer Rites: The Buying and Selling of American Holidays* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1995).

12. Schmidt, *Consumer Rites*, 18.

13. *Ibid.*, 19.

I will show that the popular serials most avidly promoting the holiday displayed the very sensibilities that Schmidt emphasizes.

Elizabeth H. Pleck sees Thanksgiving as a site on which the nation's ambitions met with and were blended into the customs of its families, particularly its nonwhite, non-Protestant, and immigrant families. Such groups often persisted in their own celebrations, which advocates of a national and nationally unifying Thanksgiving viewed as divisive and, therefore, dispensable.<sup>14</sup> Pleck builds on the work of another scholar, Janet Siskind, who has investigated how colonial and early republican thanksgiving celebrations consolidated the United States's national identity.<sup>15</sup>

The present study further develops the work of these scholars—particularly Pleck, who summarizes the activity of *Godey's Lady's Book and Magazine* editor and Thanksgiving promoter Sarah Hale but does not examine in any detail Hale's writings or the material that appeared in her magazine. I have detailed here some literary routes by which Thanksgiving's promoters sought to make the holiday a regulator of nineteenth-century American culture. The abstractions surrounding national ambition became real for individual citizen-readers through widely circulated popular magazines.<sup>16</sup> These magazines communicated national assumptions and strategies through the Thanksgiving instructions and stories they featured.

Days of thanksgiving operated, as we have noted, to regulate seventeenth-century Pilgrim culture as well, calling participants back to covenant mindfulness through worship, prayer, and Scripture

14. Elizabeth H. Pleck, "The Making of the Domestic Occasion: The History of Thanksgiving in the United States," *Journal of Social History* 32 (1999): 775–77. Pleck expands these ideas in *Celebrating the Family: Ethnicity, Consumer Culture, and Family Rituals* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000).

15. Janet Siskind, "The Invention of Thanksgiving: A Ritual of American Nationality," *Critique of Anthropology* 12 (1992): 167–91. I thank my colleague and friend Stephen Chapman and also the staff of the Interlibrary Loan Department at the Public Library of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County (N.C.) for their help in obtaining Siskind's article.

16. It has been suggested to me that the religious press might have played at least as great a role in promoting Thanksgiving as did the popular "secular" periodicals treated here. My sense is that although the aggregate circulation of denominational and religious publications might have rivaled that of the "secular" periodicals I discuss here, the reach of any single religious magazine fell far short of a *Godey's* or a *Ladies' Home Journal*. In addition, it seems that these religious periodicals were largely concerned with intradenominational matters—polity, theology, missions—and that before the Civil War, if attention fell on extraecclesial subjects, such attention focused on the question of slavery. See John Tebbel and Mary Ellen Zuckerman, *The Magazine in America, 1741–1990* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 86. Also Frank Luther Mott, *A History of American Magazines* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1938), 2: 60–78; and 3: 63–89.

reading. Feasting played little, if any, role in Pilgrim thanksgiving, with its "minimal concession to the needs of the body."<sup>17</sup> The familiar "stuff" of Thanksgiving celebrations accumulated during the nineteenth century. Yet, as important as the food and decorations were to Hale and her audience, Thanksgiving's real significance ran beyond those things. Like their seventeenth-century forebears, magazine proponents of the national celebration held a kind of covenant in view: they promoted the idea that the U.S. had indeed been chosen by God to accomplish the holy work of republic building.

The key difference between Pilgrim thanksgiving and nineteenth-century Thanksgiving may be found, therefore, in the realm of attitude: Pilgrims mindful of their bond with God approached celebrations of fasting and thanksgiving with "contrition and humiliation."<sup>18</sup> Temptations pulled urgently at the fabric of covenant. Repentance, "turning," characterized the Pilgrim thanksgiver's posture. Nineteenth-century Thanksgiving demanded a turning, too—but rather than a turn toward heavenly home, this new Thanksgiving required that the notes of earthly home—family, nation—sound more clearly above the rest. Where the Pilgrim assumed, even in the breach, the existence of an ancient covenantal relationship, the nineteenth-century practitioners of Thanksgiving offered instruction about a new national covenant. Seventeenth-century thanksgiving aimed to bring the unavoidably sinful human heart from the margins of faithful life back into the covenant fold. In the nineteenth century, Thanksgiving meant to bring perceived threatening elements on the margins—Catholic and Jewish immigrants, black and white Southerners, urban laboring masses—into the national fold. Where the Pilgrim soul sought God, the nineteenth-century Pilgrim heirs sought a certain kind of Americanness.

The Pilgrims beheld both the kindness and the severity of God.<sup>19</sup> They took seriously God's providential attentions, merciful and chastening. By contrast, the Thanksgiving holiday of the nineteenth-century republic arose from a worldview colored by modernizing mobility—geographic, economic, demographic. In taking the measure of this mobility, I will focus on the indispensable cultural formation performed by magazine columns and stories written out of this latter mindset. David D. Hall has suggested that in seventeenth-century New England, "learning how to read and becoming 'religious' were

perceived as one and the same thing."<sup>20</sup> Perhaps in the nineteenth century, reading these magazines and becoming a nineteenth-century American were one and the same thing.

Indeed, another way of gauging the contrasts between seventeenth- and nineteenth-century thanksgivings is to compare the reading habits of the two cultures—the "intensive" approach of early settlers, the "extensive" style of readers in the nineteenth century.<sup>21</sup> What was read, and how, proves symptomatic of the worldviews in play. Seventeenth-century reading, what Hall calls "traditional literacy," bore the contours of its religious context, the relative scarcity of printed material, and the repeated reading and memorization of texts.<sup>22</sup> Most readers in colonial New England owned or had access to a limited number and sort of books: the Bible, a psalmbook, a catechism, perhaps an almanac, and a reading primer that also inculcated Christian doctrine and morality.<sup>23</sup> Colonial New England readers were expected to own and use their Bibles, reading "deliberately" and with "reverence."<sup>24</sup> The colonial reader did have access to other, more "popular" literature, according to Hall, but it too covered much the same godly territory and was to be read in the same intensive manner as the aforementioned texts.<sup>25</sup>

Traditional literacy faded by 1830,<sup>26</sup> as the social relations it upheld—the local, homogeneous covenanted religious community—receded, and an increasingly diverse nation, under a secular Constitution, took its place.<sup>27</sup> The increase in the availability of inexpensive print in the nineteenth century made repeated reading of the same texts seem old-timey. Novelty and the taste for it reinforced one another and in part contributed to the popularity of the magazines discussed below.<sup>28</sup> If colonial literature accomplished inculcation by

20. David D. Hall, *Worlds of Wonder, Days of Judgment: Popular Religious Belief in Early New England* (New York: Knopf, 1989), 18.

21. Richard D. Brown, "Afterword: From Cohesion to Competition," in *Printing and Society in Early America*, ed. William L. Joyce and others (Worcester, Mass.: American Antiquarian Society, 1983), 302; Brown is summarizing ideas in an article in the same volume by David D. Hall, "The Uses of Literacy in New England, 1600–1850." On a nineteenth-century version of intensive reading, see Christopher P. Wilson, "The Rhetoric of Consumption: Mass-Market Magazines and the Demise of the Gentle Reader, 1880–1920," in *The Culture of Consumption: Critical Essays in American History, 1880–1980*, ed. Richard Wightman Fox and T. J. Jackson Lears (New York: Pantheon, 1983).

22. Hall, "Uses of Literacy," 23.

23. *Ibid.*, 24.

24. *Ibid.*, 26, 21.

25. *Ibid.*, 30, 31, 32, 34–36.

26. *Ibid.*, 23, 42–43.

27. William L. Joyce and John B. Hench, "Preface," in *Printing and Society in Early America*, ed. Joyce and others.

28. Hall, "Uses of Literacy," 44.

17. Horton Davies quoted in Hambrick-Stowe, *Practice of Piety*, 100.

18. *Ibid.*, 132.

19. Cf. Rom. 11:22.

repeated reading of a limited selection of texts, then nineteenth-century literature about Thanksgiving accomplished its goals by constant inundation. Each November, magazines' different stories and features hammered home the same message.

Sarah Hale, longtime editor of *Godey's*, did her part for inundation by propounding Thanksgiving's celebration most fervently of all. She wrote passionately about the occasion in every November issue and badgered national leaders to add it to the calendar of national celebration until Abraham Lincoln finally issued the first nationwide declaration of Thanksgiving in 1863. Hale's desire to see Thanksgiving declared a regular national festival overtook her anew each fall, and she urged her readers to join her lobbying effort.<sup>29</sup>

*Godey's*, and through it Hale, dominated the American periodical landscape during the nineteenth century, from 1827 when she took over as the magazine's editor until her retirement in 1877.<sup>30</sup> For this project, I surveyed November *Godey's* from Hale's arrival through the end of the century, as well as November issues of *The Ladies' Home Journal and Practical Housekeeper* (the successor in popularity to *Godey's*) and other Gilded Age periodicals.<sup>31</sup> My conclusions rest on a

29. For more on Hale, see Patricia Okker, *Our Sister Editors: Sarah J. Hale and the Tradition of Nineteenth-Century American Women Editors* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1995). Ann Douglas, *The Feminization of American Culture* (New York: Anchor, 1988), 44–79, gives a less sympathetic view of Hale and other women sentimental authors.

30. Mott, *History of American Magazines*, 1: 581; 2: 539. *Godey's* had reached an unprecedented circulation of 150,000 by 1860 but faded from then until its demise in 1898. *Ladies' Home Journal* grew to 440,000 in circulation by 1889 and approached one million by the turn of the century.

31. *Ibid.*, 3: 6, qualifies the accuracy of circulation figures for publications from the era before circulation audits. He explains that publishers carefully guarded and even fudged their figures for the sake of boosting advertising revenue. Nevertheless, he estimates circulation for most of the nine publications I examined for this essay. He does not mention *Chambers's Journal* in any volume of his history. *The Chautauquan*, published from 1880 until 1914 for men and women enrolled in the Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle, enjoyed "wide circulation" by 1885, when more than 20,000 people each year enrolled in the CLSC (3: 173, 544). *The Cosmopolitan* began publication in 1886; between 1892 and 1898, its circulation grew from 100,000 to 300,000 (4: 480 n. 1, 484). *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, which originated in 1850, had more than 100,000 subscribers during the 1870s and reigned as one of the "leaders in the field of national illustrated monthlies" during the period of 1885–1905 (2: 383 n. 1; 3: 6; 4: 43). Mott gives no specific figures about *Littell's Living Age* but notes that the years 1865 until 1885 were the magazine's best (3: 256). Mott is silent also on figures for the *Magazine of American History*, published from 1877–1917, but suggests that the numbers were impressive when he observes that Martha J. Lamb bought the magazine in 1883 and "made it a paying venture for the ensuing ten years" (3: 260). The more specialized sporting magazine *Outing*, which ran from 1882 until 1923, built a circulation of around 20,000 subscribers by 1886, around 90,000 a decade later, and a little more than 100,000 during the period 1905–10. My thanks to Gina Petrie, E. H. Little Library, Davidson College, for her assistance with circulation figures.

collection of 73 stories and columns from these magazines, dating from 1849 to 1903, although mostly from the 1870s, 1880s, and 1890s.

Giving thanks for yet another providential moment became, in the pages of the nineteenth century's popular magazines, an occasion to celebrate the republican traditions of rural domestic life—concepts that related more to perceived stresses of the nineteenth century than to the realities of seventeenth-century Massachusetts life. If the nineteenth century in the U.S. was a time for growth, *Godey's* and *Ladies' Home Journal* stepped in to help manage that growth. Hale, *Godey's*, and their heirs constructed Thanksgiving as a particularly American event that crystallized certain ideals of American virtue, an event that could also function in the memory both to restrain and comfort a modernizing nation. Hale and *Godey's* led the way in creating a standardized celebration, which in turn hoped to set the boundaries of a standardized celebrant, a standardized and true American.

## II. DOMESTIC DESTINY

Hale repeatedly asserted that Thanksgiving was a uniquely American domestic festival, without real precedent in the Old World. Unlike some other magazines of the period, neither *Godey's* before Hale's retirement nor *Ladies' Home Journal* focused on the historical or religious origins of thanksgiving celebrations,<sup>32</sup> even though, as Charles Hambrick-Stowe points out, Pilgrim settlers thankful for the harvest "connected the autumn thanksgiving . . . with the Old Testament Feast of Tabernacles" and other biblical references to the harvest.<sup>33</sup> For Hale, Thanksgiving began with the Pilgrim Fathers on American soil. As she wrote in November of 1865, "To the Eastern colonies we must look for the beginning of this custom. The Pilgrim Fathers incorporated a yearly thanksgiving day among the moral influences they sent over the New World."<sup>34</sup> This sense of Thanksgiving's American origins, however forced, mattered greatly to Hale as she tried to define her country's place in history, clarify its identity over against that of the world community, and establish as its prevailing ethos white Protestant culture of the Northeast (see part 3 below).

32. On the shift in late-nineteenth-century myths of Thanksgiving's origins, see Siskind, "Invention of Thanksgiving," 181–85. "Editor's Table," *Godey's Lady's Book*, November 1897, 559–60, gave a historical, pre-U.S. picture of thanksgiving traditions.

33. Hambrick-Stowe, *Practice of Piety*, 102, citing Luke 10:2, Rev. 14:15–16, and Rom. 8:23.

34. Sarah Hale, "Editor's Table: Our National Thanksgiving Day, the pledge of American Union forever," *Godey's Lady's Book*, November 1865, 445. She repeated this debt to the Pilgrim Fathers in "Editor's Table" columns from November, 1865, 1870, and 1873.

Before coming to *Godey's*, Hale had dramatized American identity in a novel, *Northwood*, reissued in 1852 as an anti-abolitionist response to Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. In a preface added to that edition, Hale, a New Hampshire native, wrote that she revered the Yankee for "holding talents and learning in higher estimation" than those Old World markers of "wealth or rank."<sup>35</sup>

The celebration of a true New England Thanksgiving mediated American distinctiveness. Using detail that would reappear through decades of November *Godey's* and its successors in the popular market, Hale devoted two chapters of *Northwood* to the portrayal of a New Hampshire family's Thanksgiving. Mr. Frankford, a British friend of main character Sidney Romilly, represented world-as-witness in *Northwood*. Hale drew him as priggish and chauvinistic, determined to be unimpressed by the backwoods Romilly family and their rustic feast. But through his testimony to the spiritual and cultural worth of the celebration, Hale showed Thanksgiving as a worthy embodiment of the Pilgrim-American character. We shall see in a moment how American characters in magazine fiction *converted* to this belief, but in Frankford, we witness the impression Thanksgiving could make on a "foreigner."

Frankford was not transformed into an American Thanksgiver, for much of his British pride remained intact. His approval nevertheless stamped the celebration, and the life within which it stood, with a certain legitimacy, even superiority. The Thanksgiving morning worship impressed him. He acknowledged the service "as an *original* exhibition of piety, patriotism, and eloquence" (emphasis added). Frankford also noted Squire Romilly's Thanksgiving blessing, which had shunned "shallow recitation." Significantly, Frankford alone witnessed Romilly's sincerity: "the tear which fell slowly down [Squire Romilly's] cheek was unnoted by all save Frankford; the others were endeavoring to repress or conceal their own emotion." This sincerity, and the free fellowship of the table, "left on the heart of the foreigner a lasting impression of felicity, while the recollection of many a splendid *fete* in gorgeous halls had passed away."<sup>36</sup> The peculiar moral power of this American custom had succeeded in persuading its reluctant witness of the country's great strengths.

What was this "moral power"? For Hale, this festival represented something other than it had to William Bradford, ever mindful of

35. Sarah Hale, *Northwood; or, Life North and South: Showing the True Character of Both*, 2nd ed. (New York: H. Long and Brother, 1852), iv. William R. Taylor, *Cavalier and Yankee: The Old South and American National Character*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1979), 138–39.

36. Hale, *Northwood*, 83, 86, 92, 91.

covenanted dependence on God's particular attentions and demands. Thanksgiving for Hale signified one's active participation in the fulfillment of America's destiny as the greatest of all nations. The experience of a unified celebration, and the acknowledgement that such unity demanded from other nations, would demonstrate *and* effect America's ascension to that rank.

Hale reported annually in *Godey's* on the growing numbers celebrating Thanksgiving in ever wider reaches: in the 1859 celebration, thirty states participated, including twelve Southern states, plus two territories and the District of Columbia. Repeatedly in the early 1870s, she projected that 40 million people "in 45 states and territories, stretching from the Atlantic to the Pacific" would celebrate the national day.<sup>37</sup> The celebration grew not only on this continent, but also on others, where American missionaries, soldiers, and statesmen overseas kept the feast.<sup>38</sup> This fact held particular importance for Hale, who kept the image of *Northwood's* Frankford ever in her mind. Surely as Americans throughout the world drew together in this American celebration, they realized and dwelt on the value of Pilgrim virtues—for Hale, faith and a sense of destiny. Other countries, full of Frankfords, would have to reckon with such a show of unity.<sup>39</sup> Hale called the celebration the "best exponent which American residents in foreign lands can give the native population of the prosperity and happiness of the American people."<sup>40</sup> Thanksgiving expressed, for celebrants and witnesses alike, true American identity.

Hale claimed that in addition to displaying, for Americans and others, the character of the republic, the inclusion of Thanksgiving among the nation's festivals would bring a sense of completion and balance to the national calendar. The two already established national celebrations, Washington's birthday and the Fourth of July, bore with them "the sounds of war" and came either during the bitter cold of winter or the scorching heat of summer. The "glorious autumn of the year, when blessings are gathered in, has no day of remembrance for her gifts of peace."<sup>41</sup> Late November weather in both North and South, she also noted, proved temperate enough for all celebrants' comfort.<sup>42</sup>

37. On her estimates of the spread of Thanksgiving celebrations, see Sarah Hale, "Editor's Table," *Godey's Lady's Book and Magazine*, November 1864, 440; *ibid.*, November 1870, 470; she cited the exact same figures in November 1872 (462) and 1874 (472).

38. *Ibid.*, November 1865, 445.

39. *Ibid.*, November 1864, 440.

40. *Ibid.*, November 1867, 447.

41. *Ibid.*, November 1876, 473.

42. *Ibid.*, November 1870, 470.

In addition, Thanksgiving would give the American story its hermeneutical key: "*Washington's birthday* represents the influence of a perfect patriotism which won our *Independence Day*, under the blessing of Almighty God, in whose name we celebrate our Thanksgiving Day. In the light of these three ideas American history must be read, if we would rightly understand the moral power it now wields over the destiny of humanity."<sup>43</sup> The celebration of Thanksgiving—and later in Hale's campaign, the officialization of its celebration by Congress<sup>44</sup>—was needed, in her words, "adequately to express the worth of the two [other holidays] we now enjoy."<sup>45</sup> Thanksgiving provided the occasion to recognize the divine power that had tended and blessed the Revolutionaries' efforts.

Thanksgiving, then, functioned on the world stage to identify the U.S. to other nations and on the national stage to sharpen the country's sense of itself. But this "domestic festival" mattered also in the smallest venue, in each household. Thanksgiving reinforced the order of American home life even as it ordered national identity. In an 1876 editorial, Hale asked, "Should not the women of America have one festival in whose rejoicings they can fully participate?"<sup>46</sup>—obliquely acknowledging that the other national celebrations restricted women's involvement or held limited interest for them. She was not interested in expanding those other celebrations, however. As a champion of "woman's sphere," Hale valued the American mother's home-centered role as gatekeeper to national virtue and destiny.<sup>47</sup> The *Godey's* editor meant, therefore, for the American homemaker to manage Thanksgiving. Women's leadership on this most American of days was essential—practically and ideologically—and *Godey's* and other women's magazines taught their readers how to prepare the feast and summon the far-flung family together to eat it. Of course, from our vantage point, Hale seems to have merely baptized women's regular work as some high-flown national duty. Wives and mothers were not, after all, advised to spend the day in leisurely contemplation, and husbands, while enjoined to virtue, were not instructed to

43. *Ibid.*

44. *Ibid.*, November, 1871, 471, for a typical appeal that Thanksgiving be "assured to us by law." Hale made similar public requests every year until her retirement in 1877.

45. Sarah Hale, "Editor's Table," *Godey's Lady's Book and Magazine*, November 1873, 471.

46. *Ibid.*, November 1876, 473.

47. The classic statements of "woman's sphere" ideology can be found in Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood," *American Quarterly* 18 (1966): 151–74; Nancy F. Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood: "Woman's Sphere" in New England, 1780–1835* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1977); and more recently, Colleen McDannell, *The Christian Home in Victorian America, 1840–1900*, Religion in North America (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), especially 1–19, 77–107, and 127–49.

put on aprons. Hale did not seek to make Thanksgiving a day that would turn the world of "separate spheres" upside down. She argued, for instance, that Thursday was the "most convenient day of the week" for the celebration not because it continued the Puritan tradition of lecture day but because a woman's preparation of a bountiful feast would not delay her preparation of Sunday's dinner.<sup>48</sup>

In the columns and fiction of these magazines, this domestic ordering moved into the foreground. Story lines that included Thanksgiving hewed to the pattern of the sentimental genre: The plots usually centered on the ingénue or the old maid haunted by a lost relation, lost love, or lost fortune. She recovered one or all, as reward for superior virtue, at the story's conclusion.<sup>49</sup> Generic as they were, these stories cannot be dismissed. They were produced during a time when the celebration of Thanksgiving was a less than settled custom for many Americans. By showing characters who took the festival and its attendant practices for granted, these stories performed the task of helping settle it.

While stories presented scenarios that assumed Thanksgiving's celebration, columns featuring recipes and advice on decorating and dress gave women readers direction on how they could engineer their own feasts and thereby establish their own outposts of American virtue. Both *Godey's* and *Ladies' Home Journal* offered detailed instruction on an authentic domestic commemoration of a true Pilgrim Thanksgiving. The bias for a celebration on the old home place ran through stories and advice columns alike. The city was suspect: Even these two Philadelphia magazines portrayed cities as "hot-beds for all that was evil," devoid of grace and cordiality, which "grew as rural boughs exclusive."<sup>50</sup> Despite rapid growth of certain cities by 1860, 80 percent of America's population still lived on farms or in towns of fewer than 2,500 people. At the same time, 50 percent of the population in the more developed northeastern states was concentrated in their cities. With the increasing ease of travel by rail,<sup>51</sup> a return home

48. "Editor's Table," *Godey's Lady's Book and Magazine*, November 1872. See Hambrick-Stowe, *Practice of Piety*, 99, 100, on "lecture days."

49. On the shape of a typical nineteenth-century sentimental story line, see Nina Baym, *Woman's Fiction: A Guide to Novels by and about Women in America, 1820–1870* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1978); Frank Luther Mott, *Golden Multitudes: The Story of Best Sellers in the United States* (New York: MacMillan, 1947); and Herbert Ross Brown, *The Sentimental Novel in America, 1789–1860* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1940), bk. 2, chap. 2, "Ten Thousand and One Nights in a Barroom," 203; *passim*.

50. Susan Coolidge, "Thanksgiving Surprise," *Ladies Home Journal*, November 1890, 3.

51. Bernard Bailyn and others, *The Great Republic: A History of the American People* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1977), 435, 452.

from the city became less of a trial and more of an expected part of holiday festivals.

In addition to advice on where to serve the feast, of course, Hale and her successors advised on what to serve. Recipes abounded, which, "if carefully carried out," would "insure a perfect dinner."<sup>52</sup> The successful Thanksgiving meal stood as tribute to the "artistry" of the housewife, who "would probably have the power to serve a lovely dinner, even in the midst of a forest."<sup>53</sup> Oysters, soups, turkey, ham, roast beef, chicken pie, rice, potatoes, cranberries, macaroni, numerous pies and cakes, fruit, and coffee were among the suggested offerings from *Godey's* and *Ladies' Home Journal* through the 1870s and 1880s. The Thanksgiving turkey—and the hunt for it, a country custom for the men in the family—also became the subject for picture and prose.<sup>54</sup>

We have noted Hale's vision of the U.S. as a Christian nation, seen from around the world gathered into houses of worship, displaying to other nations its awareness of the republic's special relationship with God. In the magazines' fiction, the characters attended services before sitting down to the groaning board.<sup>55</sup> Stories, poems, and editorial columns also described a kind of "Thanksgiving spirit" of charity and generosity: "Ah the poor and sick and sorrowing! To our glad hearts be it known, / That God never gave a blessing to be clenched and held alone."<sup>56</sup> Gratitude to a benevolent God showed itself in sharing with others. The spirit of Thanksgiving flowed out beyond the bounds of family to "the poor, the suffering, and the helpless."<sup>57</sup> Hale wrote in 1864, "Let us each see to it that on *this one day* there shall be no family or individual, within the compass of our means to help, who shall not have some portion prepared, and some reason to join in the general Thanksgiving."<sup>58</sup> Acts of Thanksgiving hospitality built virtue in the

52. Anna Alexander Cameron, "Some Thanksgiving Dishes for Harvest Tables, from Maine to Texas," *Ladies' Home Journal*, November 1890, 21.

53. Mrs. S. T. Rorer, "A Thanksgiving Dinner," *Ladies' Home Journal*, November 1890, 20.

54. "Shooting the Thanksgiving Turkey," *Godey's Lady's Book and Magazine*, November 1879, 1 (illustration); W. H. Armstrong, "A Thanksgiving Shooting Trip," *Outing*, November 1898, 121–22; Florence B. Hallowell, "Linda's Responsibility," *Ladies' Home Journal and Practical Housekeeper*, November 1889, 6.

55. For example, S. G. B., "Thanksgiving," *Godey's Lady's Book and Magazine*, November 1863, 429–32; S. Annie Frost, "Effie's Thanksgiving," *Godey's Lady's Book and Magazine*, November 1871, 428–32; and Augusta de Bubna, "Number Seventy-nine: A Thanksgiving Romance," *Godey's Lady's Book and Magazine*, November 1878, 389–91.

56. Will Carleton, "The Grand Old Day," *Ladies' Home Journal and Practical Housekeeper*, November 1888, 1.

57. Sarah Hale, "Editor's Table," *Godey's Lady's Book and Magazine*, November 1876, 473.

58. *Ibid.*, November 1864, 440. For fiction highlighting Thanksgiving charity, see Brander Matthews, "A Thanksgiving Dinner," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, December 1893, 28–34; Laura Spencer Portor, "The Yielding of Hezekiah Craddock: A Thanksgiving

household, virtue that in turn strengthened the bonds of local and national community.

Such were the prescribed practices and procedures of Thanksgiving Day. The holiday dominated Hale's career and thought, crowning and completing her vision of the American way of life. Those within and outside U.S. borders would gain a sense of the nation's unique virtues and destiny. The domestic mechanics of Thanksgiving, properly observed, guaranteed domestic strength in all its senses.

### III. COUNTRY CONVERSION: THANKSGIVING AS A WAY OF LIFE

Seventeenth-century thanksgiving expressed the Pilgrim way of life by refocusing celebrants' eyes on the mercies of covenant. Nineteenth-century Thanksgiving, in the magazines that featured it, *became* a way of life that symbolized the power and rightness of white Protestant culture—read as hard working, rational, circumspect, upright. Its celebration hoped to head off that culture's erosion by urban-identified prosperity and leisure, and/or its dilution by "outsiders," especially Jewish and Roman Catholic immigrants and freed blacks. These groups were variously seen as lazy, ignorant and superstitious, crafty but subject to manipulation, and unprepared or temperamentally unsuited for civic life in a democracy. For Hale and other authors, worry about the future integrity of white Protestant culture contributed to the imagined shape of Thanksgiving's Pilgrim origins, and to the recommended shape of its contemporary practice. This concern appeared most clearly in stories about "conversions" to a Thanksgiving way of life characterized by simplicity, humility, and honesty, all lived most fully in a community bound tight by love of country and rightly ordered family ties (that is, where women exerted subtle "influence" but men exerted authority).

The story "Rosa's Thanksgiving at Brookhaven" presented just such a conversion from high-style, urban self-absorption to concern for family, charity, and patriotism. Rosa Tyler, a giddy debutante just graduated from "a fashionable boarding-school," traveled from her city home to the little town of Brookhaven to spend Thanksgiving with her wealthy but plain-living Aunt Sarah Chase (suggesting, perhaps, chaste?). During her time in the country, Rosa's thoughts began to turn away from frivolity and gaiety toward "her own inner self, her life, her future . . . the good of others, benevolence, piety, and gentle ministering" to the needy. She developed "a love of solid literature, an interest in the country, utterly devoid of mere political

Story," *Godey's Magazine*, November 1897, 451–61; Letitia Virginia Douglas, "Carlo's Thanksgiving," *Godey's Lady's Book*, November 1890, 417–18.

speculation, and a sincere pleasure in all the beauties of Nature." Having never "kept Thanksgiving before," Rosa suddenly recognized, among family and sincere friends, her many blessings. And on Thanksgiving evening, alone in her room, "the words of thankfulness rose to her heart, and from its pure, sincere recesses she whispered her first thanksgiving."<sup>59</sup> That moment of private "celebration" signaled Rosa's entrance into true American virtue, domestic and pious, unconcerned with fashion.<sup>60</sup>

The characters in most of the stories surveyed for this study were white and presumably Protestant—from Pilgrim stock and so particularly susceptible, perhaps, to the appeal of Thanksgiving celebrations. But some stories featured "outsiders" who nevertheless witnessed to the moral power of Thanksgiving. Such stories expressed to readers the strong hopes nurtured by Thanksgiving's proponents that the holiday would "convert" outsiders by replacing old customs with the practices and virtues of Thanksgiving.

In a *Harper's* story from 1895, for instance, the Sedley sisters lived very Catholic, very Southern, very traditional lives in Washington, D.C. By chance, they met Miss Celeste Dreer, whom the sisters found charming but too modern. The young woman proceeded to show the two sisters that in condemning modern life as "allied to the powers of evil," they have lived "an unnatural life." At the conclusion of the story, the characters shared a Thanksgiving breakfast—"a festival," one sister chirped, "not especially . . . of our Church, . . . not a festival of our part of the country, at least it used not to be." She gave thanks "for the goodness which, against our will, has taken us out of the clefts of the rock and into the living currents by overturning our prejudices and enlightening our ignorance."<sup>61</sup> The Sedleys ran against the Thanksgiving ideal in their regional and religious loyalties. Here, Thanksgiving overpowered even the Catholic Church—a reassuring finding if one worried, as many Protestant Americans did, about Catholicism's designs on American democracy and culture.<sup>62</sup> The

story's author, Harriett Prescott Spofford, seemed not to acknowledge the irony of replacing certain regionalisms with another, but this silence shows that she felt her originally regional festival was indeed "right" for everyone.

Another story, from the 1897 *Chautauquan*, tested readers' expectations about the reach of Thanksgiving's powers to convert. The story, "Thanksgiving on Herring Hill," featured black servants left behind in town while the employers celebrated Thanksgiving at the Old Homestead. Aunt Susan fashioned a Thanksgiving celebration from whatever could be begged, borrowed, or stolen from employers or neighbors. Dressed in one of her mistress's fine silk gowns, she prepared to escort her guests into the feast when her last invitee, Elder Jones of the Ebenezer Church, arrived. Mortified, the elder demanded that those present—who called themselves "members in good standing"—return what they had stolen. They would then be welcome, he said, to share in his own simple Thanksgiving feast. Only a "slim and subdued little party" joined him, but he refused to be discouraged, saying that "in all dese times of 'citement yer mus' spec' dar'll be some chaff in wid de wheat . . . an' dis night we kin hol' Thanksgibin' ober de fac' dat we is got a leetle measure of de good grain anyhow!"<sup>63</sup>

The message from Herring Hill was clear: True Thanksgiving depended not upon victuals or costume. Those things mattered, as evidenced by the wealth of advice offered on those topics in every November issue. Yet only purity of heart could ensure an authentic feast. This story and others privileged loyalty, simplicity, and honesty. In this context, however, the featured characters represented a population of concern to many prosperous white readers. The story suggests that such readers had every right to make unilateral discriminations favoring their own desires, dismissing others'. The story could justify limiting (particularly black) mass access to leisure time and consumer goods, revealing Thanksgiving virtue's potential as an instrument of social control.

A long list of virtues described the life of a Thanksgiver: unselfish and mature love; benevolence; piety; devotion to knowledge, country, nature, and family; humility; thrift and hard work; simplicity; honesty; engagement in the world beyond certain limiting regional and religious loyalties; contentment with one's place. These stories dis-

59. S. Annie Frost, "Rosa's Thanksgiving at Brookhaven," *Godey's Lady's Book and Magazine*, November 1868, 417–50; quotations from 418, 420, 421. See also a similar but later conversionary tale: Olivia Lovell Wilson, "The Tola of Mustard-Seed: A Thanksgiving Tale," *Godey's Lady's Book*, November 1891, 367–75.

60. On wealth, envy, and the dangers of both vices, see a story by M. D. Sterling, "Myrtle's Thanksgiving," *Godey's Lady's Book*, November 1891, 408–11. Family ties work miraculous transformations in other stories; for example, George I. Putnam, "New England's Children: A Thanksgiving Story," *Godey's Lady's Book*, November 1893, 605–11.

61. Harriett Prescott Spofford, "A Thanksgiving Breakfast," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, November 1895, 923–33, quotations from 924, 932, 933.

62. Robert T. Handy, *A Christian America: Protestant Hopes and Historical Realities*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), esp. 64–69; and R. Laurence Moore, *Reli-*

*gious Outsiders and the Making of Americans* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), chap. 2. In the Presbyterian Church's mission magazine, an article contemporary to the Spofford story bears witness to these Protestant worries: "New England, Roman Catholic," *The Church at Home and Abroad* (March 1893): 202–3.

63. Julia M. Tenney, "Thanksgiving on Herring Hill," *The Chautauquan*, November 1897, 193–201; quotations from 200, 201.



played and recommended a transition to these habits of character. Thanksgiving was not limited to one day a year, but formed one's everyday life. Governor Bradford told no such stories of conversion, detailed no such elaborate preparations. He simply enumerated the blessings and let the chips fall where they would. Of course, as we have said, he thought he knew where those chips would fall. He thought his readers would know, too. But in the nineteenth-century United States, the chips had scattered. These Thanksgiving virtues aimed to gather them back in by fitting the stories' readers for this kind of nation.

#### IV. THE MOVABLE FEAST: THANKSGIVING AS MEMORY

It may seem strange that, at the very time when greater mobility and prosperity became possible for many Americans, *Godey's* and other magazines recommended virtues perhaps more suited to less urban, less market-driven times. In fact, the Thanksgiving way of life became, for many, a more urgent need—a brake to keep the alloyed good of "progress" from spinning out of control. An internalized Thanksgiving—"stamped," as Hale wrote in 1875, "into the mind and heart of this living generation"<sup>64</sup>—resulted from the kinds of conversions described in the stories discussed above. As this festival united U.S. citizens, set them apart from the rest of the world and fit them for a certain way of life, it also knit itself into their memories and tempered their behavior. Thanksgiving encouraged submission, not to a sovereign providence, but to the project of the nation. The holiday's partisans hoped to make Thanksgiving both permanent and portable, inseparable from its celebrants no matter where they found themselves, geographically, socially, or economically. In "A Song of the Thankful Time" (1890), the poet carried the Thanksgiving spirit through the seasons: "We think of Thanksgiving at seeding time . . . growing time . . . harvest time . . . resting time."<sup>65</sup> A country newly on the move and newly focused on "the market" demanded a national festival that could move as well.

Separation as plot device played a stock role in nineteenth-century sentimental fiction. Fate, chance, and fortune brought lost loves back, unknown relatives home, missed opportunities around again. But just as easily, fate intervened and separated the young man from his family, the young woman from her love, the heir from the fortune. This kind of separation through death or misfortune was, of course,

64. Sarah Hale, "Editor's Table," *Godey's Lady's Book and Magazine*, November 1875, 474.

65. Rose Hartwicke Thorpe, "A Song of the Thankful Time," *Ladies' Home Journal and Practical Housekeeper*, November 1890, 1.

nothing unique to the U.S. in the nineteenth century. Magazine editors with at least one eye on the profit margin merely exploited a common human anxiety about loss. They played on the heartstrings in order to loosen the purse strings.

New to the nineteenth century, however, was the greater mobility of the American public. The westward spread of the population encouraged the expansion of rail networks. It became easier for people to maintain family relationships from a distance, traveling home on holidays. In her 1886 reminiscence of childhood Thanksgivings, Martha J. Lamb noted that in 1858 an estimated ten thousand people from New York City alone traveled to New England for Thanksgiving.<sup>66</sup>

When such travel home was not possible, however, memories became the means by which Thanksgiving virtues—simplicity, piety, patriotism, hard work—could be reinforced. "Heart pictures" of past home Thanksgivings, "which remain vivid for long after the day has passed," tided the solitary soul over until the next possible reunion.<sup>67</sup> "Perhaps this day in years to come/May find their wanderers far from home/And with joy-haunting memories cheer/The shadows of that changeful year."<sup>68</sup> These memories cast off the despair and temptations that threatened in the face of life's "ills untold."<sup>69</sup>

Of greater importance perhaps than increased mobility and distance was a shift in the character of life in the U.S., in which this mobility played an important part. A burgeoning capitalism gave birth to a new kind of providence: the "invisible hand" of market capitalism. In such an economic structure, one might believe that only lack of determination and hard work could stand in the way of success. The marketplace's mythology equated virtue with seeking one's own advantage.<sup>70</sup> No matter, therefore, if one's personal advantage wreaked havoc on another poor soul's life. For many in nineteenth-century America, "the common pursuit" meant "every man for himself."

The memory of past Thanksgivings, then, crystallized in these magazine columns and poems, attempted to achieve at least two

66. Martha J. Lamb, "One New England Thanksgiving," *Magazine of American History*, December 1886, 505-15.

67. J. H. Haulenbeek, "Our Arm-Chair," *Godey's Lady's Book*, November 1883, 484.

68. "Thanksgiving in the Olden Time," *Ladies' Home Journal*, November 1884, 1.

69. Maria Clark, "Thanksgiving Offering," *Godey's Lady's Book*, November 1849, 312.

70. Bailyn and others, *Great Republic*, 425, 429 (on "invisible hand"), and 431. See Lamb, "One New England Thanksgiving," 514; her childhood Thanksgiving remembrance includes the recounting of her aged host's "mental nourishment and encouragement" to his young guests: "he taught us other things worth knowing, as, for instance, that man is equal to his aspirations and can obtain whatever he labors for."

results with respect to the nation's new-style economy: to rein in the killer instincts of new capitalists and also to reintegrate those cast down by the market back into national life. Conversions to Thanksgiving virtue did not necessarily guarantee material prosperity, and so compensation through memory making filled the gaps. "Memories of a past Thanksgiving" possessed the power to carry the downtrodden "from the cradle to the grave" so that even through the "hardships of life . . . the whole struggle and mystery of . . . life" seemed meaningful, as if "adjusted for your welfare here and hereafter."<sup>71</sup> Sarah Hale wrote of the "pure presence," the "holy spirit of Thanksgiving Day" that "glide[d] noiselessly in" to the lonely or grieving to "[shed] a golden glory around."<sup>72</sup> Memories of "Mother's pumpkin pies" and "the real old-time dinner of . . . childhood," along with fond thoughts of games and pageants, were not the stuff of despair or revolution.<sup>73</sup> Here, remembrance soothed, softened, gladdened.

The values shown so favorably in the stories of conversion were part and parcel of Thanksgiving memory, the movable feast of sweet remembrance for those riding the industrializing, modernizing tide, and for those swallowed up in it. The accelerating nation increasingly devoted its energies to the individual's acquisition of wealth. In doing so, some began to look an awful lot like the materialistic Rosa before her Brookhaven conversion. All the more reason for the national celebration of simplicity and honesty to have continued as a regulatory reminder to all Americans of what the country was determined to stand for, often in spite of itself.<sup>74</sup> What made the United States run in the nineteenth century worked against the very celebration of its own national festival, thereby necessitating this transformation—"memorization"—of celebration into sometimes hortatory, sometimes pacifying images. One's conversion to Thanksgiving marked the initiation into this kind of remembering, and it marked the entry of the Thanksgiver into American life, reversible only at what the magazines saw as the greatest cost. One could not deny Thanksgiving without backslid-

71. Rev. T. DeWitt Talmage, D.D., "Under My Study Lamp," *Ladies' Home Journal and Practical Housekeeper*, November 1890, 13.

72. Sarah Hale, "Thanksgiving Day," *Godey's Lady's Book and Magazine*, November 1872, 419.

73. Catherine Owen, "Thanksgiving Dinner, and how to cook it," *The Cosmopolitan*, September 1886, 193; Margaret E. Sangster, "Thanksgivin' Pumpkin Pies," *Ladies' Home Journal and Practical Housekeeper*, November 1889, 7; William D. Kelly, "The Twilight of Thanksgiving," *Ladies' Home Journal and Practical Housekeeper*, November 1890, 4; and Anna Whittier Wendell, "Thanksgiving at Uncle Gideon's," *Godey's Lady's Book*, November 1890, 402-9.

74. My thinking here is informed by Joel Kovel, *White Racism: A Psychohistory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984).

ing into unregenerate and antiquated regionalism. Even ruthless speculation might be preferred to that. To be an American meant to accept its terms, and if the memory of Thanksgivings past was all one could afford, that was to be a gracious plenty.

#### V. PILGRIMS AGAINST PROGRESS

Charles Ledyard Norton, in his study of "Thanksgiving Day, Past and Present," wrote: "Thanksgiving is with us, and is destined to remain, subject to such changes as the inexorable progress of events may necessitate."<sup>75</sup> For him, the holiday seemed an empty vessel, filled in one way by the Pilgrim Fathers, another way by President Washington, still another way by President Lincoln. Thanksgiving wore the ever changing garb of each successive era.

In the nineteenth century, that November Thursday became the site for so much working-out of the era's concerns. Sarah Hale spear-headed the campaign to give the nation a new domestic festival that would showcase American woman's skills and enshrine her ennobling "influence." Magazines anticipated and commemorated the day as one whose themes particularly captured the essential American way of life. And in so doing, they developed a stockpile of images that lived in readers' minds as reminders of what it meant to have lived well. Thanksgiving memories smoothed the way to modern Americanness.

Hale and the nineteenth-century readers of *Godey's and Ladies' Home Journal* would therefore not have appreciated the simplicity of style that William Bradford's assumptions about providence produced. His pilgrim plain-talk would likely have struck them as negligent for passing over some of their most cherished aspects of Thanksgiving—the meal, the worship, the gathering together with one's fellow citizens. Bradford enumerated only the conditions of the settlers. He took for granted the resultant and suitably humble thanks to God.

In the mid- and late nineteenth century, however, this necessary connection between blessing and humble thanksgiving had slackened. The United States had experienced tremendous change. The magazines of that time, *Godey's* foremost among them, stood in the midst of America's transition from a regional confederation of homogeneous communities to a national state holding together the disparate elements of immigrant and native, city and homestead, factory and farm.

75. Charles Ledyard Norton, "Thanksgiving Day, Past and Present," *Magazine of American History*, December 1885, 561.

Magazines like *Godey's* and *Ladies' Home Journal* drew tight again the connection between the nation's fortunes and the importance of commemorating them, in part by focusing exclusively on celebrating good fortune. God's providence became an unalloyed good in this nineteenth-century Thanksgiving. Bradford's people rendered due submission to a potentially chastening God. But Hale's exclusive focus on Thanksgiving Day relegated fast days to the sidelines and with them the notion that the country's role as God's chosen might sometimes be hard to take.

The magazines surveyed here, or at least their more recent successors, have "worked" on many of us, too. We who celebrate Pilgrim forebears have been converted to Thanksliving. But it is a deeply contradictory way of life, celebrating plenty in a nation whose economics are driven by lack. Those who have the means, feast, while those who do not, dream of feasting. Governor Bradford's simple account has no rhymes, no recipes, no pictures of what the ladies wore. His account, of course, suffers from its own blindnesses, but even so, it has the power to reconvert the Thanksgiving heirs of *Godey's* with its plain picture of life under providence, life bounded on all sides by justice and mercy.

## *"Between the Refrigerator and the Wildfire": Aimee Semple McPherson, Pentecostalism, and the Fundamentalist-Modernist Controversy<sup>1</sup>*

MATTHEW A. SUTTON

Early one Canadian winter morning in 1908, a teenage girl knelt to pray, pleading with God to grant her the "baptism of the Holy Spirit." Soon her petition was answered. Her body began to tremble, she slipped to the ground, and out of her lips escaped murmurs in unknown tongues. The next day, during Sunday services at a little pentecostal mission, the teenager again quaked on the floor while jabbering strange syllables. A parishioner was so shocked that he telephoned the girl's parents and implored them to retrieve the wayward adolescent immediately. When the young woman learned that her mother was en route, panic engulfed her. How could she make her parents understand? Would they forbid her from worshipping with pentecostals?

As the girl waited, she crafted a defense calculated to appease her Methodist father and her Salvation Army mother. She remembered Brother Kitchen, one of her mother's old friends, who years ago had been "struck by the Spirit" at the Salvation Army. Was her experience really any different? Then her father's bedtime stories came to mind. With longing he often recalled how "Holy Ghost power" seemed to pervade his childhood Methodist church. The mystified parents, when confronted with their daughter's unwavering conviction, real-

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