

## Doctor Andrew Turnbull's Yoke

An agricultural yoke is a wooden device used between a pair of oxen to enable them to pull together, sharing the load. The Turnbull yoke was an invisible yet tangible mental and physical burden, compelling individuals to constantly toil under the weight of their assigned responsibilities.

It is easy to imagine Catarina Moll Alzina, and the congregation listening to the priest read the Gospel of Matthew (11:30) in Alayor, Minorca, in 1768. If his homily was in Catalan, he would have said, "El meu jou és suau i la meva càrrega és lleugera" ("My yoke is easy, and my burden is light").

Metaphorically, this phrase represents submission and obedience. It encapsulates the shift from the Old Covenant, focused on strict laws and rituals, to the New Covenant of grace and faith in Jesus Christ. For believers, this passage encourages a faith practice that is heartfelt and genuine, relying on God's strength rather than human effort.

It is easy to imagine the extreme sadness of the Minorcans when they arrived at New Smyrna and quickly realized the Turnbull yoke was not "easy and light," but "difficult and heavy."

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When Dr. Andrew Turnbull, a Scottish physician turned land developer and colonizer, embarked on his quest for a new life in British East Florida, his motives and intentions were clear and honorable. Following the 1763 Treaty of Paris, in which Spain ceded Florida to Britain, Turnbull aimed to bring 500 Orthodox Greek farmers, who were suffering under the brutal and oppressive rule of the Ottoman Empire, to British East Florida. Greeks would qualify as white Protestants, which was a requirement for owning land in British East Florida. Turnbull's goal was to cultivate indigo, wine, and other products for export to his Mother Country. He secured financial support from members at the highest levels of government, even enlisting a former Prime Minister as one of his partners.

It was advantageous that the Governor of East Florida, John Grant, was also a Scotsman. By the time Turnbull's eight ships arrived in New Smyrna in 1768, Governor Grant and many others had already established functioning plantations that relied completely on the labor of enslaved Africans. Turnbull is to be complimented on his original desire to create a colony where the colonists he brought would be land owners at the end of their indentured servitude.

Unfortunately for Turnbull, his valiant attempt to bring Greeks from the mainland was completely thwarted. The Ottoman rulers prohibited Greek farmers from leaving. Additionally, the Levant Trading Company opposed Greek farmers departing and creating competition for their extensive trading enterprise. The inability to secure Greeks was the beginning of his financial hardships. Had Turnbull been able to secure 500 Greek farmers, he could have transported them to East Florida in three vessels, rather than hiring eight vessels for transporting the 1,403 colonists who left Minorca in 1768. Had the 500 Greeks arrived in New Smyrna as planned, there would have been sufficient huts, housing, provisions, a Greek priest, and a church where they could worship.