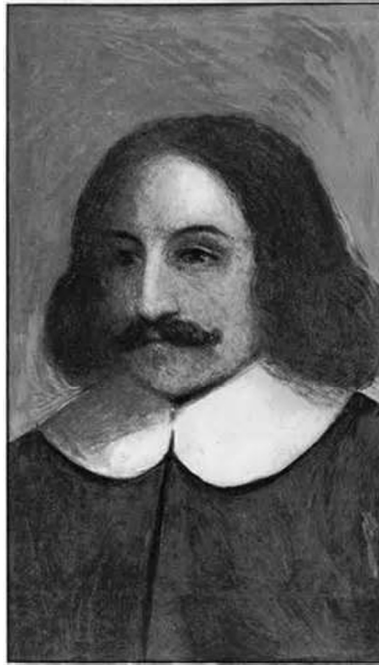


13 QUOTATIONS



William Bradford

(1590-1657)

William Bradford wrote the first American literary classic, *Of Plymouth Plantation 1620-1647*, the chronicle of the Pilgrims—a mythic allegory of the journey through the wilderness of this world toward a promised land. A prototypical American in being a humble immigrant, a common man in search of liberty and opportunity, Bradford was elected Governor of the Plymouth Colony in 1621 and got re-elected 30 times. His style is plain, humble, natural, heartfelt, self-effacing and Biblical. In 1630, the Massachusetts Bay Colony was founded at Boston by a group of upper-class Puritans led by John Winthrop.

ORDER OF TOPICS: pilgrims, Mayflower Compact, first winter, Communism fails, Merry Mount, epidemic of sex offenses:

from *Of Plymouth Plantation 1620-1647*

PILGRIMS

The place they had thoughts on was some of those vast and unpeopled countries of America, which are fruitful and fit for habitation, being devoid of all civil inhabitants, where there are only savage and brutish men which range up and down, little otherwise than the wild beasts of the same....

And yet if they should, the miseries of the land which they should be exposed unto would be too hard to be borne and likely, some or all of them together, to consume and utterly to ruinate them. For there they should be liable to famine and nakedness and the want, in a manner, of all things. The change of air, diet and drinking of water would infect their bodies with sore sicknesses and grievous diseases. And also those which should escape or overcome these difficulties should yet be in continual danger of the savage people, who are cruel, barbarous and most treacherous, being most furious in their rage and merciless where they overcome; not being content only to kill and take away life, but delight to torment men in the most bloody manner that may be; flaying some alive with the shells of fishes, cutting off the members and joints of

others by piecemeal and broiling on the coals, eat the collops of their flesh in their sight whilst they live, with other cruelties horrible to be related....

...now all being compact together in one ship, they put to sea... And I may not omit here a special work of God's providence. There was a proud and very profane young man, one of the seamen, of a lusty, able body, which made him the more haughty; he would always be condemning the poor people in their sickness and cursing them daily with grievous execrations, and did not let to tell them that he hoped to help cast half of them overboard before they came to their journey's end, and to make merry with what they had; and if he were by any gently reprov'd, he would curse and swear most bitterly. But it pleased God before they came half seas over to smite this young man with a grievous disease, of which he died in a desperate manner, and so was himself the first that was thrown overboard. Thus his curses light on his own head, and it was an astonishment to all his fellows for they noted it to be the just hand of God upon him....

...in a mighty storm, a lusty young man called John Howland, coming upon some occasion above the gratings, was, with a roll of the ship, thrown into the sea; but it pleased God that he caught hold of the topsail halyards which hung overboard and ran out at length. Yet he held his hold (though he was sundry fathoms under water) till he was hauled up by the same rope to the brim of the water, and then with a boat hook and other means got into the ship again and his life saved. And though he was something ill with it, yet he lived many years after and became a profitable member both in church and commonwealth....

But to omit other things (that I may be brief), after long beating at sea they fell with that land which is called Cape Cod; the which being made and certainly known to be it, they were not a little joyful.... Being thus arrived in a good harbor, and brought safe to land, they fell upon their knees and blessed the God of Heaven who had brought them over the vast and furious ocean, and delivered them from all the perils and miseries thereof, again to set their feet on the firm and stable earth, their proper element.... Being thus passed the vast ocean, and a sea of troubles before in their preparation (as may be remembered by that which went before), they had now no friends to welcome them nor inns to entertain or refresh their weatherbeaten bodies; no houses or much less towns to repair to, to seek for succor. It is recorded in Scripture, as a mercy to the apostle and his shipwrecked company, that the barbarians showed them no small kindness in refreshing them, but these savage barbarians, when they met with them (as after will appear), were readier to fill their sides full of arrows than otherwise.

And for the season it was winter...what could they see but a hideous and desolate wilderness, full of wild beasts and wild men—and what multitudes there might be of them they knew not. Neither could they, as it were, go up to the top of [Mount] Pisgah [comparison to Moses and the Israelites] to view from this wilderness a more goodly country to feed their hopes; for which way soever they turned their eyes (save upward to the heavens) they could have little solace or content in respect of any outward objects.... What could now sustain them but the spirit of God and His grace?...

MAYFLOWER COMPACT

Having undertaken, for the glory of God and advancement of the Christian faith and honor of our king and country, a voyage to plant the first colony in the northern parts of Virginia, do by these presents solemnly and mutually in the presence of God and one of another, covenant and combine ourselves together into a civil body politic, for our better ordering and preservation and furtherance of the ends aforesaid... [11 November 1620]

FIRST WINTER

But that which was most sad and lamentable was, that in two or three months' time half of their company died, especially in January and February, being the depth of winter, and wanting houses and other comforts, being infected with the scurvy and other diseases which this long voyage and their inaccommodate condition had brought upon them. So as there died sometimes two or three of a day in the aforesaid time, that of one hundred and odd persons, scarce fifty remained. And of these, in the time of most distress, there was but six or seven sound persons who to their great commendations, be it spoken, spared no pains night nor day, but with abundance of toil and hazard of their own health, fetched them wood, made them fires, dressed them meat, made their beds, washed their loathsome clothes, clothed and

unclothed them. In a word, did all the homely and necessary offices for them which dainty and queasy stomachs cannot endure to hear named; and all this willingly and cheerfully, without any grudging in the least, showing herein their true love unto their friends and brethren; a rare example and worthy to be remembered.... And yet the Lord so upheld these persons as in this general calamity they were not at all infected either with sickness or lameness....

[“Of the 102 *Mayflower* passengers who reached Cape Cod, 4 died before she made Plymouth; and by the summer of 1621 the total deaths numbered 50. Only 12 of the original 26 heads of families and 4 of the original 12 unattached men or boys were left; and of the women who reached Plymouth, all but a few died. Doubtless many of the deaths took place on board the *Mayflower* at anchor, since there was not enough shelter ashore for all; and Plymouth Harbor is so shallow that she was moored about 1½ nautical miles from the Rock.” Samuel Eliot Morison, Editor, *Of Plymouth Plantation 1620-1647* (Knopf, 1963) 77n.]

COMMUNISM FAILS

[Chapter XIV, “...Communism...”; “End of the Common Course and Condition”]...they began to think how they might raise as much corn as they could, and obtain a better crop than they had done, that they might not still thus languish in misery. At length, after much debate of things, the Governor (with the advice of the chiefest among them) gave way that they should set corn every man for his own particular, and in that regard trust to themselves... And so assigned to every family a parcel of land, according to the proportion of their number... This had very good success, for it made all hands very industrious, so as much more corn was planted than otherwise... The women now went willingly into the field, and took their little ones with them to set corn; which before would allege weakness and inability; whom to have compelled would have been thought great tyranny and oppression....

The experience that was had in this common course and condition, tried sundry years and that amongst godly and sober men, may well evince the vanity of that conceit of Plato's and other ancients applauded by some of later times; that the taking away of property and bringing in community into a commonwealth would make them happy and flourishing; as if they were wiser than God. For this community (so far as it was) was found to breed much confusion and discontent and retard much employment that would have been to their benefit and comfort. For the young men, that were most able and fit for labour and service, did repine that they should spend their time and strength to work for other men's wives and children without any recompense. The strong, or man of parts, had no more in division of victuals and clothes than did he that was weak and not able to do a quarter the other could; this was thought injustice.... And for men's wives to be commanded to do service for other men, as dressing their meat, washing their clothes, etc., they deemed it a kind of slavery, neither could many husbands well brook it.... [1623]

MERRY MOUNT

And [Thomas] Morton became lord of misrule, and maintained (as it were) a schoole of Athisme [a rival colony, Cavalier rather than Puritan]. And after they had got some goods into their hands, and got much by trading with ye Indeans, they spent it as vainly, in quaffing & drinking both wine & strong waters in great excess, and as some reported, 10 pounds worth in a morning. They also set up a Maypole, drinking and dancing aboute it many days togeather, inviting the Indean women, for their consorts, dancing and frisking together, (like so many fairies, or furies rather,) and worse practices. As if they had anew revived and celebrated the feasts of ye Roman Goddes Flora, or ye beastly practieses of ye madd Bacchinalians. Morton likewise (to shew his poetrie) composed sundry rimes & verses, some tending to lasciviousness, and others to ye detraction and scandall of some persons [including William Bradford himself], which he affixed to this idle or idoll May-polle. They also changed the name of their place, and in stead of calling it Mounte Wollaston, they called it Merie-mounte, as if this jollity would have lasted ever. But this continued not long, for after Morton was sent for England [exiled by the Puritans], (as follows to be declared,) shortly after came over that worthy gentleman, Mr. John Indecott, who brought over a patent under ye broad seall, for ye governmente of ye Massachusetts, who visiting those parts caused ye May-polle to be cutt down, and rebuked them for their profannes... [1628] [These events were allegorized by Nathaniel Hawthorne in “The Maypole of Merry Mount.”]

EPIDEMIC OF SEX OFFENSES

It may be in this case as it is with waters when their streams are stopped or damned up, when they get passage they flow with more violence, and make more noise and disturbance, than when they are suffered to run quietly in their own channels. So wickedness being here more stopped by strict laws, and the same more nearly looked unto, so as it cannot run in a common road of liberty as it would, and is inclined, it searches everywhere, and at last breaks out where it gets vent.... There was a youth whose name was Thomas Granger. He was servant to an honest man of Duxbury, being about 16 or 17 years of age.... He was this year detected of buggery, and indicted for the same, with a mare, a cow, two goats, five sheep, two calves and a turkey.... (I forbear particulars.)... [1642]

