

## AMERICA:1619 OR 1620?

These are more than significant dates in American history, they represent conflicting world views arising from differing understandings of the nature of man and the role of government, the value of human life, and the nature and character of God. Most of us have heard of the NYT's notorious '1619 Project', to further harass, shame and debilitate American youth and inflame racial animosity. The 1619 Project, being forced into public schools all over the country, relocates the founding of 'America' to the year black slaves arrived in Jamestown, 1619. More than that, it defines America, permanently, as the 1619 Virginia Colony. Why the *Times*, owned and funded by Jeff Bezos and his Amazon billions, so hates this country as to distort its history is another good question, but not for this moment.

The traditional, and, it once seemed, universally accepted, founding date of 'America' as a unique civilization is 1620, with the signing of the Mayflower Compact, the landing of the Mayflower Pilgrims at Plymouth Rock, and the successive establishment of the Massachusetts Bay Colony by later Puritan pilgrims. It is quite true that the two founding colonies were very different from one another and often at odds; now, shockingly, it seems quite true that the United States, four centuries later, is still struggling over which, 1619 or 1620, is the real America. But the struggle is not at all as it is depicted by the NYT's and its anti-American cohorts; quite the reverse in fact.

The truth is extremely complex, but extremely important to understand. The National Association of Scholars (NAS) has established the '1620 Project' in response to the NYT's damnable lies, and it is a noteworthy and scholarly effort, but I want to contribute something else to the refutation of the 1619 Project. That is a compilation of selections from early American public school readers, *PIOUS TO PROGRESSIVE: A CENTURY OF AMERICAN READERS*. The conflict between the 1619 and the 1620 worlds is as old as mankind, but one current battleground of this war is public education, and it is to the history of our public education that we can look for concrete evidence of how the battle lines were drawn in the days when '1620 America' was on the rise.

*Pious To Progressive* documents the role of public education as it was conceived in 1620 Puritan America – emphasizing freedom, hard work, and Christian morality – and how that view spread across most of America in succeeding generations; but, unfortunately, not to all Americans. By 1635, there were public schools in the Massachusetts Bay Colony, and by 1647 the Colony's Constitution required each community of fifty families to establish a public school.

By contrast, Virginia, established by the English aristocracy strictly for profit, had no public school system until the Reconstruction Era, 1870. Search as I might, I was unable to find any early public school books published in the deep south. Public schools were a New England Puritan project.

The reason for that disparity becomes clear in reading *Pious to Progressive*. The Puritans wanted a democratic republic of educated and morally sound citizens. The southern plantation aristocracy wanted a land of ignorant, and even debauched, peasants (besides the black slaves) under an hereditary ruling class, along the lines of England, or as close to it as they could get. I make that charge as a Southerner who (being rather ancient) can attest to having observed the suffering the South has endured from rule by the aristocracy, via the Democrat Party.

Also becoming clear from the book's selections is a line of succession from the royalist Cavaliers and the Puritan Roundheads of the English Civil War in the Seventeenth Century, through the Union and Confederate leadership in America's Civil War of 1861-65, to the belligerents of the looming civil war of 2021. To a large extent, the factors of the English Civil War have, and still do, determine America's destiny. The English Civil War was a formative event in the mind's of American founders, and was once an focus of American public education. It offers some very good lessons for today. There are still two world views in play: "government of the people, by the people, and for the people"; and government of a few people, by a few people, and for a few people.

Bill