



## The Crucible in which Freedom was Forged

Not for a thousand years had a government been created in which all had a voice and a vote. Not just church members, but unbelievers! Not just nobility and free men, but servants! Not just men, but female heads of household! All were offered a voice in their government and their church during Sunday afternoon Town Meetings. Even women spoke in many situations. What inspired these free-spirited pioneers in 1620? Can whatever inspired them, still inspire us?

# Freedom's Roots

In a world in which only a tiny percentage of citizens voted, the Separatists gave the vote to *every* man, and to every woman head of household.

In a world where no man had freedom of speech to criticize his political or religious leaders, the Separatists created freedom to criticize both.

The Separatists gave even their theological opponents a vote and a voice: a voice even to criticize and correct both church and state, without punishment.

The Separatists even *encouraged* robust Freedom of Speech by instituting Sunday afternoon “Prophecying” services, from which are descended Town Meetings which persist today in that corner of the United States.

The Separatists did not marginalize and dehumanize critics of their doctrines, carefully pre-screening every idea allowed on the podium for anything slightly nonconformist or “controversial”.

The Separatists not only declined to torture outsiders, they treated them as respectfully as insiders.

The Separatists created the first model, in over a thousand years, of self government which did not impose itself on anyone who had no say in it.

The Separatists tolerated dissent, sensibly. They created a forum that welcomed all voices to speak openly, where error could be corrected through respectful discussion by the light of Scripture.

It is time for an important question: is all this history entertaining, at most? Is it but a curiosity from the past?

Or was there, in that Pilgrim model, any freedom we have lost, worth regaining today?

– From “1620: When Freedom Was Reborn”



Re-enactors at Plimoth Plantation offer you the experience of going back to 1627 in a time machine to talk with the actual pilgrims face to face. They study the history of their characters so thoroughly that they even master the accent from the part of England from which their characters came. And if you slip up and ask them what happened in 1628, they will just stare at you blankly and remind you that no one knows the future. Buddy Tripp, in real life, left, here playing John Billington who lived between 1580 and 1630 when he was hung for murder, told me, (Dave Leach), in character, that Richard Warren (my ancestor) read him the advertisement about the voyage that was distributed by the Separatists (the church group that organized the voyage). “Billington” explained that he could not, himself, read.

This movie was filmed in September of 2008.

# World Experts on what happened at Plimoth in 1620

**Allyn Bradford**

12th generation descendant of  
Governor William Bradford, and  
Governor Bradford re-enactor

**Glenn Cheney**

Author: *Thanksgiving*

**Jeanne Linderman**

Elder General (clergy) of General  
Society of Mayflower Descendants

**Ken Callison**

Captain General of General  
Society of Mayflower Descendants

**Debra Miller**

Author: *The Mayflower and Me*  
school curriculum

**Buddy Tripp**

Re-enactor and Museum Teacher at  
Plimoth Plantation, Plymouth, Mass.

**Featured in:**  
**1620: When**  
**Freedom was Reborn**



# Historical Re-enactors

of Plimoth Plantation  
interviewed for  
**1620: When Freedom  
Was Reborn**

**Juliana  
Kempton  
1583-1664**



**Alice  
Bradford  
1590-1670**



**John Billington**      **Francis Cooke**  
**1580-1630**      **1583-1663**

**Will Wright**      **-1633**

# God's Encounter Groups

“Are there Christian churches today that do the ‘Prophecying’ in the manner of the Pilgrims? Now it was a typical Sunday for people in the Pilgrim community to gather at 8:00 am for worship, ...and then after a lengthy sermon, of probably two hours, maybe more, spent together in the morning, then they break for lunch; everybody would bring a basket lunch. And then in the afternoon they would prophesy.

“Any of us who have been in any kind of close group, or ‘encounter group,’ which were popular a number of years ago, or a ‘support group,’ that we have many of today, would inherit this dynamic of being very truthful with one another.

“And being corrected! Meaning if you said something that wasn’t quite right, people would disagree with you publicly, and it would get hashed out within the congregation.

“In Plimoth it would have been a very severe examination of conscience. And shared in front of – you know that would take a lot of courage, to stand up in front of your closest friends and neighbors, and confess what you’d done wrong. *Or tell somebody else what they’d done wrong.* But that kind of truth-telling and search for wisdom was really the focus of this prophecying.”

– Rev. Jeanne Linderman, Elder General  
General Society of Mayflower Descendants  
Triennial Convention, Plymouth MS, 2008



The  
Mayflower  
II, and its  
shallop,  
(rowboat),  
docked near  
where the  
original

shallop landed every day, that cold 1620  
December, for the men to build houses so the  
Mayflower passengers could leave the ship.

Host Dave  
Leach's  
prejudice  
shows a bit as  
he hears an  
expert say the  
Mayflower  
Compact may  
not be quite  
as significant to the history of Freedom as he  
wants it to be!



# Freedom of Speech in 1620

In a world where freedom of Speech to criticize either church or state was unthinkable and the ticket to a terrible death, the Separatists created both, following the lead of their pastor, John Robinson, who found his precedent in Scripture. The Separatists didn't just wink at Freedom of Speech. They made an institution of it: a Town Meeting every Sunday afternoon called a "prophesying service" (named after the application of that word in 1 Corinthians 14 and especially verse 3), where people of all faiths could speak on any matter, appealing to the highest principles they knew, where the Bible was not censored. Robinson wrote:

**In our prophesying service we are briefly to speak a word of exhortation as God enableth, and...questions also about things delivered [preached], and with them, EVEN DISPUTATIONS, ...as there is occasion, being part, or appurtenances of that exercise. Acts xvii 2 and xviii 4. (Book 3, Chapter 8, "On the Exercise of Prophecy", Argument Tenth.)**

Here he lists the benefits of such discussion. We could more easily ignore his list, if he didn't follow it with Scriptures showing that very same kind of animated discourse was the habit of Jesus, Paul, and Apollos.

**[We all prophesy to each other so] that things doubtful arising in teaching may be cleared, things obscure opened, things erroneous convinced [refuted]; and lastly, that as by the beating together of two stones fire appeareth, so may the light of the truth more clearly shine by disputations, questions, and answers modestly had and made, and as becomes the church of saints, and work of God.**