

**Ferdie J. Deering**

## Americans Have More Than Most For Which They Can Be Thankful

**A**MERICANS have more than most peoples for which to be thankful on this Thanksgiving Day. Unfortunately, many do not seem to know whom to thank, and others may neglect to express their gratitude.

Faith in God as the Supreme Creator of the universe has been challenged and resulting confusion has shaken the understanding and confidence of millions.

We should not be surprised. This is the natural product of man's inherent greed and self-centered thinking. Both secular and biblical history record numerous examples of this characteristic and its often disastrous effects.

Real obstacles to religious thinking confront young people who have grown up in a society that has become increasingly permissive of public immorality, sexual promiscuity, alcohol and drug abuse, misconduct of public officials, rampant crime and disregard of the law by reputable citizens.

As Americans, we trace our tradition of Thanksgiving Day to the Pilgrims who settled in New England, after fleeing other lands because of their faith. However, the custom of giving thanks and celebrating bountiful harvests is as old as mankind.

Hardly a race of people or nation has failed to note that human beings are not sole controllers of the world about them, and that a superior being exerts large influence upon their destinies. Such beliefs exist even where atheism is official.

In their supplications to God, to their gods or to their idols, gratitude for physical well-being has ranked high among all worshipers, even those who profess deep spirituality.

The Pilgrims were grateful that they had survived the hardships of travel and settling in a new land. They had a mere sufficiency to celebrate on their first Thanksgiving Day. Now, we have an abundance for which to be thankful.

Freedom also has been a cherished boon, and it thrives among religious peoples, rather than among nonbelievers. Today we should appreciate our liberty all the more because so few people in today's world have much of it. Millions have none at all.

The Pilgrims came to America because they had been denied freedom of religion and freedom of conscience. Probably they would have fared better from a material point of view if they had stayed where they were. They wanted spiritual freedom.

In the new land, they found it. Later, freedom of religion was translated into broader terms by those who drafted our nation's Declaration of Independence and our Constitution.

Those documents gave to each of us the right to choose our own way of worship and belief. There is no state church and no law requiring us to accept a creed or even to worship at all.

However, the majority of Americans recognize a personal responsibility to the Supreme Deity, and most have a feeling of gratitude for our blessings of liberty, plenty and peace.

Every day might very well be a day of Thanksgiving, and for a great many, it is. Today is a special Thanksgiving Day, when all America may join together in meditating upon our blessings and saying "Thank you, God!"

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