Of Plymouth Plantation

INTRODUCTION

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF WILLIAM BRADFORD

William Bradford was born into a prosperous family of farmers. As a teenager, he began attending sermons delivered by church reformers, despite the fact that his family believed all reforms to the church to be heretical. Bradford eventually became a Separatist—a Christian who believed in separating from the established Church of England. In the 1610s, Bradford fled to the Dutch Republic to avoid persecution in his own country. It was during this period that Bradford and some of his fellow Separatists began to entertain the idea of settling in America. In 1620, Bradford and his wife set sail aboard the *Mayflower*, along with a few dozen other Separatists. Bradford rose to become the governor of the Plymouth Colony from 1621 to 1632, and later served as governor from 1645 to 1656. During these years, Bradford was instrumental in instituting a fledgling system of democracy in the colony, and in negotiating with Native American tribes in the surrounding area. His journal of the colony's history, *Of Plymouth Plantation*, is still regarded as one of the key primary sources of early American history. He died in 1657, a highly respected colonist.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The overarching historical event in *Of Plymouth Plantation* is, of course, the Pilgrims' colonization of New England in North America. Readers interested in a more authoritative, unbiased account of this period in history might consult Nathaniel Philbrick's recent book *Mayflower* (2007), or, for a more partisan account, the early chapters of either Howard Zinn's *A People's History of the United States* (1980) or James Loewen's *Lies My Teacher Told Me* (1995). One aspect of the colonial era that Bradford doesn't really delve into is the reformation of the English church. Following the reign of Henry VIII, the English church broke with the Roman Catholic church, becoming its own separate institution. Under Queen Elizabeth I, Henry's daughter, England underwent further reforms that limited the role of ceremony and prelate jurisdiction in Christian practice, and pushed England in a more overtly Protestant direction. By the end of the 17th century, however, English Christianity had undergone a schism: some reformers thought that England hadn't gone far enough in expelling Catholic ritual, while others thought it had gone too far. Many Christians in the former group went on to become full-fledge separatists, and some of these separatists became the American Pilgrims.

RELATED LITERARY WORKS

Of Plymouth Plantation is regarded as one of the most elegant examples of the Puritan "plain style"—the literary style that stresses simple sentence constructions and a relatively small vocabulary. The plain style is often regarded as a stylistic analogy for the Puritans' simple, sparse lifestyle. Other good examples include *The Narrative of the Captivity and Removes of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson* (1682). Notable works of fiction about Puritan/Separatist society include *The Scarlet Letter* (1850) by Nathaniel Hawthorne and *The Crucible* (1953) by Arthur Miller.

KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** *Of Plimouth Plantation* (usually modernized to "*Of Plymouth Plantation*")
- **When Written:** Believed to have been written between 1630 and 1651
- **Where Written:** Plymouth Colony, Massachusetts
- **When Published:** The original manuscript for *Of Plymouth Plantation* was stored in the Old South Meeting House in Boston. Although early 19th century historians of America quoted from it, it wasn't published in its entirety until 1856.
- **Literary Period:** "Plain style" nonfiction
- **Genre:** Nonfiction, journal
- **Setting:** Plymouth Colony, Massachusetts, early America
- **Antagonist:** Catholicism, Episcopalian Christianity, the Narragansett Indians, and various hypocritical businessmen (like Thomas Weston and Isaac Allerton) could all qualify as antagonists in the book
- **Point of View:** Third person (Bradford even talks about himself in the third person at times)

EXTRA CREDIT

Where'd they dig it up? The story of how *Of Plymouth Plantation* finally came to be published is worthy of its own book. Following Bradford's death, the manuscript was passed down from generation to generation of Bradford's family—however, it was later stolen by a British soldier during the Revolutionary War. After the war, the manuscript was returned to Boston, and stored with other early American documents. It wasn't until the mid-19th century that it was published in its entirety.

Other books. William Bradford was a prolific writer. In addition to his history of the Plymouth plantation, he penned a lengthy series of dialogues between old and young Christians, modeling the tenets of (his version of) Christianity. Only fragments of this series survive, however, and they've never been published.

PLOT SUMMARY

William Bradford, the Governor of the Plymouth Plantation in North America, records the history of the colony, promising to write in a plain, honest style that reflects his commitment to the truth.

Bradford begins by discussing the history of the Plymouth colony before 1620. In England, Henry VIII and his daughter, Queen Elizabeth, instituted a series of religious reforms that limited the role of Roman Catholic ceremony in Christian practice. However, some Christian reformers worried that the English crown hadn't gone far enough, and broke with the English church altogether.

Many of the English reformers migrated to Holland, where they believed they'd enjoy more religious freedom. However, life in Holland was difficult, and the reformers had to compete with other religious sects for their congregants. William Brewster and John Robinson, two of the key leaders of the English reform movement, resolved to bring their congregants to America to find a new home. After ten years in Holland, the English reformers were able to make arrangements with the Virginia Company, which had gathered investors to send an expedition to Plymouth, located in New England.

In 1620, the English reformers in Holland, now calling themselves Pilgrims, sail for England aboard the *Mayflower*. During this period, John Carver and Robert Cushman serve as the Pilgrims' business contacts in England, ensuring the Virginia Company's cooperation. Many of the English reformers in Holland have to stay behind, both because of the size of the ship and because it is feared that they won't be able to survive the long voyage.

In 1620, the *Mayflower* docks in Cape Cod, near the Hudson River. Before the settlers go ashore, they agree to recognize John Carver as their first governor, and to abide by the laws of the community. Under the command of Captain Myles Standish, an expedition of Pilgrims goes out to explore the surrounding area, and quickly encounters a group of Native Americans. The Pilgrims steal some food from the Native Americans, promising to return it when they're able to do so. The Native Americans attack the Pilgrims, and the Pilgrims fire back, killing several people.

In the second, much longer part of his book, Bradford uses a more concise, chronological approach, and includes many excerpts from people's letters. By 1621, much of the *Mayflower* expedition has died off due to disease, cold weather, and starvation. However, the Pilgrims benefit from the presence of Squanto, a Native America who has spent time among English traders and speaks good English. Squanto is instrumental in forging alliances between the Pilgrims and the Native Americans in the surrounding area. Around the same time, a plague breaks out among the Native Americans, and thousands die. Governor Carver also becomes ill and dies, and William Bradford is appointed the new governor, with Isaac Allerton as his assistant.

Throughout the 1620s, the Plymouth settlement is embroiled in a dispute concerning its considerable debts to the investors who made the Virginia Company's Plymouth venture possible. Though the Virginia Company itself goes under, many investors demand that the Pilgrims honor their agreement and pay off their debt over the next few years. Thomas Weston, a former investor in the Company, sells off his shares, but then tries to send his own ship to the New World in the hopes of starting a new colony. Weston begins a new colony in Massachusetts, but quickly falls on hard times. By 1623, he's wanted by the English crown for illegally selling trading licenses and other goods in America, endangering the health of England's colonies. Meanwhile, the Pilgrims receive ships sent by Robert Cushman and the remaining investors in England, with the understanding that the Pilgrims will pay off their debts as soon as possible.

In spite of its outstanding debts to investors, the Plymouth plantation begins to thrive. Its population is disciplined and well-organized, and when Bradford makes the decision to allow each family to farm its own land, the overall health of the colony greatly improves. Bradford encounters a challenge when he learns that two new settlers in Plymouth, John Oldham and John Lyford, are secretly writing letters to their friends in England that insult the colonists, and seem to be plotting to reduce the Pilgrims' religious authority. Bradford arranges for Lyford and Oldham to be expelled from Plymouth. Around the same time, Bradford orders for the first execution in Plymouth.

The Plymouth leadership sends Isaac Allerton to England to negotiate with outstanding investors. At first, Allerton does a good job, negotiating for a more gradual repayment and obtaining a lucrative **land patent** for the Plymouth colonists. However, he then begins to use his access to England for his own selfish purposes. Allerton starts to bring large quantities of goods back from England, against the Pilgrims' request, and then selling them for inflated prices. James Sherley, a business contact of the Pilgrims, sends a secret letter to Plymouth, explaining that Allerton is no longer loyal to the colonists' interests. Meanwhile, the Plymouth colonists begin to develop good relations with the Dutch traders in New Amsterdam. Bradford also strikes up a friendship with John Winthrop, the governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony.

The Pilgrims face another crisis when the *White Angel*, a ship sent to Plymouth by Sherley and manned by Isaac Allerton, brings no cargo for Plymouth—and Sherley still charges the colonists for the shipment, plunging them further into debt. Bradford suspects that Allerton has hidden the ship's cargo in order to sell it for his own profit, and argues to Sherley that the colonists shouldn't be charged for the cargo. Allerton later sells the *White Angel* to Spain, further endangering the Pilgrims' financial stability. The Pilgrims write to Sherley that they

shouldn't be punished for Allerton's wrongdoings, but Sherley continues to insist that the Pilgrims pay off the debt from the *White Angel*. Around the same time, the Pilgrims enter into a dispute with French settlers, but due to their lack of resources, they're unable to wage a war against the French.

Toward the end of the book, Bradford describes the growing conflict with the Native Americans. The Pequot and the Narragansett tribes begin to fight, and try to enlist the colonists in their war. In 1637, the Massachusetts Bay Colony and Plymouth Colony begin a war with the Pequot tribe, resulting in the beheading of their chief. Meanwhile, the Pilgrims decide to dismiss Mr. Sherley as their business contact, since he seems to have done nothing to ease the Pilgrims' debts by paying off the investors. By 1640, the Pilgrims negotiate a final agreement with Mr. Sherley: to pay off 1400 pounds in outstanding debts.

The Plymouth leadership forms a Council of the United Colonies, enlisting the settlers in Massachusetts, Connecticut, and other areas in New England. Meeting in Boston, representatives from all colonies agree to support one another in times of war and support peaceful trade between one another. The Council's first test arrives in 1645 when the Narragansett tribe begins to feud with the colonies and with the Monhig Native Americans. The Council sends hundreds of soldiers in preparation for war—intimidating the Narragansett into surrendering.

In the final chapter of the book, Bradford lists the original settlers of the Plymouth Plantation and thanks God for blessing the colony with health and strength.

CHARACTERS

MAJOR CHARACTERS

William Bradford – William Bradford is the author of *Of Plymouth Plantation* and an important figure in the history of the Plymouth colony. He served as the governor of the colony for many years, including from 1621 to 1632 and 1645 to 1656. During this time, Bradford was instrumental in negotiating the colonists' debts with English creditors, managing relationships between Plymouth and neighboring colonies, and soothing tensions between Plymouth and Native American tribes. While Bradford is clearly an important presence in his book, it would be wrong to say that he's the main character. Indeed, Bradford makes it clear right away that his intention is to write a neutral, third-person history of the Plymouth colony, in which his own biases and experiences are secondary to the "objective" history of the colony. Bradford will occasionally refer to himself in the first person; however, he also refers to himself in the *third* person as a sign of his stated commitment to objectivity. Bradford is an authoritative, deeply pious leader—but at the same time, it's important to understand his political, religious, and economic biases and see the subjective nature of his supposedly objective history of Plymouth.

Isaac Allerton – Isaac Allerton is one of the original colonists in Plymouth. He's later appointed to travel to England to negotiate the Pilgrims' considerable debts and obtain new land patents. However, Allerton begins to use his influential position for his own advantage, endangering the survival of the colony: for example, he brings his own goods back to Plymouth and sells them at unfair prices to the desperate colonists. Allerton is eventually ousted from the colony, though he later becomes a successful businessman in Connecticut.

Robert Cushman – An important agent for the Pilgrims in Leyden, who later serves as their chief agent after they travel to the Plymouth settlement. Cushman plays an ambiguous role in the early days of the Pilgrims' colony. He seems to be more selfless and more committed to the prosperity of the Plymouth colony than Thomas Weston, but he's also responsible for supporting a sudden rewriting of the Pilgrims' contract with the Virginia Company, such that they have to repay their debts at a much faster rate. Cushman dies in the mid-1620s.

John Carver – John Carver is an English separatist and an important business contact for the Leyden branch of the separatist movement. He's instrumental in organizing an agreement with the Virginia Company and obtaining a ship, the *Mayflower*, to bring the Pilgrims to the New World. Carver is later chosen as the Pilgrims' first governor, but he dies of disease while the colony is still in its infancy.

Captain Myles Standish – Myles Standish accompanies the Pilgrims on the *Mayflower* on their first voyage to the New World, and later serves as the Pilgrims' chief military adviser. Standish is instrumental in organizing a militia and, toward the end of his life, assembling an army to fight the Narragansett Native Americans. He's also a fixture of the Pilgrims' expeditions to explore New England. Standish was probably one of the most influential early colonists in New England—his military experiences helped shape the colony's policy toward Native Americans and neighboring settlements for decades to come.

Squanto – Squanto is one of the most important figures in the history of the Pilgrims' settlement in New England. A Native American who'd previously been captured by an English captain, Squanto managed to escape from his captors, and later learned English during his time in Newfoundland. He later travels back to America with the help of an English captain, and becomes instrumental in making introductions between the Pilgrim settlers and the Native American chiefs. Squanto later dies of disease, probably as a result of his extended contact with Europeans.

James Sherley – James Sherley is an important business partner for the Pilgrims in Plymouth. Beginning in 1629, he's tasked with all the colonists' business affairs in England—above

all, paying off their debts and arranging for a **land patent**. It's unclear from Bradford's account how loyal Sherley is to the Pilgrims: at several points, he seems to be colluding with Isaac Allerton, charging the Pilgrims for shipments that never arrive and assuring that Allerton still has their best interests at heart. However, Sherley also helps the Pilgrims sue Allerton, and faithfully enacts their wishes during his time in England.

Thomas Weston – Thomas Weston is an English merchant, investor, and arguably one of the main antagonists of the book. Initially he helps the English separatists obtain and negotiate a charter with the Virginia Company, whereby they'll sail to the Plymouth plantation and slowly pay off their debts. However, Weston soon begins to manipulate the Pilgrims, threatening to withhold supply shipments unless they pay him more money. Although Weston ends his relationship with the Virginia Company in 1622, he goes on to pursue his own colony in a different part of America. However, Weston falls deep into debt, and angers the British crown by illegally selling goods and shipping licenses. Later on, he's arrested, and dies of plague in Bristol.

Governor John Winthrop – John Winthrop was an important figure in early New England history, and the governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. He was a close friend to William Bradford, and exerted a powerful influence on the development of the Plymouth colony. Winthrop was especially influential in negotiating with the Native Americans, and in forming the United Council of New England governors.

Roger Williams – Roger Williams was one of the most influential figures in early New England history. A charismatic Massachusetts preacher, he began to break with Protestant beliefs by claiming that Christians who've been "saved" need not live their lives according to any moral code. Williams later leaves his community and lives among Native Americans. William Bradford claims to respect Williams greatly, though he prays that Williams will reconsider his beliefs.

MINOR CHARACTERS

William Brewster – English separatist, leader of the separatist congregation in Leyden, and elder leader of the Plymouth colony in America. Bradford repeatedly praises Brewster for his wisdom and authority, and when Brewster dies in the 1640s, his death is greeted with great sadness in the colony.

John Pierce – An English investor in whose name a **land patent** (a claim of ownership over land in Plymouth) was taken out by the Virginia Company, with the approval of James I. Pierce never traveled to the New World, though, and in the end the Virginia Company revoked his patent.

Queen Elizabeth I – Queen Elizabeth I of England was responsible for instituting a series of reforms in the English church that limited the role of Catholic ceremony and the power of prelates (i.e., church leaders, such as bishops).

King James I – Stuart king of England following the death of Queen Elizabeth I.

John Smith – English separatist (i.e., Protestant who criticized the English church for being too reliant on Catholic ritual and prelate authority) who was responsible for moving a large number of other separatists with him to Holland.

Richard Clifton – English separatist whose congregation included William Bradford. Clifton was instrumental in bringing Bradford and other English separatists to Holland.

John Robinson – Leader of the English separatists, and an important figure in the establishment of the Plymouth colony. Robinson doesn't travel to America himself, and dies in 1626.

Poliander – Dutch theologian who led the Arminian faction (i.e., followers of the theologian Jacobus Arminius) in the community of Leyden.

Sir Robert Nanton – English aristocrat who helped convince King James I to allow the Plymouth settlers to worship in their own way, provided that they pledged their loyalty to the English crown.

Sir John Worstenholme – English aristocrat and an ally of the Virginia Company.

Sir Thomas Smith – English aristocrat who's nominated to act as the first governor for the Plymouth colony, but refuses.

Sir Edwin Sandys – English aristocrat who's considered to act as the first governor for the Plymouth colony.

Mr. Martin – An English business contact for the Pilgrims.

Blackwell – English reformer who renounces his separatist beliefs and leads a small, unsuccessful expedition to Virginia.

Mr. Reynolds – The captain of a small ship that's initially intended to bring Pilgrims to the New World.

Samoset – A Native American who greets the Pilgrims when they arrive in New England in 1620. Samoset speaks some English, since he's traveled with English fishermen in the past.

Chief Massasoyt – A Native American chief who makes a treaty with the Pilgrims in their early days in New England.

Hobbamok – A Native American who comes to live with the Pilgrims.

Corbitant – A Native American who becomes embroiled in an argument with Hobbamok.

Captain Robert Gorges – English leader who is appointed to become the new Governor General of New England.

Sir Ferdinand Gorges – English leader, and father of Captain Robert Gorges, who serves as a member of the Commission for the Colonies in America.

John Lyford – A colonist who journeys to Plymouth plantation in 1624 and later turns out to be plotting against the religious authorities in Plymouth.

John Oldham – A colleague and friend of John Lyford.

Captain Dermer – An English captain who transports Squanto back to America.

Captain Wollaston – An English captain who leads a settlement in Massachusetts.

Mr. Morton – A Massachusetts colonist who sells guns to the Native Americans.

Mr. Rogers – A preacher who Isaac Allerton brings to the Plymouth colony, who turns out to be "crazed in the brain."

Edward Ashley – A businessman who enters into a partnership with Isaac Allerton, endangering the survival of the Plymouth colony.

Governor John Endicott – Governor in Salem, Massachusetts.

Mr. Edward Winslow – Edward Winslow is a governor of the Plymouth colony, as well as a business agent in England on behalf of the colonists.

John Billington – The first person to be sentenced to death in the Plymouth colony.

Sir Christopher Gardiner – An English aristocrat who lives in Massachusetts, flees to live with Native Americans, and later tries to sue William Bradford.

Samuel Fuller – Physician for the Plymouth colony.

Governor Thomas Prince – Governor for the Plymouth colony in 1634 and 1638.

Hocking – A Piscataqua trader who's shot and killed in a conflict with the Pilgrims.

Monsieur d'Aulnay – Leader of a group of French colonists who steal property from the Pilgrim settlement.

Girling – The captain of a ship that Myles Standish tries and fails to use to attack Monsieur d'Aulnay's men.

Sassacus – A Pequot chief in the 1630s.

Arthur Peach – A Plymouth settler who's arrested and executed for murder.

Thomas Jackson – A Plymouth settler who's arrested and executed for murder.

Richard Stinnings – A Plymouth settler who's arrested and executed for murder.

Daniel Crose – A Plymouth settler who's arrested for murder, but who escapes.

Charles Chauncey – A reverend who arrives in Plymouth in 1638.

Chief Miantinomo – A Chief of the Narragansett tribe.

Chief Uncas – A Chief of the Monhig tribe.

John Pemberton – An English minister and noted opponent of the English separatists.

Mr. Norton – A reverend hired by Edward Winslow to live in Plymouth, who eventually decides to move to another colony.

Ralph Smith – A minister in Massachusetts.

Sachem – A Native American chief who dies, probably of smallpox.

Edward Southworth – A London-based friend of Robert Cushman.

Christopher Jones – The captain of the *Mayflower*, the ship that transports the Pilgrims to America in 1620.

THEMES

In LitCharts literature guides, each theme gets its own color-coded icon. These icons make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. If you don't have a color printer, you can still use the icons to track themes in black and white.

CHRISTIANITY

The central theme of Governor William Bradford's *Of Plymouth Plantation* is Christianity—in particular, the English Separatist interpretation of Christianity that, in recent times, is usually referred to as Puritanism (although Bradford considers this term insulting.) Following the rise of a distinctly English (i.e., Anglican) church during the reign of Henry VIII, England began to move away from Catholic ritual and organization, toward a more overtly Protestant set of values, emphasizing simplicity, humility, and hard work. There were some who believed that England hadn't gone far enough in reforming its church practices—i.e., that its religion should be even simpler and sparer. Some of these "reformers" (as Bradford calls them) splintered off and formed their own congregations, first in Northern England, then in Holland, and finally in North America. Over the course of the book, Bradford implicitly shows that the reformers' faith was vital in bringing them together as one group, inspiring them to migrate to new places, and compelling them to make material sacrifices and work hard for the good of their colony.

The Christian reformers' unique interpretation of Christianity, stressing simplicity and the absence of elaborate church hierarchies, inspired them to come together and, later, to leave England. The reform movement originated in Northern England, largely because of the preaching of a small handful of reverends, such as John Smith and Richard Clifton. Smith and Clifton's sermons stressed that their congregants were united by a common set of beliefs, and that—just as importantly—they were fundamentally different from other Christians in England, who supported more elaborate rituals and intricate systems of bishops, cardinals, and other prelates. Religion didn't just give the North English reformers a common identity—it galvanized them into taking action. The reformers believed whole-

heartedly that their interpretation of Christianity was the right one, and, furthermore, that their highest priority in life was to practice Christianity to the best of their abilities. In order to practice their interpretation of religion (and, by the same token, escape religious persecution because of this interpretation), Smith and Clifton successfully organized a massive migration from England to Holland where, supposedly, there was more religious freedom. Later on, reform figures such as William Brewster were able to convince their followers to migrate once more to America. In the 1600s, voyaging to America must have been a terrifying idea: there was almost no European civilization there, and it was well known that many people died of starvation and disease, either when they reached America or during the voyage. The fact that so many English reformers agreed to migrate to America illustrates the strength of their faith—they valued their beliefs so highly that they were willing to risk their lives to find a place to worship freely.

But it's not just that Christianity inspired the Pilgrims to journey to America—as numerous historians have argued, the specific tenets of Puritanism also helped the Pilgrims to form a successful colony in New England, to a degree that, arguably, other religion sects would not have achieved. As the sociologist Max Weber argued in *The Protestant Work Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, the Pilgrims' religion emphasis on hard work, frugality, and—crucially—individual responsibility—positioned them for success in the New World. Because of their beliefs, the Pilgrims were willing to sacrifice material comforts and even glorify the lack of these comforts. The Pilgrims were especially willing to work hard instead of relying on other people, as their faith taught them that God would hold them individually accountable for their actions. Indeed, William Bradford notes that the Plymouth Plantation began to thrive after he divided up the farmland into smaller plots, encouraging each family to provide for itself and do its fair share of the work. By encouraging people to work hard and be responsible for their own property, the Puritan ethos not only contributed to the success of the Plymouth Plantation; it laid much of the groundwork for the rise of American capitalism (another ideology rooted in hard work and individual responsibility). It's obvious on almost every page of *Of Plymouth Plantation* that religion exerted a profound influence on the lives of the Pilgrims at Plymouth Plantation. Religion didn't just encourage them to join together and travel to America—their faith helped them to thrive where many other colonies had failed.

BIAS AND PROPAGANDA

Even today, William Bradford's *Of Plymouth Plantation* is regarded by historians as one of the most valuable records of early New England history. Bradford penned the journal between 1630 and 1651, meaning that it contains an extraordinary amount of detail about the quality of life in Plymouth Plantation. But Bradford's journal isn't just an important document because of what it says about Plymouth—it's also fascinating because of what it *doesn't* say. To understand *Of Plymouth Plantation* fully, readers need to understand what Bradford was trying to accomplish by writing a history of his colony—in other words, what his biases were, and what incentives he had to distort the truth.

Historians still debate about what Bradford intended for his journal of Pilgrim history, but most agree that he wanted his writings to be read by future generations of Pilgrims, Englishmen, and inhabitants of neighboring colonies. Therefore, Bradford has a strong incentive to portray his people and his religion in an overwhelmingly positive light. At various points, Bradford explicitly states that he wants the Pilgrims' descendants to read his journal and learn about their ancestors' sacrifices. Put another way, Bradford intends for *Of Plymouth Plantation* to be a teaching tool, inspiring the New Englanders of the future to be as frugal, steadfast, and generally virtuous as the first wave of Pilgrims was. Bradford's intentions for his journal parallel his friend John Winthrop's famous "city on the hill" sermon, in which Winthrop said that the settlers in the New World must lead virtuous lives to set a good example for the rest of the world and for their own descendants.

Bradford may have also had other, more practical reasons for presenting his people in a positive light. Some historians have argued that Bradford glossed over the Pilgrims' questionable financial and legal behavior because, when he began writing the journal in 1630, he anticipated being sued by the investors in the failed Virginia Company (see Debt and Religious Capitalism theme), or investigated by the English monarchy itself. Throughout the book, Bradford shows the Pilgrims to be unerringly honest and financially responsible—perhaps in part because he worried that in the future, a powerful English authority would investigate his colony and find reason to seize control over it. Because of these and other sources of bias, Bradford portrays the Plymouth Plantation as a model of morality and civility. The Pilgrims are generous with their resources, even when they're on the verge of starvation. They treat the Native American population peacefully and reasonably (until the Native Americans attack them first). They are law-abiding, with the exception of a small handful of colonists who, according to Bradford, aren't truly a part of the community at all.

It is impossible to know with 100% accuracy how the Pilgrims in New England behaved—and indeed, it's quite possible, considering their religion convictions, that the Pilgrims *were* exceptionally virtuous and fair. However, in light of Bradford's strong incentives to present his people positively, it's very likely that Bradford exaggerates the Pilgrims' virtuousness to at least some degree.

Another important form of bias to consider is Bradford's tendency to portray the Plymouth Plantation as being more

cooperative, organized, and monolithic than it really was. For example, Bradford portrays the settlers as being united in their religious convictions. However, many readers of *Of Plymouth Plantation* would be surprised to learn that a significant chunk of the Plymouth settlers weren't Christian reformers, or even particularly religious for the time—many were indentured servants looking for new employment opportunities. Furthermore, Bradford appears to downplay the amount of disagreement and internal strife among the Pilgrims. For example, he characterizes the Pilgrims' decision to sail to America as a difficult decision that, eventually, most people in the community supported. Some historians have suggested that, in reality, a majority of reformers chose not to sail to America at all. Similarly, Bradford suggests that the entire Plymouth community supported the decisions to war with the Native Americans, expand territory, etc., when historians have suggested that these were elite decisions that the lower-class Pilgrims reluctantly accepted. Again, Bradford's desire to portray Plymouth Plantation as an inspiration to others probably led him to exaggerate the unity, idealism, and overall virtue of the colony.

WAR, VIOLENCE, AND THE STATE

Violence has been called the cornerstone of a successful state. The sociologist Max Weber went so far as to *define* the state as the institution that claims a monopoly on the legitimate use of violence. One of the most fascinating aspects of *Of Plymouth Plantation* is the way that Bradford depicts the relationship between violence—directed at Native Americans, neighboring colonies, and even Plymouth Plantation's own people—and the brand new state that William Bradford and his peers built in New England. Within twenty-four hours of landing in New England, Captain Myles Standish leads a group of armed men to explore the surrounding area—a sign of the importance of military force even in a supposedly Christian society. Bradford's book upholds Weber's theories of the state by showing how violence underlies Plymouth society, providing both a system of organization for New England's citizens and a means of seizing and protecting property.

First and foremost, violence is critical to the success of the Plymouth Plantation—and, arguably, of any state—because people need force to protect their property (whether it's private, individual property or property in a more collective sense). The colonists aboard the *Mayflower* bring guns with them, and hire an experienced military commander, Captain Myles Standish, under the assumption that they'll need to fight to protect their claim to land. They are then only able to protect their property and their land in the first thirty years of Plymouth Plantation's history because of their military technology. At various points in the colony's history, the Pilgrims use muskets to seize and protect their land surrounding the Connecticut River, first from Native American tribes and later from French and English settlers. Furthermore, the Pilgrims experience some of their most humiliating *setbacks* because of their inability to use force to defend their property. In 1635, for example, French forces seize the Pilgrims' land, and the Pilgrims lack sufficient manpower and firepower to reclaim what was theirs (and which they, in turn, stole from the Native Americans!). In all, Bradford's account of Plymouth's early history emphasizes the importance of property: which, practically speaking, translates into enough food to feed the Pilgrim population, and enough land to grow corn and beans. He further emphasizes the inseparability of property and violence, essentially showing that, if you can't defend your property, then you don't truly own it at all.

But violence is more than just a means of protecting property; it's a way of creating systems of organization and fostering order and cooperation in society. On one hand, the threat of violence is a powerful means of enforcing the law. In the 1630s, William Bradford organizes the first use of the death penalty in Plymouth, which, one can only assume, encourages the Pilgrims to obey the laws, pay their taxes, obey authority, and generally support the state. Just as importantly, however, violence fosters cooperation *between* different states. In the 1640s, for example, Plymouth enters into the United Council, an agreement between Plymouth, Massachusetts, and various other New England colonies, the primary purpose of which is to provide the resources for future military conflicts. Under the terms of the Council, each colony must support the other colonies in times of war, donating soldiers and resources and paying for all other expenses. The historian Gordon Wood argued that the formation of military alliances such as this anticipated and led to the formation of a strong, nationalized state—the United States of America—by giving social elites (i.e.. council members) more power over their people (i.e., the soldiers). *Of Plymouth Plantation* is the history of a pious Christian community—and yet even this community, it's shown again and again, is structured around the use of force, seemingly confirming the idea that violence is the cornerstone of a powerful, well-organized state.

NATIVE AMERICANS

One of the most remarkable things about *Of Plymouth Plantation* is the way that William Bradford writes about the Native Americans that the Pilgrims encounter in New England. At times, Bradford voices his admiration for certain specific Native Americans, such as Squanto, who helps the Pilgrims communicate with Native American tribes and guides them through the wilderness. But even so, Bradford repeatedly characterizes the Native Americans as "bloodthirsty," arguing that they're "savages" because of their ignorance of Christianity. It's an indisputable fact that Native Americans represent an essential

part of early New England history, on both a practical and a philosophical level: Native Americans showed the early colonists how to survive in New England, and changed the way they thought about themselves and their culture. By studying what Bradford writes about the Native Americans—and, just as importantly, what he *doesn't* write—readers can get a sense for the Native Americans' enormous importance to the colonists.

Perhaps the most important thing that Bradford *doesn't* say about the Native Americans is that, in many ways, they were better organized and more prosperous than the Pilgrim settlers. Bradford credits the Native Americans for providing the Pilgrims with some corn and beans; however, he says relatively little about the invaluable training that Native Americans gave the Pilgrims. Indeed, some historians have argued that the Pilgrims would never have developed agriculture had it not been for Native Americans' advice. There's some historical evidence that the Native Americans were initially healthier than the Pilgrims, though they soon began dying from smallpox (a disease that, unbeknownst to Bradford, English settlers passed on to them). Bradford's treatment of the Native Americans illustrates the psychological concept of cognitive dissonance: the phenomenon whereby a subject holds two contradictory beliefs at the same time, and thus is forced to ignore one of them. On one hand, Bradford wholeheartedly believed that God would reward the Pilgrims for being good Christians and grant them prosperity. On the other, Bradford must have seen that, at least initially, the "heathen" Native Americans were better at surviving in New England than the Pilgrims were. (One key piece of evidence for this claim: Bradford notes that some settlers abandoned Plymouth to live among the Native Americans.) The result of this cognitive dissonance is apparent in *Of Plymouth Plantation*: whether consciously or not, Bradford downplays the sophistication of the Native Americans and emphasizes the Pilgrims' independence from the Native American population.

The Native Americans also shaped the Pilgrims' understanding of their own cultural identity. The historian James Loewen argued that there was no "Europe"—i.e., no collective identity for the people of France, England, Italy, etc.—until Europeans made contact with Native Americans. *Of Plymouth Plantation* supports a similar argument: the colonists of New England began to cooperate with one another, and defined themselves as one collective group, by defining themselves in opposition to "savage" Native American tribes. During the majority of the book, the Pilgrims are shown to think of themselves as a distinct religious group, unique from the rest of European society. Indeed, Bradford shows that the Pilgrims have, at best, very limited cooperation with neighboring colonies—even Massachusetts Bay, another Puritan settlement—and, at worst, outright hostility toward other colonies (for example, the French traders who impinge on English trading rights). It's no coincidence that the first substantive act of cooperation between the New England colonies is a military alliance, the purpose of which is to raise an army against the Native Americans. The colonists' leaders assert their common bond—i.e., by forming a council with a common set of rules and objectives—in the act of opposing Native Americans. This reflects Loewen's point: European settlers in the New World, coming from many different backgrounds, developed a new group identity by defining themselves in opposition to the Native Americans. In more sense than one, European settlers relied on Native Americans for survival: both in the literal sense and the more abstract sense of the survival and success of the European group identity.

DEBT AND RELIGIOUS CAPITALISM

A surprising amount of the "action" in *Of Plymouth Plantation* revolves around the Pilgrims' finances. In the late 1610s the Pilgrims form a plan to migrate to the New World, and to fund the trip they make inroads with the Virginia Company of Plymouth (which Bradford often refers to simply as 'the Virginia Company," though nowadays it's usually called the Plymouth Company). The Pilgrims then travel to Plymouth, significantly in debt to the English investors who'd fronted the money for Plymouth's joint stock operation. Initially, the plan is to pay off the investors over the course of the next seven years. (Historians have argued that, without the invention of the joint stock company, Europe would never have been able to send people to the New World profitably.) In 1624, the Virginia Company fails, but many investors continue to demand their money. Furthermore, the Pilgrims find themselves at the mercy of their English business contacts, some of whom use their position to sell the Pilgrims overpriced goods and make a huge profit, plunging the Plymouth Plantation further into debt.

Of Plymouth Plantation's enormous amount of detail about debt, interest rates, shipping costs, and other financial concerns might seem to contrast with the religious idealism of the Pilgrims' aims. The Pilgrims believe that they're honoring God by founding a new society in which they can worship him freely, and yet they're shackled by their obligations to creditors. The Plymouth Plantation's debt also seems to clash, at least initially, with the Pilgrims' strong emphasis on self-sufficiency and independence (inspired by Saint Paul's command to "owe no man anything"). But in fact, debt becomes a fundamental part of the Pilgrim's religion, reinforcing their emphasis on the virtues of labor and responsibility. One could even argue that for the Pilgrims, the "Protestant work ethic" that comes to define theirs and similar colonies is a result of financial necessity as much as religious idealism.

The Pilgrim's ongoing debts to investors influence early Plymouth society in other important ways as well. First, the English debt provides a constant reminder that the Pilgrims aren't entirely cut off from their old lives. The Pilgrims have

journeyed to the New World to start a new life of religious freedom. But they are still obligated to the English merchants who financed their voyage and provide them with regular shipments of food. By the same token, debt arguably trains Plymouth's leaders to become savvy negotiators and expert politicians. Over the course of the book, William Bradford is forced to send frequent communications back to his creditors in England. He learns to write forcefully but carefully, so as not to anger the merchants and business contacts who hold so much power over his colony. Bradford exercises these same skills when dealing with neighboring settlements in America—so it could be said that Bradford (who had no political experience before Plymouth) grew into a skillful secular leader in the process of managing the colony's debt. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, debt provided the impetus for a strong stable state in Plymouth Plantation. At Plymouth, each Pilgrim is required to pay an annual tax to their governor, gradually paying off their share of the debt. There are several times in the book when some Pilgrims are tempted to run off and make a better life for themselves with the Native Americans. However, Bradford makes it clear that anyone who wants to leave Plymouth must first pay off their debt (or risk being prosecuted as a criminal). As Bradford's dictate suggests, the Pilgrims' leaders had a strong incentive to persuade their followers to stick together. Had the Pilgrims not been in debt for so long, it's entirely possible that many of them would have wandered off in search of a better life, and the Plymouth colony would have collapsed.

Debt provided the Plymouth Pilgrims with a constant reminder of their imperfect natures, a reason to work hard and live frugally (with an emphasis on individual property ownership within a united colony), and a cause to stay together in a strange new place—and in fact, in all of these senses, it was strikingly similar to their interpretation of Christianity. In the long run, the Pilgrims' ongoing debt to England exerted a major influence on the rise of a distinctly American brand of capitalism and Christianity, in which the emphasis on ongoing hard work, property ownership, and individual responsibility reinforced both ideologies.

SYMBOLS

Symbols appear in **teal text** throughout the Summary and Analysis sections of this LitChart.

THE LAND PATENT

Of Plymouth Plantation is written in a spare, unadorned voice known as "the plain style." As a result, there are few symbols in the text: instead, William Bradford opts for a direct, more "honest" form of writing. One exception, however, is the land patent (i.e., legal claim to land) that the English Crown grants to the Plymouth branch of the Virginia Company. After years of hard work, the patent is taken out in the name of one man, John Pierce—but John Pierce eventually decides not to go to America at all, meaning that the land patent is effectively useless for the Pilgrims. Thus, Bradford writes, the patent symbolizes the futility of human existence, and all the "uncertain things of this world."

QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Publisher edition of *Of Plymouth Plantation* published in 0.

Book 1, Chapter 1 Quotes

I must begin at the very root and rise of it; and this I shall endeavor to do in a plain style and with singular regard to the truth, at least as near as my slender judgment can attain to it.

Related Characters: William Bradford (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 1

Explanation and Analysis

In the famous opening paragraph of *Of Plymouth Plantation*, William Bradford outlines the nature of his project: to tell the history of his colony in the simplest, most straightforward language possible. The style to which Bradford alludes here is often called the "plain style," and for future generations of scholars and historians it's one of the most quintessential elements of Puritan culture. Just as Puritan society itself was famously simple, spare, and honest, the Puritan writing style favors simple sentence constructions and unadorned language (and because of this, *Of Plymouth Plantation* is pretty easy for modern audiences to understand, especially compared with a lot of other writing from the 17th century). Bradford writes in this fashion not just to reflect his religious convictions, but so that future generations of readers will be able to understand his writing and learn from it.

But there's more to the plain style than meets the eye. Bradford claims that he'll do his best to be honest and straightforward, but historians have suggested that he doesn't always live up to that aspiration—just as Puritans wasn't always as scrupulously moral and honest as they professed to be. Bradford may have distorted the truth, or lied outright, about the Pilgrims' voyage to America, their financial obligations to England, and their relations with the Native Americans. So perhaps the plain style isn't as "plain" as it appears.

Book 1, Chapter 4 Quotes

But still more lamentable, and of all sorrows most heavy to be borne, was that many of the children, influenced by these conditions, and the great licentiousness of the young people of the country and the many temptations of the city were led by evil example into dangerous courses, getting the reins off their necks and leaving their parents.

Related Characters: William Bradford (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 13

Explanation and Analysis

Bradford quickly outlines the history of the Separatist movement before 1620. Many of the English reformers—i.e., Protestants who argued that the new Anglican Church hadn't gone far enough in breaking with Catholic values and rituals—migrated to Leyden in Holland, where they believed they'd enjoy more religious freedom. However, life in Leyden was challenging, especially since the Pilgrims who lived there had very little experience with city life—most of them were farmers.

The Pilgrims decided to move to America for a number of reasons. One of the most interesting is that which Bradford describes in this passage: the Pilgrims were concerned that in Leyden, they'd be unable to raise children in accordance with their Separatist values. Put another way, the Pilgrims feared that the beliefs for which they'd fought so hard would eventually be drowned out by competing religious traditions in Leyden. The Separatists needed their own community—a place where their children would grow up surrounded by one set of values and one set of religious beliefs. From a modern perspective, this could be interpreted as theocracy (i.e., making sure that children are indoctrinated in a specific set of religious beliefs from the day they're born)—but for the English Separatists, it was a solemn duty to teach their children proper Christian values as soon as possible.

Book 1, Chapter 6 Quotes

About this time they heard both from Mr. Weston and others, that sundry honorable lords had obtained a large grant from the King, of the more northerly parts of the country arising out of the Virginia Company's patent, but wholly separated from its government, and to be called by another name, viz., New England.

Related Characters: William Bradford (speaker), King James I, Thomas Weston

Related Themes:

Page Number: 23

Explanation and Analysis

In Chapter Six, Bradford discusses the reasons why the Pilgrims in Leyden decided to sail for Plymouth, New England, rather than the areas of North America located further south, in Virginia. According to Bradford, the Pilgrims had decided on a voyage to Virginia, only to change direction after their business agent, Mr. Thomas Weston, suggested a new contract that would send them to the north, where, supposedly, there was lucrative fishing.

Many historians have disputed Bradford's version of the events. Some, such as James Loewen, author of *Lies My Teacher Told Me*, have even argued that the Pilgrims initially agreed to sail to Virginia on behalf of the Virginia Company's charter, only to stage a mutiny and redirect the ship towards Plymouth. Bradford, needless to say, doesn't discuss such a possibility. The passage is, all in all, one of the most frequently disputed in *Of Plymouth Plantation*, and a strong reminder that, despite Bradford's claims to be writing honestly and plainly, he may be putting more of a spin on reality than he claims.

My object is that their children may see with what difficulties their fathers had to wrestle in accomplishing the first beginning; and how God ultimately brought them through, notwithstanding all their weakness and infirmities; also that some use may be made of them later, by others, in similar important projects.

Related Characters: William Bradford (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 32

Explanation and Analysis

Bradford offers some explanation for why, in the pages of *Of Plymouth Plantation*, he devotes so much time to describing the Pilgrims' finances and business arrangements with the English merchants. Bradford's explanation is simple: the Pilgrims sacrificed a great deal, and took great pains to arrange a good contract with the Virginia Company—therefore, their sacrifice and hard work should stand as a model for future generations of Pilgrims in New

England.

The passage is interesting because it suggests that Bradford intended *Of Plymouth Plantation* to be read and studied by the people of New England long after his death. This might explain why Bradford often seems to distort the truth to present the Pilgrims in the most favorable light: he had an incentive to idealize the Pilgrims because he wanted the history of the Plymouth colony to inspire people to behave morally and honorably. Other historians have suggested that Bradford prepared a biased account of the Pilgrims' business deals so that, in the event that creditors tried to sue the Plymouth colony, or if English authorities tried to seize control over the colony on moral grounds, Bradford would have a document testifying to the Pilgrims' unimpeachably moral behavior.

Book 1, Chapter 7 Quotes

Mr. Weston also came up from London to see them embark, and to have the conditions confirmed; but they refused, and told him that he knew well that they were not according to the first agreement, nor could they endorse them without the consent of the rest in Holland. In fact they had special orders when they came away, from the chief men of the congregation, not to do it. At this he was much offended, and told them in that case they must stand on their own legs; so he returned to London in displeasure. They lacked about 100 pounds to clear their obligations; but he would not disburse a penny, and left them to shift as they could. So they were forced to sell some of their provisions…

Related Characters: William Bradford (speaker), Thomas Weston

Related Themes:

Page Number: 33

Explanation and Analysis

As the Pilgrims prepared to leave England for America, they had to settle their finances and pay back all short-term loans with English merchants. This created several problems. Furthermore, Thomas Weston tried to alter his contract with the Pilgrims, requiring the Pilgrims to pay back more money upfront, rather than spreading out their payments over a longer period. Just before the Pilgrims were scheduled to leave, Weston appeared in England and tried to pressure some of the Pilgrims to agree to an unfair contract that demanded them to make large payments almost immediately. Bradford clearly suggests that Weston tried to use his position of power over the Pilgrims to pressure them into surrendering more of their money—in other words, Weston used his power to make more money for himself, instead of putting the Pilgrims' needs (or religious ideals) first.

Book 1, Chapter 9 Quotes

It pleased God, before they came half seas over, to smite the young man with a grievous disease, of which he died in a desperate manner, and so was himself the first to be thrown overboard. Thus his curses fell upon his own head, which astonished all his mates for they saw it was the just hand of God upon him.

Related Characters: William Bradford (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 41

Explanation and Analysis

Bradford's description of the voyage from England to America is surprisingly—and, some might say, suspiciously—short, considering how much time he spends on other, arguably less important details of Plymouth's history. He does, however, mention that a sailor, who'd previously embarrassed the Pilgrims and used foul language in front of women and children, died of disease during the long voyage. This is a good example of how Bradford uses moments from the history of the colony (usually tragic ones) as warnings or teaching tools for future generations of Christians: he suggests that God punished the insolent sailor by sending him a deadly disease—and that, in general, God punishes the wicked and rewards the virtuous. (It's also worth noting that, by glossing over the voyage to America aboard the *Mayflower*, Bradford obscures the fact that a significant chunk of the voyagers to Plymouth—possibly the majority—weren't Pilgrims at all. Many were indentured servants who had no particular commitment to Separatist religious values.)

Book 1, Chapter 10 Quotes

They also found two of the Indians' houses covered with mats, and some of their implements in them; but the people had run away and could not be seen. They also found more corn, and beans of various colors. These they brought away, intending to give them full satisfaction when they should meet with any of them.

Related Characters: William Bradford (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 45

Explanation and Analysis

In Chapter Ten, Bradford describes the Pilgrims' earliest encounters with the Native Americans of New England. Before they actually interact with the Native Americans, the Pilgrims steal food from them—although, according to Bradford, the Pilgrims promise to pay back the Native Americans as soon as possible.

The passage is one of the clearest examples of Bradford's strong bias toward the Pilgrims. Had the Native Americans stolen food from the Pilgrims, it's fair to presume, Bradford would have presented the incident in the most withering terms, accusing the Native Americans of savagery, godlessness, and theft. When the Pilgrims steal from the Native Americans, however, Bradford emphasizes their fair-mindedness. It's also very telling that, according to *Of Plymouth Plantation*, the earliest interaction between Native Americans and Pilgrims was an act of theft, foreshadowing the overall theft of Native American lands that would follow in ensuing years.

The Pilgrims, by and large, have a better record of coexisting with the Native Americans than do other English settlers in North America—and, indeed, Bradford is sometimes willing to credit the Native Americans for their sophistication and cooperation. However, Bradford's account of the Pilgrims' relations with the Native Americans is still very often biased, condescending, or factually incorrect.

❝ Thus it pleased God to vanquish their enemies, and give them deliverance; and by His special providence so to dispose that not one of them was hit, though the arrows came close to them, on every side, and some of their coats which were hung up in the barricade were shot through and through. Afterwards they gave God solemn thanks and praise for their deliverance, and gathered up a bundle of the arrows, and later sent them to England by the captain of the ship. They called the place "The First Encounter."

Related Characters: William Bradford (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 47

Explanation and Analysis

The first time Pilgrims interact face-to-face with Native Americans, a fight breaks out—foreshadowing the many more fights and wars that will erupt between New England colonists and Native Americans in the following centuries. It's tragic, and perhaps surprising, that even the piously Christian Pilgrim colonists did not hesitate to use force against the Native Americans. However, as Bradford paints the scene, the Pilgrims acted defensively, shooting only *after* the Native Americans fired arrows at them. Bradford goes out of his way, in fact, to emphasize the point that the Pilgrims were the victims—he even makes notes that most of the Pilgrims had left their muskets behind when the Native Americans attacked. While it's impossible to know for sure what really happened between the Native Americans and the Pilgrims at their "First Encounter," it's likely that Bradford exaggerates the Pilgrims' virtue and plays up the Native Americans' "savagery." And as ever, Bradford assumes that God is on the side of the Pilgrims, and punishes the "heathen" Native Americans with defeat.

Book 2, Chapter 2 Quotes

❝ So he went with the rest, and left them; but on returning from work at noon he found them at play in the street, some pitching the bar, some at stool-ball, and such like sports. So he went to them and took away their games, and told them that it was against his conscience that they should play and others work. If they made the keeping of the day a matter of devotion, let them remain in their houses; but there should be no gaming and reveling in the streets.

Related Characters: William Bradford (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 62

Explanation and Analysis

William Bradford becomes Governor in the second year of the Plymouth Plantation. During the next ten years, he presides over the colony, enforcing Puritan laws and values. In this revealing passage—which almost reads like a parody of Puritanism—Bradford demonstrates the commitment to hard work and frugality that were fixtures of Pilgrim culture. On Christmas Day, Bradford is informed that some of the Pilgrims refuse to work in recognition of the holiday. Bradford later sees a group of youths playing in the streets, at which point he tells them that, if they're not going to work, they should go inside and pray. Work and prayer are

the two acceptable modes of behavior in Plymouth Plantation—play isn't acceptable.

Puritanism was once jokingly defined as "the terrifying suspicion that someone, somewhere, is having a good time." This passage would almost seem to uphold that definition. Bradford believes that the duty of all good Pilgrims is to work hard and live frugally, worshipping God as much as possible. Therefore, he trains the children in his community for a lifetime of work and worship, in which frivolity has no place.

Book 2, Chapter 4 Quotes

❝ This was the end of those who at one time boasted of their strength—all able, healthy men—and what they would do in comparison with the people here, who had many women and children and weak ones among them and who had said, on their first arrival, when they saw the want here, that they would take a very different course and not to fall into any such condition as these simple people had come to. But a man's way is not in his own hands.

Related Characters: William Bradford (speaker)

Related Themes: †

Page Number: 74

Explanation and Analysis

Bradford describes the history of a small settlement in Massachusetts. The earliest Massachusetts settlers aren't as intensely spiritual as the Pilgrims, at least according to Bradford. These settlers arrive in Massachusetts, confident that they'll be able to survive in the harsh New England environment. But soon enough, they begin to suffer from disease, and fail to foster much in the way of agriculture. As Bradford implies, there is nothing coincidental about this: the settlers in Massachusetts have been punished in part because of their immorality. Because they're disorganized and undisciplined, they don't have the wherewithal to survive. Most of all (according to Bradford), the Massachusetts settlers have disrespected God by demonstrating hubris, arrogantly claiming that they can survive in the New World without God's help. As with the profane sailor who died of disease aboard the Mayflower, Bradford takes the fate of the Massachusetts settlers as a teachable moment for future generations of Puritans, confirming the point (straight out of the Biblical book of Ecclesiastes) that human beings don't have total control over their own lives.

❝ The failure of this experiment of communal service, which was tried for several years, and by good and honest men, proves the emptiness of the theory of Plato and other ancients, applauded by some of later times, that the taking away of private property and the possession of it in community by a commonwealth, would make a state happy and flourishing; as if they were wiser than God. For in this instance, community of property (so far as it went) was found to breed much confusion and discontent, and retard much employment which would have been to the general benefit and comfort.

Related Characters: William Bradford (speaker)

Related Themes: †

Page Number: 76

Explanation and Analysis

In this chapter, Bradford contrasts the disorganization of the Massachusetts colonists with the careful organization of the Plymouth Plantation. In particular, Bradford notes that the Pilgrims became much more efficient and productive after they divided up their work in a new way: each family was put in charge of its own patch of farmland. As a result, individuals worked much harder than they had before, since they could see the immediate consequences of their hard work. Furthermore, women and children pitched in, further increasing productivity (and helping the Pilgrims pay off their debt to England).

Bradford's new form of organization could be interpreted as an extension of the Puritan ideology. The Puritans' interpretation of Protestantism stressed the importance of individual accountability and hard work during one's mortal life. Therefore, it makes a certain amount of sense that the Puritans would have eventually gravitated toward a system of agriculture whereby each Pilgrim worked their own land. Bradford's innovations in agricultural organization have been credited with influencing the growth of a uniquely American strain of capitalism, grounded in personal responsibility and property ownership, and reinforced by the Protestant work ethic.

Book 2, Chapter 5 Quotes

❝ Then the Governor explained to the people that he had done it as a magistrate, and was bound to do it to prevent the mischief and ruin that this conspiracy and plot of theirs might otherwise have brought to the colony.

Related Characters: William Bradford (speaker), John Lyford, John Oldham

Related Themes:

Page Number: 99

Explanation and Analysis

In Chapter Five, Bradford (referring to himself in the third person as "the Governor") discusses his decision to monitor two residents of Plymouth Plantation, John Oldham and John Lyford. Both arrived after the first wave of settlers in Plymouth, and both antagonize Bradford by criticizing Puritan values and questioning Bradford's leadership. Bradford is vague on the matter, but it's suggested that Lyford and Oldham aren't really Separatists at all, and move to Plymouth in search of work opportunities more than religious freedom. Bradford sends a spy to open Lyford and Oldham's letters to their contacts in England; the spy finds that Lyford and Oldham have criticized Bradford's government, and Bradford himself. Bradford next holds a trial for Lyford and Oldham, in which he accuses the men of plotting to undermine his authority. When questioned about the ethics of opening someone else's mail, Bradford claims that he had a duty to do so, and adds that the ends (confirming that Lyford was a liar) justify the means (violating Lyford's privacy).

The passage is a good example of how the Pilgrim state could be called unethical and arguably un-Christian in the way it treated its subjects. At least by modern standards, Bradford compromised his moral values in the interests of preserving his authority (here, infringing on Lyford's right to privacy). In history classes, Pilgrim society is often celebrated for promoting democratic values and protecting its citizens' freedom. Nevertheless, Pilgrim society was hardly morally unimpeachable, and many of Bradford's actions at governor seem dubious.

Book 2, Chapter 6 Quotes

❝ While we ourselves are ready to take every opportunity to further so hopeful an enterprise, it must rest with you to put it on its feet again. And whatever else may be said, let your honesty and conscience remain approved, and lose no jot of your innocence amidst your crosses and afflictions; and surely if you behave yourselves wisely and go on fairly, you will need no other weapon to wound your adversaries; for when your righteousness is revealed as the light, they, who have causelessly sought your overthrow, shall cover their faces with shame.

Related Characters: William Bradford

Related Themes:

Page Number: 109

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, the Pilgrims receive a letter from a coalition of investors based in England. These investors have contributed money to the Virginia Company, the joint-stock venture that initially sent the Pilgrims to America. Though the Virginia Company itself has failed, the investors who donated money to the Company are eager to recoup their investments. Therefore, they send a letter to the Pilgrims, asking that they continue paying off their debts in a timely manner. The investors further stress that they'll continue to send the Pilgrims regular supplies, ensuring that the Pilgrims survive, provided that the Pilgrims send *them* beaver furs and other valuable items in order to pay off their obligations.

The passage is important because it establishes a pattern for the rest of the book: the Pilgrims will continue sending back valuable shipments to their investors, in the interest of paying off their debts. The Pilgrims' debt is a central part of their society in Plymouth. It's a constant reminder that they're not completely free of English society, and furthermore, debt provides the Pilgrims with an impetus to work hard and live frugally—upholding and influencing their religious values. This constant paying off of debt as connected to religious values could even be said to result in what is now a uniquely American brand of Christian capitalism.

Book 2, Chapter 9 Quotes

❝ Hitherto Mr. Allerton had done them good and faithful service: would that he had so continued.

Related Characters: William Bradford (speaker), Isaac Allerton

Related Themes:

Page Number: 127

Explanation and Analysis

Over the course of the book, Isaac Allerton transforms from a seemingly faithful servant of William Bradford and the other Pilgrims to a greedy, self-interested businessman who harms the colony in the act of trying to make himself wealthy (although it's later revealed that he's been rather

corrupt all along). Allerton is sent to England by Bradford in order to negotiate the Pilgrims' remaining debts to the English investors. However, Allerton then starts to use this time in England to strengthen his own business ties with English merchants, establishing trading routes for his own goods. Allerton further abuses his position by selling his own beaver furs to English merchants, hurting the market for the Pilgrims' shipments, and prolonging their debt. Allerton's career is, in other words, a good example of a central tenet of Puritanism: excessive authority and wealth breed corruption and sin.

❝ How many Dutch and English have lately been killed by Indians, thus furnished; and no remedy is provided—nay, the evil has increased. The blood of their brothers has been sold for profit; and in what danger all these colonies are is too well-known.

Related Characters: William Bradford (speaker), Mr. Morton

Related Themes:

Page Number: 130

Explanation and Analysis

In Chapter Nine, Bradford also discusses a corrupt merchant named Mr. Morton. Morton is rumored to be an adulterer and a murderer; however, Bradford focuses on Morton's relationship with the Native Americans. Morton is supposedly be the first person to sell muskets and other firearms to Native Americans, thus strengthening the Native Americans in their wars against European settlers, and resulting in the deaths of many Dutch and English colonists. Morton is, from Bradford's perspective, a totally amoral merchant, someone who doesn't care who he's selling to, as long as he continues to make money (and Bradford, of course, assumes the Native American cause to be an "evil" one). The passage also emphasizes how jealously the English settlers guarded their military technology, recognizing that it was a huge advantage—in fact, their single biggest advantage—against the Native American population in New England.

Book 2, Chapter 11 Quotes

❝ Thus out of small beginnings greater things have grown by His hand, Who made all things out of nothing, and gives being to all things that are; and as one small candle may light a thousand, so the light enkindled here has shone to many…

Related Characters: William Bradford (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 149

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Bradford contrasts the success of the Plymouth Plantation with the economic difficulties of other colonies, such as the town of Charlestown. Charlestown suffers from many problems, including starvation and disease. Bradford, however, thanks God that similar problems haven't afflicted the Plymouth Plantation. By the mid-1620s, indeed, Plymouth Plantation has become a highly profitable, well-organized colony. Bradford credits God with these successes; however, Bradford's own intelligence and political savvy were instrumental in Plymouth's success. It was Bradford who proposed a new, individuated style of farming the land, and Bradford also took many measures to build the colonists' loyalty and group unity. The Pilgrims were also extraordinarily lucky that they had Squanto and other friendly Native Americans to show them how to plant seeds and grow corn and beans efficiently. But Bradford tends to downplay the Native Americans' contribution to Plymouth's success, crediting God instead.

Book 2, Chapter 13 Quotes

❝ Others again, thinking themselves impoverished, or for want of accommodation, broke away on one pretense or another, thinking their own imagined necessity or the example of others sufficient warrant. This I fear will be the ruin of New England.

Related Characters: William Bradford (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 161

Explanation and Analysis

Bradford describes the slow decentralization of New England society in the 1630s. Colonists increasingly lived far away from the center of Plymouth Plantation, encouraged by the new level of prosperity in the colony. As a result, Bradford argues, the colonists become more and more disorganized and less united in a common culture and religion. Bradford fears that, in the future, New England's colonies will collapse because of this same decentralization and disunity.

It's interesting, from a political scientist's lens, that Bradford emphasizes the disunity of the colonists around the same time that he and other New England governors began to strengthen their militaries. It could be argued that, by strengthening its army, the Plymouth Plantation solved its own problems of disorganization—since, by definition, a strong military has the effect of organizing the people and uniting them around a common set of interests. As Bradford shows in the following chapters, New England society became increasingly militarized in the 1630s and 1640s, perhaps offsetting some of the problems that he identifies in this passage.

Book 2, Chapter 14 Quotes

I shall leave the matter, and desire the Lord to show him his errors and return him to the way of truth, and give him a settled judgment and constancy therein; for I hope he belongs to the Lord and that He will show him mercy.

Related Characters: William Bradford (speaker), Roger Williams

Related Themes:

Page Number: 164

Explanation and Analysis

Bradford briefly describes the life of Roger Williams, one of the most influential figures in early New England society. Roger Williams was a renowned preacher in his community, but quickly earned the ire of the government because his interpretation of Protestant values took the idea of predestination to its extreme, suggesting that human beings needn't obey laws or subscribe to any set of values during their lifetimes—their souls were either saved, or they weren't, and no amount of good deeds could change that. Williams eventually left his community and settled in the colony of Rhode Island. Williams continued to win the respect from some New England colonists due to his impassionate sermons, but he was a highly controversial figure in part because he questioned the rigid structure of New England Christian society. Bradford takes a mixed view of Williams, praising him for his religious passion but stressing that he is mistaken in his interpretation of the Bible.

Book 2, Chapter 15 Quotes

Notice was given a month beforehand, viz.: to Massachusetts, Salem, Piscataqua, and others, requesting them to produce any evidence they could in the case. The place of meeting was Boston. But when the day came, there only appeared some of the magistrates and ministers of Massachusetts and of New Plymouth. As none had come from Piscataqua or other places, Mr. Winthrop and the others said they could do no more than they had done, and the blame must rest with them.

Related Characters: William Bradford (speaker), Hocking, Governor John Winthrop

Related Themes:

Page Number: 170-171

Explanation and Analysis

In Chapter Fifteen, Bradford describes the Hocking incident, during which a Piscataqua man named Hocking was killed on Plymouth land, causing a potential conflict between Plymouth and Piscataqua. In an effort to prevent a full-scale war, Bradford, acting on the advice of John Winthrop, the governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, called for a meeting of judges and magistrates from all the New England colonies in Boston. However, only a few magistrates showed up, none of whom were from Piscataqua. While the Hocking incident didn't result in any kind of war between Plymouth and Piscataqua, Bradford failed to assemble a peaceful coalition of New England authorities. This suggests that New England in the 1630s and 1640s wasn't a close-knit community, but rather a hodgepodge of loosely connected territories. After a series of conflict with the Native Americans, however, the New England colonies began to work together.

The chief Sachem himself died, and almost all his friends and relatives; but by the marvelous goodness and providence of God not one of the English was so much as ill...

Related Characters: William Bradford (speaker), Sachem

Related Themes:

Page Number: 173

Explanation and Analysis

At the end of the chapter, Bradford describes how many Native Americans died of a mysterious plague—a plague

that was almost certainly smallpox. Unbeknownst to Bradford, the cause of the smallpox epidemic was European migration to the New World. For centuries, European citizens had developed immunities to various deadly infectious diseases, including smallpox. Therefore, the European colonists in New England spread germs to the Native Americans, resulting in the deaths of tens of thousands of Native Americans, while the English settlers (in this case at least) didn't suffer a single death. Bradford interprets the survival of the English settlers as a blessing from God—perhaps even a reward for virtuous behavior. And yet, we now know, there was a far more literal—and disturbing—explanation for this phenomenon.

Book 2, Chapter 16 Quotes

He consulted with the Captain how he could get further supplies of gun powder, for he had not enough to carry him home; so he told him he would go to the next settlement and endeavour to procure him some, and did so. But Captain Standish gathered, from intelligence he received that he intended to seize the bark and take the beaver, so he sent him the powder and brought the bark home. Girling never attacked the place again, and went on his way; which ended the business.

Related Characters: William Bradford (speaker), Captain Myles Standish, Girling

Related Themes:

Page Number: 177

Explanation and Analysis

In Chapter Sixteen, the Pilgrims endure a humiliating defeat. French colonists raid Pilgrim land and steal Pilgrim property, and the Pilgrims are too weak and disorganized to fight back. Captain Myles Standish, one of the few Pilgrims with real military experience, organizes a mission to reclaim the property from France; however, he's forced to work with a captain named Girling, who's so incompetent that he fires the ship's ammunition before they even reach the French, forcing Standish to order Girling to turn back.

In all, the incident demonstrates how fragile the Pilgrim state was at the time. If the mark of a strong state is its ability to defend its citizens' property, then Plymouth wasn't strong at all. After a series of conflicts with the Native Americans, however, Plymouth became a powerful military presence that could not only defend its own people's property but also steal *more* property from the Native Americans.

Book 2, Chapter 19 Quotes

Some of the more ignorant colonists objected that an Englishman should be put to death for an Indian. So at last the murderers were brought home from the Island, and after being tried, and the evidence produced, they all in the end freely confessed to all the Indian had accused them of and that they had done it in the manner described. So they were condemned by the jury, and executed. Some of the Narragansett Indians and the murdered man's friends, were present when it was done, which gave them and all the country satisfaction. But it was a matter of much sadness to them here, as it was the second execution since they came,—both being for willful murder.

Related Characters: William Bradford (speaker), Richard Stinnings, Thomas Jackson, Arthur Peach

Related Themes:

Page Number: 194

Explanation and Analysis

In this chapter, Bradford describes the executions of three English settlers in Plymouth: Arthur Peach, Thomas Jackson, and Richard Stinnings. The settlers were executed for fighting and killing Narragansett Native Americans. This created an interesting controversy among the Plymouth population. Some argued that the Pilgrims would be wrong to spill English blood over something as trivial as the death of a Native American. Bradford arguably deserves some credit for respecting the lives of Native Americans to a degree that other colonial governors did not: he argued that the Pilgrims should honor the Narragansett tribe's rights and avenge the death of a Narragansett Native American.

At the same time, however, it's important to recognize the political, non-idealistic side of Bradford's decision. Bradford had an incentive at the time to forge a strong alliance with the Narragansett, so in a sense he was forced to execute the three men. Furthermore, the fact that Bradford ordered the execution of some of his own citizens suggests that, at the time, the Plymouth state was becoming more powerful and more aggressive in enforcing its own authority. It's no coincidence that the three public executions come on the heels of the Pilgrims' war with the Pequot tribe: it's as if the conflict with the Pequot set a new precedent for brutality.

Book 2, Chapter 21 Quotes

Now, blessed be God, times are so much changed here that I hope to see many of you return to your native country again, and have such freedom and liberty as the word of God prescribes.

Related Characters: James Sherley (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 201

Explanation and Analysis

In this intriguing passage from a letter sent by James Sherley, one of the Pilgrims' key business contacts, Sherley tell the Pilgrims that England has changed greatly since the 1610s: the country is becoming more overtly Protestant, shedding some of the Catholic ritualism that inspired the English reformers to migrate to Leyden in the first place. He raises the possibility that, someday, the Pilgrims will return to England.

Although Bradford doesn't comment on Sherley's suggestion, it's immediately understood that his suggestion isn't worth entertaining. By this time, the Pilgrims have built a society for themselves in America: they have their own distinct values, work ethic, and even religious practices (for instance, they baptize their children by drizzling water on them, instead of dunking them in water—a byproduct of the cold New England weather). From a literary perspective, Sherley's letter is an important, and even poignant, sign of how much time has passed over the course of Bradford's book. The Pilgrims are no longer English in their values and behavior: they've become distinctly American.

Book 2, Chapter 23 Quotes

I cannot but take occasion here to wonder at the marvelous providence of God, that, notwithstanding the many changes these people went through, and the many enemies they had, and the difficulties they met with, so many of them should live to very old age. It was not only their reverend elder—for one swallow makes no summer, as they say—but many more of them, some dying about and before this time, and some still living, who reached sixty or sixty-five years of age, others seventy and over, and some nearly eighty as he was. It must needs be accounted for by more than natural reasons...

Related Characters: William Bradford (speaker), William Brewster

Related Themes:

Page Number: 209

Explanation and Analysis

In this chapter, Bradford comments on the health and vigor of the Pilgrims in New England. Pilgrims were quite long-lived by the standards of the 17th-century Western world: some of them lived to be seventy or even eighty years old. Bradford credits the Pilgrims' longevity to the grace of God—but there are also worldlier, more concrete reasons. The Pilgrims worked hard, ate healthily, and remained mostly free of disease. They also remained a close-knit community, meaning that they tended to their wounded and protected one another from danger. It's typical of Bradford's worldview that he credits God with the Pilgrims' success in the New World. Although God might be the underlying cause of the Pilgrims' success, the more immediate, proximate causes are their hard work and cultural unity.

The said United Colonies, for themselves and their posterity jointly and severally, hereby enter into a firm and perpetual league of friendship and amity for offence and defense, mutual advice and succor, upon all just occasions, both for preserving and propagating the truth of the Gospel, and for their own mutual safety and welfare.

Related Characters: William Bradford (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 211

Explanation and Analysis

Here, Bradford describes the formation of the United Colonies' council. The most immediate purpose of the United Colonies was to form a strong military. At the time, there was a conflict brewing between the Narragansett and other Native American tribes, and the American colonists wanted to be able to protect their land (which they'd essentially stolen from the Native Americans in the first place) and preserve free, peaceful trade. Consequently, Bradford, along with governors from other New England colonies, promised to provide troops, money, supplies, and other resources in the event of any military conflict.

The formation of the United Colonies was a milestone in New England history, because it represented one of the first times that the colonies' leaders acted together. It's no coincidence that the impetus for forming the treaty was military in nature: the New England colonies wanted to be able to protect themselves from Native American aggression and, it could certainly be argued, to summon a powerful enough military force to steal additional land from Native American tribes in the future. Native Americans were a central part of early New England history: they

helped the colonists learn how to farm and support themselves, but they also provided a convenient foe against which the colonists could define themselves.

SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

The color-coded icons under each analysis entry make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. Each icon corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section of this LitChart.

BOOK 1, CHAPTER 1

William Bradford says that he will begin with an account of the events that led to the foundation of the New Plymouth Settlement. He will tell this story in a "plain style," telling the truth to the best of his mortal abilities.

Bradford promises to write in a simple, "plain" style, without lots of elaborate literary devices or sentence constructions. As a result, Of Plymouth Plantation *is fairly easy for 21st century people to read, at least compared with other texts from the 1600s. Bradford characterizes the plain style as an extension of the Pilgrim ethos: simple, spare, and honest.*

Throughout history, Bradford claims, the Devil has tried to fight Christianity through various means. In ancient Rome, for example, he killed Christians. Then, when the Christian Church became powerful, he succeeded in tempting clergymen, so that Christianity itself was corrupted with "vile canons and decrees." The Devil has used two different means to fight Christianity: attacking Christianity from the outside, and corrupting and twisting it from the inside. In modern England, the Devil has more often used the second method.

Bradford situates the story of the Pilgrims' migration to America within a broader narrative, alluding to the persecution of Christians throughout history. Note, though, that he is careful to distinguish "true Christians" from "vile" Catholic institutions and ceremonies—and the true Christians are always portrayed as innocent victims of both supernatural and human evil.

The Protestant reformers who sought to fight the evils of "popery" (Catholicism) became locked in a "bitter war" with each other. Virtuous Protestant reformers supported a simple Christian religion, based on humble pastors' interpretations of the gospels. The other, "episcopal" reformers supported a Christianity tarnished by the "popish manner," with its emphasis on gaudy ceremony. Under the reign of Queen Elizabeth, the episcopal party" became too powerful. They criticized other Christian reformers for being too "high and mighty," and gave them a derisive nickname, "Puritans." By emphasizing ceremony, episcopal Christians risked reverting to old-fashioned popery.

Bradford suggests that, even within the Protestant Reformation movement, some reformers didn't go far enough in their desire to promote simplicity and spirituality. In the early 17th century, England had broken with the Catholic Church and founded its own version of Christianity, Anglicanism. There were many Protestant reformers, including Bradford himself, who criticized Anglicanism for being too similar to Catholicism (or "popery," which Bradford assumes to be evil); first because it emphasized church hierarchy (the prelates), and second because it emphasized ceremony. Notice that Bradford doesn't use the word Puritan to describe his followers, even though that's the word most people use today—as with many other terms describing a group ("Yankee," "Impressionist"), the insult has become the accepted term.

The story of the Plymouth Plantation begins when a group of North English preachers found the true word of God. They began to reform their lives, despite the fact that they were scorned by their neighbors, and they refuse to acknowledge the authority of prelates (i.e., bishops and other high religious authorities). After the coronation of King James I, prelates begin to wield much more power over the English church, and the North English reformers saw that England was in danger of returning to popery.

The English reformers were scorned and persecuted in their own country at a time when religious freedom wasn't seen as a fundamental right in England. These reformers were committed to simplifying the Christian church, getting rid of the complex hierarchies of bishops, ministers, and cardinals (although, to be clear, Puritans didn't reject the concept of authority altogether—there were certainly Puritan reverends).

One of the key leaders of the Northern English reformers is a man named John Smith. Another is a man named Richard Clifton—Clifton ends up playing the more significant role in the growth of the Plymouth Plantation. Clifton tries to institute reform in England, but eventually proposes that all Christian reformers should migrate to the Low Countries (i.e., present-day Netherlands and Belgium), where there's supposedly more religious freedom. By 1608, there is a significant English population in Holland.

Historians have studied the reformers' migration to Holland—at the time, Northern English people were unusually familiar with moving to a new community. This would suggest that, at least compared with most other Europeans of the time, North English reformers were especially willing to uproot their families and migrate to the Low countries. The move to Holland was something of a "trial run" for the longer, more challenging voyage to America.

BOOK 1, CHAPTER 2

The English reformers make a great sacrifice when they migrate to Holland: many of them abandon their families and property. Furthermore, they have little experience with trade, since most of them are farmers. Life in Holland is difficult for the reformers because they're charged exorbitant rates to travel to their adopted country. One group of reformers tries to set sail for Holland from Lincolnshire, but their captain betrays them and sends them to prison. Later, a Dutchman offers to bring some English reformers to Holland. He allows the men to board the vessel—but then, when he sees that English troops are trying to arrest his passengers, he sets sail, leaving the reformers' wives behind.

The voyage to Holland represents the reformers' first experiences with corrupt businesspeople, who take advantage of them in their moment of desperation. Nevertheless, Bradford tends to portray the Dutch in favorable terms throughout the book—notice that, even here, the Dutch captain sails away from the harbor, not because of ill intent but because he doesn't want to get arrested, and wants to bring as many reformers to Holland as possible. Also note the level of persecution the reformers face in England—they can actually be arrested for their brand of Christianity.

Bradford says he will not dwell on the details of how the English reformers made their ways into Holland. In the end all the English reformers found their way to Holland, and rejoiced at having a new, tolerant home.

Bradford doesn't give much information about the migration to Holland, opting for a vague generalization that leaves out the many reformers who did not *escape.*

BOOK 1, CHAPTER 3

In Holland, the English reformers are intimidated by the strange language and customs. They work hard to avoid falling into poverty. Settling in the city of Leyden, famous for its university, the English manage to support themselves. The unofficial leader of the English, John Robinson, along with his assistant, William Brewster, fosters a strong congregation. Robinson is beloved among his congregants.

At the time, Leyden was a seat of religious and political thought, and a home to some of the most notable Protestant theologians in Europe. The reformers are impoverished during their time in Leyden, however, since they don't have any real experience with Dutch culture.

Bradford says he won't dwell on the details of the English reformers' lives in Holland, since his subject is Plymouth. However, Bradford will address the slanderous rumor that the English left Holland because of their poor reputation. On the contrary, he says, English reformers had a reputation for honesty. However, they became embroiled in a feud with the Arminian (i.e., Dutch Protestant reformer) population. The Arminians were well educated, and Robinson engaged in many theological debates with their leader, Poliander. Robinson was so successful in the debates that many prominent Dutchmen became sympathetic to Robinson's ideas, and invited Robinson's congregation to remain in the country.

Here Bradford seems to be obscuring the truth in the interest of representing the Pilgrims in a favorable light. He goes out of his way to insist that the Pilgrims, contrary to what others have said, were well behaved and beloved in Leyden. At the time, however, it was extremely rare for people to uproot themselves and leave the country, and usually, it only happened when the people were being punished for something. Thus, Bradford is trying to defend his people from the impression that they might have left Holland because they wore out their welcome in some way.

BOOK 1, CHAPTER 4

The English reformers live in Leyden for over a decade. Around this time, some senior congregants begin to plan for a long-term colony in another part of the world. Bradford will now discuss the congregants' reasons for proposing such a colony.

Bradford walks readers through the process of choosing to migrate to America, as opposed to some other European country.

First, English reformers recognize that few other people will join them in their new Dutch home, since moving to a new country is difficult. Second, they recognize that, due to the hardships of Leyden life, congregants are dying early. Recognizing that wise men should preserve their health and prepare for adversity, they plan to move to a place where they might live better lives. Third, the English recognize that they have a duty to take care of their children. In Holland, where there are many corrupting influences, it's difficult to raise good Christians. Finally, the English want to spread their faith around the world. For all of these reasons, they support colonizing America.

According to Bradford, the decision to leave Holland was motivated by a desire to practice Christianity to the best of the reformers' abilities. Notice that Bradford speaks of the "English reformers" as if they're one monolithic group. Many European historians have suggested that, in fact, it was Bradford and other more elite reformers who pushed the group to leave Holland, while most of the congregation wanted to stay in their new home.

At the time, America is seen as a fruitful place to live. Some reformers are reluctant to sail so far away, especially since some of them are likely to die on the voyage. Others argue that it will be costly to sail to America. However, reform leaders successfully argue that they'll triumph with the help of God and that even if some of them die on the voyage over, they'll die satisfied at having made such a journey. In the end, the reformers decide to sail to America.

The reformers' religious passion inspires them to travel across the ocean to find a new home: they accept that, even if they die, they'll have died for the sake of their religious beliefs—or at least that's what their leaders want them to accept, and what Bradford wants his readers to believe.

BOOK 1, CHAPTER 5

The next task for the reformers is to decide which part of America to sail for. Some propose sailing to Guyana (present-day Venezuela), while others support Virginia. Guyana is said to be fertile and warm, while Virginia has the advantage of already having an English population. Some argue that Guyana will foster disease. Others point out that settling in Virginia, where there are other English settlers, defeats the point of sailing to a new land. In the end, the reformers decide that they will live as a separate colony under the government of Virginia, and that they will try to persuade King James I to allow them to worship in their own way.

In the early 17th century, King James I was in the business of leasing charters (i.e., legal claims to American territory) with the understanding that settlers would journey to America and send back great wealth. However, James had to be sure that these settlers would honor him and respect his authority—so the English reformers were in an awkward position if they wanted to go to Virginia, since they were fleeing the crown's persecution in the first place.

Two members of the congregation sail to England to negotiate a voyage to America. The Virginia Company is eager for volunteers to sail to America, and in return, it uses some of its connections, including Sir Robert Nanton, to convince the king to allow the reformers to practice their faith. James I consents to allow the reformers to worship in America in their own way, but he refuses to publicly agree to honor their religion. This awkward compromise is the best the Virginia Company can offer the reformers.

Instead of lobbying King James directly, the congregants work through the Virginia Company, a joint-stock venture for which James dispenses the land rights (since, by English law, James technically owned all of England's land in America). Privately, James doesn't seem to care how the reformers worship God, but he's concerned that if he publicly recognizes the reformers' religion, it'll create a dangerous precedent.

The English reformers are unsure how to proceed. Some think that King James' limited support is enough; others fear that his successors might back out of his promise. In the end, the reformers agree that the British crown won't infringe upon their faith. By 1617, John Robinson and William Brewster receive word that the Virginia Company has arranged an agreement for their congregation. In their negotiations with the Virginia Company, Robinson and Brewster stress their congregants' diligence and unity.

The reformers take a gamble and decide to cooperate with James, hoping that he won't back out of his promise to allow them to worship peacefully. Brewster and Robinson essentially go in for a job interview with the Virginia Company, explaining why their congregants would be the best people for the "job" of traveling to America and forming a new plantation.

Bradford provides letters that give an overview of the process by which the reformers negotiated a contract with the Virginia Company. In December 1617, Robinson and Brewster write to Sir John Worstenholme, another important ally of the Virginia Company, to defend their religion from common criticisms. In response to the criticism that their congregants aren't loyal to the crown, Robinson and Brewster insist that they will take an Oath of Allegiance recognizing the king's authority over the pope. In response to the criticism that the reformers are unlike other Christians, Robinson and Brewster argue that they are similar to the French Reformed Churches (i.e., the French Protestants).

Bradford likes to include letters in his account of Plymouth's history, and here he includes the first of many correspondences between the reformers and their English business contacts. Brewster and Robinson continue to stress their congregants' virtues, implicitly arguing that they're highly qualified to travel to America and run a plantation in King James's name. At the time, James demanded that his subjects take an Oath of Allegiance, swearing to defend the king's honor and recognize his authority.

There are many delays in the negotiation process. One important point of contention is who will lead the Virginia colony when it arrives in America. The company's preferred candidate, Sir Thomas Smith, is reluctant to be governor. However, he doesn't approve of the company's new proposed governor, Sir Edwin Sandys. There's also a controversy over how many people will be able to travel to America, and when. In 1619, a reformer named Blackwell splits from the congregation and begins supporting the English prelates. He then sails for America along with a small group of followers. Blackwell, according to rumor, makes a huge mistake by packing too many people into the ship, with the result that many die of disease or else starve to death.

Here Bradford describes the first of many complications and delays in the reformers' relationship with the Virginia businessmen revolving around who the colony's new leader will be. Notice, also, that Bradford describes the crushing failure of a supposedly immoral, hypocritical man named Blackwell, who sacrifices his religious convictions for the sake of traveling to America. Bradford has a habit of including stories of this kind, which stress that God rewards the virtuous and punishes hypocrites like Blackwell.

In spite of many complications and controversies, the Virginia Company succeeds in obtaining a contract for the Leyden congregants. The Company even obtains a **land patent** (i.e., legal right to land) for the reformers. However, the patent isn't taken out in the name of the reformers, but rather in the name of single person, John Pierce, who eventually decides not to go to America at all. Thus the patent is a symbol, Bradford says, of "the uncertain things of this world."

One of the main purposes of working through an established stock venture like the Virginia Company is that the Company can use its influence to lobby King James for a patent—a legal claim to land, taken out in James's own name. However, this patent doesn't prove at all useful to the reformers, reminding Bradford (who then reminds the reader) that even "the best laid plans" of mortals can fail.

BOOK 1, CHAPTER 6

In the year 1620, the reformers have a contract to sail to Virginia. Their next task is to decide which of their number should sail first. Those who can settle their affairs most quickly are permitted to leave, but most of the congregants stay behind. It is decided that William Brewster will go to America, leaving Robinson behind.

It's a sign of how many reformers stay behind in Holland that Robinson stays in Leyden, too: somebody needs to lead the reformers who haven't yet made the voyage to America.

The next challenge for the congregants is to organize themselves. It's difficult for the potential colonists to agree on where and when to sail. Some of the colonists living in England back out of their decision to sail to Virginia, while others still want to sail to Guyana. Next, Thomas Weston, a merchant with whom Brewster and Robinson had been friendly, begins to change course. Weston offers the congregants a new agreement, whereby they will sail north of Virginia to a part of America called New England, where, Weston believes, there's a lot of money to be earned from fishing.

While the congregants begin to decide whether they'll travel to America or not, the group's agreement begins to change suddenly. Thomas Weston, one of the most overtly villainous people in Bradford's journal, now wants to bring the reformers to New England—which, of course, is where they ended up. Weston changes course for selfish reasons, as he thinks that he (and, admittedly, the colonists) stands to make more money. Two other notes: 1) Bradford continues to refer to the Plymouth branch of the Virginia Company as "the Virginia Company." 2) Some historians, like James Loewen, have gone so far as to say that Bradford was lying about the change in the charter, and that the Pilgrims staged a mutiny on the Mayflower while it was bound for Virginia.

Along with his proposal for sailing to a new part of America, Weston introduces a new contract with the congregants. Previously, Weston had assured Robinson that he would provide for the congregation's rations and transportation, provided that the colonists pay him in the future. Now, Weston offers an agreement whereby the New England colonists have to pay more upfront and, secondly, planters (i.e., farmers who own a parcel of land on Plymouth Plantation) will not be allowed to farm their land for personal profit, but will instead be required to send surpluses back to England.

Much like the captains who transported the English reformers to Holland, Weston recognizes that the reformers have no real power, and therefore have to agree to whatever he says. For the first, but not the last time, he tries to extract more money from his clients. Notice that Bradford faults Weston for trying to deprive the reformers of the right to farm land for their own gain. Bradford later writes (and historians have confirmed) that planters' desire to make personal profit was a major reason why the Plymouth colony succeeded.

In response to Weston's new demands, John Robinson writes a letter to Robert Cushman, the congregants' agent in England, on June 10th, 1620. In the letter he voices his disapproval for Weston's behavior, arguing that planters should be allowed "personal profit" from their work on the land in New England. Bradford, along with three of his peers, also pens a letter to Cushman, stressing that they'd trusted Weston. Cushman replies to the letter, insisting that the original contract with Weston was unfair and needed revising, and that the money Weston now demands will be used for the colonists' own good. Bradford guesses that the Leyden congregation never received Cushman's reply (it was probably intercepted by John Carver for fear of offending the congregants). However, Cushman sends another, milder letter, clarifying that he's made progress obtaining a ship for the transatlantic voyage.

The congregants' leaders, especially Robinson, continue to negotiate as their circumstances change, as Bradford again shows the political and financial dealings underpinning this venture of supposed religious idealism. Instead of dealing with Weston directly, Robinson tries to work with Cushman and negotiate a new, fairer contract. However, Cushman pushes back, and his reply illustrates what Weston already understood—the reformers don't have much power or leverage to influence the Company.

Another problem arises midway: the congregants' two primary contacts stationed in England, John Carver and Robert Cushman, begin to disagree with their other contact, Mr. Martin. Martin argues that it would be best to accrue provisions for the voyage in Kent, and he proceeds to do so, even after Carver orders him to stop. Cushman also argues with Carver: Cushman claims that, contrary to what Carver has claimed, the congregants will be able to front enough money to fund the voyage under their new agreement with the Virginia Company.

John Carver was the first governor of the Plymouth Plantation, but he was a controversial figure during the Leyden period of the reformers' history. Carver and Cushman had very different ideas about what sort of contract the reformers should make with the Virginia Company, and the letters Bradford includes here are some of the book's only examples of a clash between different high-ranking figures in the English reform movement.

Bradford acknowledges that he has been especially thorough on the matters of financing the transatlantic voyage. His aim is to show the descendants of the Plymouth colonists how difficult their ancestors' struggle was.

Bradford intends his book to be an example—a teaching tool, even—for the descendants of the Pilgrims. As a result, it's worth noting, Bradford has a strong incentive to portray the pilgrims in a favorable light, meaning that he arguably glosses over their more unsavory actions. Put another way, the "plain style" may be less honest than Bradford claims.

BOOK 1, CHAPTER 7

By July of 1620, the reformers have obtained the necessary materials for a voyage to America. They sail out of Delfthaven, sorry to leave Holland but faithful that God will protect them. Within a few days they've sailed to Southampton, England, where Carver and Cushman have found ships to take them to America.

Thanks to Weston, Carver, and Cushman, the Pilgrims are now sailing to New England under a new contract that requires them to pay more money upfront and pay the remainder back sooner.

In Southampton, the English reformers, now calling themselves Pilgrims, have to close their business with Cushman. Weston arrives to gives the Pilgrims provisions and help with clearing their financial obligations. But when the Pilgrims refuse to finalize their business arrangement with Weston, Weston becomes offended and leaves. As a result, The Pilgrims lack about one hundred pounds to clear their obligations, meaning that they're forced to re-sell some of their provisions.

Bradford hereafter refers to the congregants as Pilgrims, rather than Puritans or Separatists. The concept of the pilgrimage is very important to Christianity, and the Plymouth Pilgrims took inspiration in the long tradition of Christian visionaries and prophets who made pilgrimages in search of religious enlightenment. Yet the passage also contrasts the high-mindedness of the Pilgrims' concept of themselves with the harsh reality of their debts to Cushman. Yet as we will see, debt and financial responsibility becomes fundamentally linked to the Pilgrims' religion: an impetus to work hard and be responsible for one's own life.

In August of 1620, while still in Southampton, the Pilgrims pen a letter to the various merchants of the area, many of whom have purchased stock in the Virginia Company. In the letter, the Pilgrims stress that Cushman rewrote the contract with the Pilgrims to require them to pay more money. They also promise to reimburse the merchants investors over the next seven years, in the event that they haven't already turned a profit.

The Pilgrims' letter is intended to reassure the merchant investors (who've financed the voyage to America) that they're reliable, trustworthy people who'll pay back their debt. This is a wise move, since the investors will wield a lot of power over the Pilgrims in the years to come, so the Pilgrims need to stay in their good graces.

On July 27, 1620, John Robinson (an important leader of the English separatists) writes a letter to the Pilgrims in which he outlines five pieces of advice. First, he advises them to repent their sins. Second, he tells them to be reasonable and never to take offense at other people's behavior. Third, he urges the Pilgrims to cooperate, recognizing that they'll be working side by side in a strange place. Fourth, he advises them to work for a common good, rather than pursuing selfish interests. Finally, he stresses that the Pilgrims are about to become a "body politic," meaning that they should elect an honest leader. The Pilgrims receives Robinson's letter and, following his advice, elect governors and assistants for the voyage. Then, with their affairs settled, they sail for America on August 5th, in two separate ships.

Robinson's letter stresses the Pilgrims' religious faith, but it also addresses some more practical concerns. Robinson stresses the need for cooperation and condemns selfishness. However, as Bradford shows, the Pilgrim's society is both selfish and cooperative—they (or at least their leaders) find that what's best for the individual farmer is often best for the group. With the word "elect," Robinson stresses the democratic nature of the plantation, but Bradford doesn't give much information about how leaders were chosen at Plymouth, and historians debate how democratic the colony really was.

BOOK 1, CHAPTER 8

Shortly after setting sail, the Pilgrims run into a problem. The captain of the smaller ship, Mr. Reynolds, realizes that the ship is leaky and probably can't survive a voyage. Both ships dock to wait for repairs; however, no leaks can be found. Eventually, it's decided that the smaller ship must stay behind. The ship's provisions are transferred to the larger ship, which is captained by Christopher Jones, and the remaining Pilgrims set sail, sorry to leave their friends.

Notice that Bradford gives the strong impression that there are only Pilgrims aboard the ship. In reality, there were other people traveling to New England as well, including indentured servants, farmers, and people with no strong Separatist convictions.

One of the people who stay behind is Mr. Cushman. On August 17, 1620, he writes a long letter to Edward Southworth, a friend living in London, complaining about the lengthy process of repairing the smaller ship. He also complains that Mr. Weston is being unreasonable in demanding new conditions for the Pilgrims' contract. Some Pilgrims point out that Mr. Robinson should have confirmed the conditions earlier. In light of the disunity and financial troubles of the voyage, Cushman writes, "if ever we establish a colony, God works a miracle."

The chapter ends on a note of disunity and suspense—it's not clear how the Pilgrim leaders will be able to overcome their disagreements over contracts and debts and work together to run a successful colony in New England. Cushman's observation stresses the Pilgrim's faith in God's benevolence, and how they intimately connect their financial decisions to their religious beliefs.

BOOK 1, CHAPTER 9

The Pilgrims sail from Plymouth on September 6th, 1620, aboard a ship called the *Mayflower*. Soon, many of the Pilgrims are seasick. One of the ship's sailors harasses the Pilgrims and curses around children; however, he eventually dies from a horrible disease, and is "the first to be thrown overboard," reflecting "the just hand of God upon him." Later, a young man is thrown off the ship in a storm, but manages to hang on and climb aboard again. Ultimately, only one passenger dies on the voyage to America.

Bradford uses episodes from the voyage as teaching tools for future generations of Christian readers: he implies that un-virtuous people, such as the sailor, will be punished for their sinfulness. Notice that Bradford describes the profane sailor as "the first" to be thrown overboard, implying that others came after him, but then claims that only one person on the Mayflower died—perhaps Bradford means that other sailors died, but only one passenger.

The *Mayflower* anchors in a part of America called Cape Cod, near Hudson's River. Cape Cod was first discovered by a group of English explorers in 1602. The Pilgrims thank God for having reached land, but they know that they have many challenges ahead of them. They're about to encounter "savages" in America, who are ready to "fill their sides full of arrows." Furthermore, it's winter when the Pilgrims arrive. They have nothing to sustain them but God's mercy, Bradford says.

Notice that Bradford leaves out almost all the information about the actual voyage. Some historians, including James Loewen in Lies My Teacher Told Me, have argued that, contrary to Bradford's claims, the Mayflower *was supposed to sail for Virginia, but changed course after the Pilgrims staged a mutiny, meaning that Bradford lies about this throughout Book One. If this is true, then the chapter's lack of detail seems to disguise a guilty conscience. Also notice that Bradford characterizes the Native Americans (whom he calls Indians, since it was initially believed that America was a part of India) as wild and savage—an example of an inherent racist bias almost all European colonists held against Native peoples.*

BOOK 1, CHAPTER 10

Having arrived at Cape Cod in November 1620, the Pilgrims proceed to explore their new home, under the command of Captain Standish. On November 15th, a group of armed Pilgrims ventures inland, where they see a group of Indian "savages." The Pilgrims try to speak to the Indians, but they run away. That night, the Pilgrims discover a river leading to an Indian community. There, they find corn and beans, which they take, intending to "give full satisfaction" to the Indians when next they meet. They thank God for providing them with food.

This is another example of how Bradford may have twisted to truth to paint the Pilgrims in a favorable light. The Pilgrims are armed and, it must be admitted, dangerous, but Bradford insists that they behaved peacefully and tried to talk to the Native Americans. They also steal food from the Native Americans, though Bradford excuses their actions by claiming pure intentions. It's impossible to know for sure how the Pilgrims really behaved around the Native Americans, but they were probably less virtuous than Bradford claims here.

In early December, a small squad of Pilgrims sails around Cape Cod. During this mission, the Pilgrims see a group of Indians fishing, but don't make contact with them. At night, the Pilgrims hear cries in the distance, which the sailors believe probably come from wolves. They shoot their muskets into the air, and the cries cease. The next morning, the Pilgrims prepare to return to the boat—but they are attacked by Indians. Though many of the Pilgrims are unarmed, the Indians attack them with arrows. The few Pilgrims with muskets fire back. The Pilgrims kill several Indians, and not one of the Pilgrims is hit with an arrow. The Pilgrims call the attack area "The First Encounter."

According to Bradford, the "savage Indians" attack the Pilgrims before the Pilgrims attack the Indians. Whether or not this is true (Bradford could have lied in an effort to idealize the Pilgrims), it's telling that the first contact between Pilgrims and Native Americans was a shootout. Clearly, the Pilgrims were more aggressive and less pacifistic than Bradford likes to claim. Clearly their brand of Christianity does not preclude violence.

The Pilgrims next proceed to sail around the coast, until they find a harbor for the ship to dock. Inland, they find cornfields and small brooks, suggesting that the area would be perfect for a colony. By Christmas, the pilgrims have built a storehouse.

The Pilgrims claim New England land for themselves—an act that could reasonably be construed as theft from the Native Americans, but is seen as a victory for the colonists. On this note, Book One ends.

BOOK 2, CHAPTER 1

William Bradford says that he will compose the second part of his journal in somewhat less detail than the first, "noting only the principal doings, chronologically." He'll begin with the governmental compact that the Pilgrims drew before going ashore. There are some "mutinous speeches" by the people aboard the ship whom the Pilgrims don't know, and some passengers suggest that when the group arrives in America, they will have no leader. However, the Pilgrims draw up a deed in the name of God and King James, explaining that they will abide by just laws and submit to the authority of a governor for the greater good of the colony itself. The Pilgrims then choose John Carver, "a godly man," to become their first governor.

As Bradford notes, Book Two proceeds year-by-year, and contains much more detail than Book One. Bradford begins by circling back to describe the voyage to New England, which he'd previously glossed over. The agreement he's describing is the famous Mayflower Compact, often considered one of the first examples of a democratic "social contract" between citizen and society. Bradford obscures the fact that many, and possibly most, of the Mayflower passengers weren't Pilgrims at all, and needed some guarantee that their rights would be respected on land. It's surprising that Bradford devotes very little time to an agreement that's so frequently taught in history classes nowadays—as the historian James Loewen argued, the Mayflower Compact was more important to historians than to the actual Mayflower settlers.

Within a few months of arriving in America, about half the colonists in Cape Cod die from disease and the cold weather, so that only about fifty people remain. At times, there are no more than half a dozen healthy people, including William Brewster and Captain Myles Standish. The sailors begin to desert one another, refusing to take care of the sick for fear of risking their own lives. When some of the Pilgrims become sick after drinking water from the river, the sailors drink only beer.

The Pilgrims didn't understand what germs were, but they knew that when they drank certain kinds of water, they died. Beer was safe to drink because it was sterile—in fact, it's been argued that English settlers could never have survived in American without beer!

A major turning point in the colonists' history comes on the 16th of March, when an Indian approaches the Pilgrims, speaking a few words of English. The Indian, whose name is Samoset, explains that he'd traveled back to England with some English fisherman, from whom he learned the language. Samoset refers the Pilgrims to another Indian, named Squanto, whose English is even better than his own. Squanto greets the Pilgrims and introduces them to his chief, named Massasoyt. In this way, the Pilgrims are able to make a treaty with the Indians. According to this treaty, the Indians and the Pilgrims won't attack one another or steal from one another, and they'll fight alongside one another if either group becomes involved in a war.

Squanto is one of the most important figures in Plymouth history—had it not been for him, it's likely that the Pilgrims would have starved to death due to their ignorance of agriculture. The agreement that the Native Americans and the Pilgrims draw doesn't last very long: over the course of the next thirty years, both sides break the treaty, attacking and stealing from one another.

In addition to making introductions with Massasoyt, Squanto shows the Pilgrims how to plant corn and fish. He'd been carried back to England by an English captain, who'd intended to sell him as a slave in Spain. Squanto managed to escape from the captain and find work in Newfoundland, when he met another captain, Dermer, who brought him back to his home just a few months before the Pilgrims arrived. Captain Dermer noted that the Indians who lived near Cape Cod were cruel and dangerous, but also observed that the soil in the area was perfect for English crops. Dermer was captured by Indians, and his men were murdered. He managed to escape and reach Virginia. There are many other reports of the Indians' savagery and bloodthirstiness, Bradford says.

Bradford credits Squanto with showing the Pilgrims how to plant corn and develop thriving agriculture, which is more than other English settlers were willing to do when describing Native Americans. However, Bradford also falls back on the old stereotypes about Native American "savages"—he might praise individuals, but claims that as a whole Native Americans are bloodthirsty, cruel, etc., Of course, the Native American tribes of New England were probably less aggressive, selfish, and "savage" than many European nation states of the era.

BOOK 2, CHAPTER 2

In April of 1621, the Pilgrims decide that it is time to send back the *Mayflower*, the ship on which they sailed to America. They would have sent it back much sooner except that they'd faced so many challenges, including sickness and starvation. Nevertheless, the Pilgrims have adjusted to their new life, planting corn and fishing for food.

The Mayflower *has been docked in the harbor for months, a sign of the enormous difficulties and crises of confidence that the Pilgrims suffered during their first year, and which they were able to overcome with the Native Americans' help.*

The colony experiences a setback when Governor Carver becomes ill and dies. William Bradford is then chosen governor, despite the fact that he's very ill. Isaac Allerton is appointed Bradford's assistant, and the two of them are reelected to their positions for several years to come.

There's famine and disease throughout the Pilgrim settlement, and as a result Bradford is appointed governor, a position he'll occupy for years to come. Hereafter, Bradford will sometimes refer to himself as "the Governor," rather than using the first person.

On May 12, the colony celebrates its first marriage, performed by the magistrate. Soon after, the Pilgrims send gifts to Massasoyt to earn his trust—they send him clothes, which he accepts politely. Massasoyt's people have become afflicted with a mysterious plague in the years leading up to the English colonists' arrival, and thousands have died. Soon afterwards, the Pilgrims repay the Indians for the corn they took during their exploration of Cape Cod.

The first marriage on the plantation symbolizes the introduction of Christian religious institutions into the New World, and a sign that, while the Pilgrims' lives are hard, they're preserving "civilization" in their new home. Bradford couldn't have known that the mysterious plague he describes was actually a smallpox epidemic brought by the English settlers.

Later in the year, an Indian named Hobbamok comes to live with the Pilgrims. Hobbamok and Squanto later become embroiled in an argument with another Indian named Corbitant, and Hobbamok reports to the Pilgrims that Corbitant may have attacked Squanto. To defend the Pilgrims' friend, Governor Bradford sends armed men to punish Corbitant, only to find that Squanto is alive and well—Corbitant only *threatened* to hurt him.

Disagreements break out between the Pilgrims and the Native Americans, and the Pilgrims are forced to back some Native Americans against others. In early New England history, there are many other "close calls" like the one described here.

On September 18, the Pilgrims send an expedition to the Massachusetts Bay, with Mr. Edward Winslow as the leader and Squanto as the interpreter. Squanto explains that there is a wild tribe of Indians, the Tarantines, living in Massachusetts. However, the Tarantines receive the Pilgrims politely, and give them beaver skins and other supplies. By this time, the Pilgrims have developed their own agriculture. In November a ship arrives carrying Robert Cushman, along with thirty-five others. Many of these people aren't reformers at all, and when they see how desolate the Pilgrims' lives are, some want to return to England. However, the ship's captain prevents them from doing so.

The Pilgrims continue to explore the area in search of trade, agriculture, and other necessities for survival. Notice that Cushman's ship's captain won't allow the settlers to go back to England. This contradicts the ethos of the Mayflower Compact, the entire point of which was that settlers voluntarily chose to enter their new lives in America. This would further suggest that, contrary to what most grade school history classes teach, the Mayflower Compact simply wasn't that important in early New England history.

The ship also comes to the Plymouth colony bearing a letter from Weston to the now deceased Carver. In the letter, Weston berates Carver for failing to send back any cargo or payment to repay Weston for the "great sums I disbursed for this former voyage," and criticizes him for being an indecisive, incompetent leader. Nevertheless, Weston notes that he's succeeded in reaching a new charter with the Virginia Company, one with better terms than its predecessor. The Pilgrims send the ship back to England, laden with valuable beaver and otter skins. Bradford also gives the captain a letter for Mr. Weston, in which he defends Carver's decision to keep the ship near Cape Cod for so long.

This passage sets a pattern for the rest of the book: the Pilgrims try to send some supplies back to England in order to pay off their immense debt to the Virginia Company investors, while the investors and other business contacts send the Pilgrims sternly worded letters demanding that they do more. Contrary to what Thomas Weston thought, the primary source of income for the Pilgrims is beaver skins, not fishing.

Shortly after the ship's departure, the Narragansett Indians send a messenger to the Pilgrims bearing a bundle of arrows—which Squanto explains is a threat of war. The Pilgrims respond by sending a pile of bullets. Governor Bradford organizes his people to take precautions in the event of war, and arranges for a barricade to be built around the community. Bradford ends his reminiscences of 1621 by noting how, on Christmas Day, most of the Pilgrims refused to work. When Bradford noticed children playing in the street, he sternly confiscated their games, saying that, if the Pilgrims wanted to worship, they should worship, and if they wanted to work, they should work. Since that time, Bradford reports, "nothing has been attempted in that way, at least openly."

The Pilgrims don't actually fight a war with the Narragansett—at least not yet. Instead, both the Narragansett and the English settlers build up their military arsenals in preparation for war. The passage also contains a quintessential (and perhaps unintentionally funny) example of the Puritan mindset: Bradford sternly ordering little kids not to have a good time on Christmas Day. The Puritans sincerely believed that the purpose of life was to live simply, work hard, and worship God—thus, games and fun had no place in a virtuous Puritan's life.

BOOK 2, CHAPTER 3

In spring, the Pilgrims prepare for a voyage to Massachusetts Bay, the purpose of which is to trade with the Massachusetts Indians—though Hobbamok warns the Pilgrims that the Massachusetts might form an alliance with the Narragansett Indians against the Pilgrims. Soon after, the Pilgrims get word that Corbitant and Massasoyt are leading an attack against the Pilgrims, with the Narragansett Indians' help. However, no attack materializes.

Bradford is conspicuously vague about why Massasoyt turns against the Pilgrims, beyond the fact that the Pilgrims try to protect Squanto from Corbitant. This could suggest that Bradford is omitting information about the Pilgrims' aggressiveness toward the Native Americans; however, it's unclear.

The Pilgrims begin to see that Squanto is manipulating the Indians for his own ends, making them believe that the Pilgrims are all-powerful. Soon afterwards, the Indians turn on Squanto, and Squanto begins to spend more time on the Pilgrim settlement.

Here Bradford characterizes Squanto as a somewhat devious person, who's most committed to advancing his own interests.

The Pilgrims' supplies run low, and they wait for another ship to arrive. Toward the end of May, a boat arrives, which has come from a fishing vessel sent by Weston. The boat, containing seven passengers, brings the Pilgrims a letter from Mr. Weston, explaining that he has sent the seven passengers. However, Weston warns the Pilgrims that some of these passengers are selfish and ungodly, and also adds that the remaining English reformers living in Leyden are "cold" and "backward."

Weston sends more settlers under the assumption that more settlers will mean more food and a more successful (and profitable) settlement. Weston demonstrates his lack of loyalty to the Pilgrims by insulting the their friends and family in Leyden. Weston is free to do this because the Pilgrims don't exert much power over him (except the power to decide not to send goods back to England).

The boat brings another letter from Weston to John Carver, explaining that many of the "adventurers" (i.e., investors) have been convinced to invest more money in the Virginia Company settlement, while others have become discouraged and broken off their investments altogether. Weston now asks that Carver convince his Pilgrims to ratify a charter, such that they would have to provide more profits in the short term. Weston makes it clear that he will only send more supplies to Plymouth Plantation when Carver gives word that his colonists have complied.

By this point, the Virginia Company is falling apart; however, by the nature of joint stock companies, the investors themselves still want their money back. Weston is trying to regain his own investment and, it's suggested, pump some much-needed money into the Virginia Company itself. Here, very explicitly, Weston is using his powerful position to pressure the Pilgrims into paying as much as possible.

William Bradford receives a third letter from Weston, this one addressed to him. Weston, now aware that Carver is dead, explains to Bradford that he has sold his shares in the Virginia Company, meaning that "I am quit of you." He advises Bradford to break off the current joint stock agreement, as is his right. Finally, Weston mentions intercepting a letter that his former colleagues tried to send in secret to the colonists. In this letter, dated April 10, 1621, Weston's former colleagues address Bradford and Brewster. They warn the Pilgrims to prepare for a visit from Weston—they fear that Weston will sail to America, pretending to still have some stake in the Company, and bring back supplies. Weston, commenting upon this letter, insists that the letter is wrong—he would never steal from the Pilgrims.

Weston quickly evolves into an overtly villainous character: clearly, he has no loyalty to Bradford or the Pilgrims' religious convictions—his only concern is making money. Furthermore, the passage raises the strong possibility that Weston was planning to con the Pilgrims into surrendering some of their own supplies to him, further underscoring Weston's deviousness and amorality (particularly as Bradford presents him, and particularly in contrast to how virtuous Bradford presents the Pilgrims as being).

Bradford receives one more letter, this one from Robert Cushman. Cushman greets Bradford warmly, and mentions that Weston intends to sail to America on the next available boat, though Cushman isn't sure why. He instructs Bradford not to give any supplies to Weston's men, and to instruct Squanto to spread word that Weston and his men aren't affiliated with the Pilgrims.

By this point, Weston has worn out his welcome not only with the Pilgrims but with the other Virginia Company investors in England. Here, the Pilgrims do wield power over Weston: they tell the Native Americans not to cooperate with him. Unbeknownst to Cushman, Weston is trying to found his own settlement, meaning that a lack of cooperation with the Native Americans could be the difference between success and starvation.

A ship arrives, sent by Weston, and the Pilgrims decide to welcome and entertain the ship, even though its men are disorganized. The men offer the Pilgrims some supplies in return for the Pilgrims' hospitality, but the Pilgrims refuse to accept. Shortly afterwards, a boat arrives at Plymouth, bearing word from colonists in Virginia. The Pilgrims send a boat of their own to Virginia, where they obtain food and other supplies. In the end, the Pilgrims are able to feed themselves for a while, despite Weston's refusal to send more supplies.

Once again Bradford shows the Pilgrims behaving selflessly, treating Weston's men with impressive hospitality even though they're under no obligation to do so.

The Pilgrims build a fortress to protect themselves from Indian attacks. By the time the fortress is completed, the harvest is near. However, the harvest yields little food—certainly not enough to feed the colony for a year. Later in the year, a ship arrives from Virginia, selling knives. The Pilgrims trade beaver skins for the knives, and then trade knives for corn from the Indians.

Although the Pilgrims aren't currently embroiled in war with the Native Americans, they prepare for war in the future, designing a large fort—and once again seeing no disconnect between violence and Christianity.

By the end of the harvest, the settlers who arrived on Weston's ship earlier in the year have settled in Massachusetts. They experience famine, and write to Bradford, begging to trade with the Pilgrims. Bradford consents, and enlists the Massachusetts settlers to sail with him, along with Squanto, in search of more corn. The voyage is thwarted, however, by a storm, and the ship only makes it to the Manamoick Bay, where the group obtains corn and beans. During the voyage, Squanto dies of "Indian fever." Before dying, he begs Bradford to pray for him to meet "the Englishman's God in heaven."

As he's done before, Bradford not-so-subtly suggests that Weston's men fail because they lack God's blessing: God is punishing them for their greed and general faithlessness. It's interesting that Bradford stresses that Squanto dies craving an English God—first, because Bradford hasn't previously noted Squanto's religiosity, suggesting that the scene might be an invention; second, because Squanto characterizes God as "English," a good example of the way many Native Americans perceived the link between English religion and the English nation-state.

In February of 1623, the Massachusetts Bay settlers send word that they're considering warring with the Indians to ensure that they have enough food. Bradford emphatically replies that the colonists shouldn't war with the Indians.

Bradford continues to emphasize his Pilgrims' peacefulness and contrast it with the combativeness of neighboring settlements.

BOOK 2, CHAPTER 4

It is strange, Bradford notes, that the Massachusetts colony should have fallen into hard times. The colony suffered because of its disorganization—as a result, many starved to death. The colonists also won the scorn of the Indians, who often stole from them.

Bradford reminds readers of the Massachusetts settlers' bad fortune, suggesting once again that they've been punished for their lack of virtue. Of course, Bradford never considers his own colony's hardships as the result of God's disapproval.

Massasoyt becomes seriously ill, and the Pilgrims respond by giving him the best medical care they can. After Massasoyt recovers, he gets word that the Massachusetts Indians are planning to wipe out the colonists. Recognizing that the Pilgrims might try to avenge their fellow Englishmen, Massasoyt alerts the Pilgrims of the impending attack. The Pilgrims then send troops, headed by Captain Standish, to fight the Indians. The Massachusetts settlers are grateful to the Pilgrims for defending them, but still beg the Pilgrims to send food. Standish agrees to help the settlers, and refuses to accept any payment. Bradford notes that the Massachusetts settlers, starved and diseased, had once claimed to be invincible. But, he concludes, "a man's way is not in his own hands."

By this point, the English settlers in New England have made enough of a display of their military force that the Native Americans have decided to try to cooperate with them rather than risk a full-scale war. Bradford reiterates what he's previously implied: the Massachusetts settlers have fallen on hard times because of the uncontrollability of the world, and, furthermore, they may have "sinned" by imagining that they could prosper without the blessing of God.

Weston receives word that his men in Massachusetts have fallen on hard times, and he travels across the Atlantic to inspect the colony himself. Near the coast of America, Weston's shallop (small boat) gets caught in a storm, and Weston nearly drowns. When he comes ashore, Indians attack him and steal his clothes and possessions. Thus, when he finally arrives in Plymouth, he is a shadow of his former self—"so uncertain," Bradford notes, "are the mutable things of this unstable world."

Here, Bradford characterizes Weston as a familiar Biblical (and general literary) archetype: the proud sinner who is punished by God for his hubris. For Bradford, the plunging fortunes of Weston and other characters are a teachable moment for his readers, confirming that the world is unstable, and that the only source of stability is a belief in God.

In Plymouth, Weston asks to borrow beaver skins from the Pilgrims. He claims that a ship bearing supplies is coming soon. The Pilgrims don't really believe Weston, but they take pity on him and offer him some food and skins. To this day, Bradford says, Weston has never repaid the Pilgrims. Furthermore, no new ship bearing supplies reaches Plymouth.

The Pilgrims treat Weston with kindness and respect, even giving him beaver skins for free; however, they're fully aware that Weston has an obligation to repay them, which he never honors. This pairing of "selfless" generosity and keen awareness of people's debts and obligations seems quintessentially Puritan.

Meanwhile, Governor Bradford mandates that all households plant their own corn. Each family is assigned a parcel of land, with the result that the Pilgrims become more industrious. Before, women often claimed to be too frail to work; now they toil alongside their husbands. The Pilgrims had previously tried a communal system of farming, modeled after the ideas of Plato—but Bradford says that the colony's experiences disprove Plato's claim that taking away private property benefits the community. The Pilgrims also improve their fishing yields by dividing up into small crews.

This is a turning point in the history of Plymouth: Bradford finds that families become more responsible and hard-working when they begin working for themselves, rather than toiling on a collective piece of farmland, for which the rewards are harder to see. Bradford's insight here is that what's best for the individual is also best for the group, in the sense that individual profit will benefit the entire colony and help the Pilgrims pay off their debt. This idea is also a cornerstone of modern capitalism, suggesting that the Pilgrims' organization was influential in the history of the American economy. (Note also Bradford's casual assumption that women are inherently lazier or more deceitful than men.)

The Pilgrims receive a letter from the investors in England, dated December 21, 1622, explaining that they sent a ship full of supplies to the colonists, but that the ship had to return to England due to leaks. Bradford also receives a letter from the Virginia Company, explaining that the **land patent** for land has reverted from a single congregant, John Pierce, to the company itself. Pierce tried to use his patent to control the company, and the company responded by taking his patent away from him. Pierce then tried to sue the Company; but now, Bradford says, he is dead.

The Virginia Company and its investors are portrayed as being disorganized, greedy, and frequently at odds with one another: Pierce tries to use the land patent for his own profit, and so the Company snatches it back.

In June of 1623, a ship arrives in Plymouth. The ship has been sent by the English crown to enforce fishing laws and prosecute anyone caught fishing without a license. However, the delegated English authorities find it difficult to prosecute in America—there are simply too many fishermen operating without the proper license. Shortly afterwards, another ship arrives bearing sixty settlers for Plymouth, some of whom are related to Pilgrims in America. The ship also carries a letter from Robert Cushman, apologizing for the lack of supplies onboard the ship. However, the ship has brought salt, fishing gear, and, mostly importantly, fishermen. The Pilgrims are disappointed not to receive more supplies, but they still load the ship with furs to ship back to England.

The passage captures the autonomy of the New England colonies: although England tried to police America and enforce laws, it didn't have the resources to do so effectively. Bradford also underscores the Pilgrims' steadfastness and honesty: even though Cushman hasn't been able to give them many supplies, they fulfill their end of the bargain by sending back a full load of furs.

It's harvest time again, and this time the yield is high, not just because of luck but because the Pilgrims have become better organized. Since 1623, Bradford says, the Pilgrims haven't suffered from famine. The colony becomes so successful that settlers come to live there from other colonies. To each of these settlers, Bradford offers the same conditions: that they recognize the governor of the Plymouth Plantation; that they pay a bushel of wheat every year; that they serve the "common defense"; and that they obey all laws. In September, a ship captained by Robert Gorges arrives in Massachusetts. Gorges has a royal mandate to become the new Governor-General of New England.

Because of the new system of individual organization, Bradford implies, the harvest is high for 1623. By this point the colony has established a set of laws and a social contract for its citizens (similar to the Mayflower Compact described in Chapter 1 of Book 2). Notice that this social contract stresses the importance of taxation (to pay off the debt to England) and military force. In all, the contract revolves around state-sponsored violence and obeying a central authority—but all in the name of religious ideals.

Later in the year, Thomas Weston arrives in a small ship to again inspect his settlers in Massachusetts. While he's in America, he's confronted by Captain Gorges. Gorges accuses Weston of "ill carriage of his men in Massachusetts," to which Weston replies that he's protected his men. Gorges also accuses Weston of illegally selling licenses to transport supplies to New England. Weston leaves Massachusetts, angrily saying that Gorges is a young justice but a "good beggar." At the end of 1623, there is a fire in Plymouth, caused by some sailors who were "roistering." With God's mercy, Bradford says, the colonists manage to put out the fire before it does great damage to the community.

Thomas Weston begins to antagonize some of the most powerful people in England. He's been selling trading licenses to captains and merchants whom James I hasn't approved—a major crime at the time. Bradford's anecdote about the fire again emphasizes the disorganization and destructiveness of the non-Puritan settlers in New England (at least as Bradford portrays them).

Captain Gorges issues a warrant for the arrest of Mr. Weston. Bradford is sorry to hear this news, and tries to persuade Gorges to desist. However, Gorges has already made up his mind. Weston is arrested, and Gorges orders that he turn over all supplies and possessions on his ship—some two weeks' worth of food. Afterwards, Weston sails back to Virginia, and later dies in Bristol. Captain Gorges later returns to England, partly because the quality of life in America doesn't "correspond to his station."

Bradford stresses that he tried to stop Gorges from arresting Weston, despite the fact that he would have every reason to want to see Weston punished for his greediness. The passage also underscores an overarching point of the book, that only humble people who are willing to work very hard—i.e., Pilgrims—can survive in America.

BOOK 2, CHAPTER 5

The year is 1624, and it's time for the election of Plymouth officers. Bradford orders that more officials be elected, since the colony is growing. Five assistants, instead of the previous one, are appointed to help the governor.

1624 is a pivotal year for Plymouth plantation, and it begins with Bradford acknowledging that the colony is thriving, to the point where there needs to be a stronger centralized authority (i.e., more governor's assistants).

In March, the Pilgrims send a boat eastward to fish. However, the boat is caught in a storm and sinks, drowning the captain and losing all provisions. After this setback, some colonists, particularly those who came over after 1620, begin to whisper about defecting to another colony. Bradford makes it known that defectors must still pay their way out of the joint partnership, and also front a large supply of food. This silences most of the talk of separating. The colony becomes more secure after Mr. Edward Winslow returns on a ship bearing provisions, including cattle and warm clothes. Winslow reports that many shareholders in the Virginia Company oppose sending over more reformers from Leyden.

In this important passage, Bradford illustrates the importance of the Pilgrims' debt to the English investors. Debt wasn't just a constant reminder of the Pilgrims' obligations to English society; it actually helped preserve *the Plymouth colony. Lower-class Pilgrims had an incentive to stick to the colony, since they risked being arrested otherwise. Similarly, authorities like Governor Bradford had a strong incentive to preserve the community to ensure that the debt would be paid off.*

Bradford receives a letter, dated January 24, 1623, from Robert Cushman explaining that the Pilgrims would do well to pursue "fishing, salt-making, and boat-making," and advising the Pilgrims to seek the help of the boatmaker who's just arrived. Cushman also apologizes that he's been unable to send more provisions, but stresses that he'll send more if the Pilgrims send *him* enough supplies to turn a profit.

Bradford and Cushman continue their uneasy relationship, with both men implicitly accusing the other of preventing them from sending more supplies.

Bradford also receives a letter from a Virginia Company shareholder, laying out a series of charges against the colony. Bradford sends back a letter in which he replies to each charge. To the charges that the colony is disorganized, poorly run, atheistic, and impoverished, Bradford stresses his colonists' discipline, organization, and piety, and insists that the Pilgrims will send back plenty of profitable resources.

As late as 1624—and actually long after as well—Bradford has to defend his colony from accusations of laziness or immorality, for fear that the English authorities will repossess the land. This might explain why Bradford's account of the Pilgrims is so idealized: he wants to provide testimony to his people's good character for practical and financial reasons.

Bradford receives another letter from John Robinson in Leyden. Robinson mourns the deaths of Indians, which he's heard about, and he prays that the Indians were at least "converted" before dying. William Brewster also receives a letter from Robinson, in which Robinson describes the state of the now almost defunct Virginia Company. He estimates that there are a few outstanding investors who support the Pilgrims' beliefs, a few outstanding investors who don't, and many more who are neutral on the matter. He also notes that the remaining investors have refused to spend any more money to bring the reformers in Leyden over to America.

This is one of the only passages in the book in which the Pilgrims discuss the state of the Native Americans' souls. The Puritans weren't active proselytizers, and thus, while they recognized that Native Americans were human beings and had souls, they didn't go out of their way to preach to them. The passage also establishes a pattern for the remainder of the book: the Virginia Company is going under, but individual investors are still working together to recover their money.

Bradford says he will now describe the state of the colony in 1624. Each household is given an acre of land to farm on, and produces a fair amount of food. The boatmaker who came over on the last voyage helps to design two excellent shallops (small boats) but then succumbs to fever and dies. The salt-maker, however, is an ignorant man—all he knows how to do is boil salt. Two other new colonists are John Lyford and his friend, John Oldham. Lyford and Oldham begin to denounce the church while pretending to be virtuous in public. Just as the ship is preparing to sail back to England, bearing many people's letters, Bradford sends a spy to read Lyford and Oldham's letters, in which he finds "slanders and false accusations." Lyford is also found to be in contact with John Pemberton, a minister and noted opponent of the Pilgrims. Finally, the spy finds that Lyford has been opening people's mail and adding "scandalous annotations."

The Pilgrims' colony thrives, in part, because Bradford masterminds a plan to divide the resources into small, self-managed groups. The families farm their own land, increasing productivity, and the fishermen and other specialists perform their designated jobs. However, not all people in the community pull their weight. Notice that, whenever Bradford describes a "bad apple" in Plymouth, he goes out of his way to emphasize that the colonist isn't a true English reformer. (Also notice that, rather hypocritically, Bradford discovers that the men have been opening other people's mail—in the act of opening their *mail.)*

Bradford calls for a public trial against Lyford and Oldham, on the grounds that they've denounced the church and disturbed the peace. Bradford reads from Lyford's letters, and Lyford becomes so enraged that he calls for any man to speak out against him—nobody speaks. Bradford claims that he's opened Lyford's mail to prevent harm to the colony, and that Lyford, clearly an opponent of the Pilgrims' cause, doesn't belong in the colony.

Bradford is forced to divulge that he opened Lyford's mail, an invasion of his privacy. Bradford's justification for his action—that he did it for the good of the colony—could be interpreted as a sign of how the Puritans sacrificed their religious high-mindedness in order to create a more powerful state. The Puritans fled to America to escape *excessive authority—now, they've arguably recreated it in America.*

Bradford proceeds to read more excerpts from Lyford's letters, showing that Lyford has been in contact with anti-Pilgrim factions. In his letters, Lyford plots to bring more settlers to Plymouth so that the Pilgrims will become a minority. He also plans to bring a new captain to Plymouth and ensure his election—furthermore, Lyford writes that if he can't enact his plans, he and Oldham will move to a surrounding colony. Lyford tries to defend himself, but is convicted of disturbing the peace and sentenced to leave in the next six months. When the sentence is read, Lyford begins to cry, and confesses that he is a sinner. Oldham is also convicted, but because his letters were harder to read, and because he has a family, he's allowed to stay for longer.

It's a little suspicious that Lyford immediately admits his guilt after being convicted—it's as if Bradford has re-staged the scene to justify his own invasions of people's privacy. Bradford also emphasizes the Pilgrims' mercy to Oldham.

Later on, and in spite of his public confession, Lyford tries to justify his actions. In April 1624, he writes a new letter to "the Adventurers in England," in which he claims that he was trying to "help several poor souls" who the church in Plymouth Plantation wasn't providing for. Bradford apologizes for devoting so much space to Lyford's case.

This section is one of the few times in the book when Bradford alludes to the many people living in Plymouth who weren't Pilgrims. Although it's impossible to be sure, some historians have suggested that Lyford was a populist hero, trying to thwart the tyranny of the Puritans' minority rule.

Other notable events of 1624 include an attempt to recover and mend the boat that sank in the storm. Some fishers manage to bring the boat back to shore and refit it, at great expense. Winter passes without "great incident," except that many who'd remained aloof from the church now come forward and join it, recognizing "Lyford's unjust dealing and malignity."

The prosecution of Lyford and Oldham appears to frighten the Pilgrim community into unity: some of the people who'd held out against Bradford's authority now seem to submit to it. And in Plymouth, submitting to governing authority also means submitting to the authority's religious beliefs.

BOOK 2, CHAPTER 6

In the year 1625, Oldham returns to the colony, despite the fact that he's been banished. He calls the Pilgrims good-for-nothings, and as a result he's locked up and sent away from Plymouth, along with Lyford. Oldham later sails to Virginia, and during the voyage he nearly dies in a storm. The experience inspires Oldham to confess his sins and become a better Christian. He later lives with his wife and children in Massachusetts, but dies after being attacked by Indians. Lyford returns to his wife, who learns that he's had a child with another woman. As the Bible says, Lyford dug a hole for himself, and now had to lie in it.

As with many of the other corrupt characters in the book, Bradford describes Lyford's fate as a teachable moment for future generations of Pilgrims. Lyford is portrayed as a sinful man who's brought about his own abject misery. The description of Oldham's conversion mirrors a quintessential Christian motif: the near-death experience that prompts a religious awakening.

Lyford later makes alliances with some "worthy reformers" based in Ireland. During his time with these people, Lyford is said to have "defiled" a young woman who was engaged to be married to another man. Lyford later sails to the Massachusetts Bay, in the town later known as Salem. He eventually moves to Virginia, where he dies.

Bradford doesn't explain how he learned that Lyford "defiled" the Irish woman (it's possible, one could say, that he or others just invented the story in order to defame his enemy's reputation). Also note that Bradford never even considers the woman's agency in the matter.

In the middle of the year, a ship arrives at Plymouth, bearing a letter from "the Adventurers in England." In the letter the adventurers (investors) accuse the Pilgrims of treating them and their religious beliefs with outright hostility. The Pilgrims also receive a letter from "the Adventurers in England who remained friendly to them." Therein, they explain that the Virginia Compact's partnership is dissolved due to a failure to turn a profit. They also ask that the Pilgrims send them enough money to free them of their stake in the company's common stock. The ship bears supplies for sale to the colonists, including cattle and shoes. Some colonists are offended by the high prices the investors charge. However, they purchase supplies and send the ship back laden with beaver furs and fish. When the ship sails back, though, it is captured by a Turkish fleet and its sailors are enslaved—confirming "the uncertainty of all human things."

The merchant investors ("adventurers") clash with the Pilgrims largely because they disagree with the Pilgrims' religious beliefs, and perhaps as a result don't consider the Pilgrims to be trustworthy businessmen. Around the same time, the Virginia Company itself dissolves; however, many investors want their money back. As a result, the Pilgrims continue with an arrangement similar to the one they'd established previously: the investors send them some supplies to ensure their survival, and the Pilgrims send back valuable furs and pelts to repay their obligations. Also note that once again Bradford uses a tragedy to derive an easy religious moral.

The Pilgrims also send a second ship to England, captained by Myles Standish. In England, Standish's mission is to convince the remaining investors to fall in line instead of demanding their money back right away. Standish has little success, since there is a plague in England; however, he makes "good preparations" for a future agreement with the investors. Meanwhile, the Pilgrims experience a good harvest, and send a shipload of corn and beaver furs back to England.

Uncontrollable natural disasters, such as storms and plagues, dominate this chapter, confirming Bradford's observation about life's uncertainties. However, one of the central tenets of Pilgrim life is that God rewards the faithful—thus, Bradford closes the chapter by noting the bountiful harvest.

BOOK 2, CHAPTER 7

In April 1626, Captain Myles Standish returns from England, having traveled on an English fishing boat. He comes bringing sad tidings, including the deaths of John Robinson and Robert Cushman. Sad though the Pilgrims are to hear of the deaths of their old friends, they set to work farming for corn, since Standish has informed them that it's now their most valuable commodity from an English perspective. They're also able to trade with the Indians successfully.

The death of John Robinson is almost a symbolic event, representing how the Puritan plantation in America has become its own autonomous entity, with laws and values distinct from those of Robinson's European contingent.

The Pilgrims send a representative, Isaac Allerton, back to England to negotiate with outstanding investors regarding the Pilgrims' debts. Meanwhile, the Pilgrims proceed to build more fishing boats. They have no boat-builders among them, but an ingenious carpenter manages to design and build a stable ship, which they use for the next seven years.

It's a sign of the Pilgrims' new economic independence that they decide to send Allerton back to England: they're finally in a position where they're not entirely dependent on their English creditors, and therefore can run the risk of angering the investors.

BOOK 2, CHAPTER 8

The year is now 1627, and Isaac Allerton returns from his visit to England, having raised two hundred pounds from the remaining Virginia Company investors. He's also managed to reduce the Pilgrims' debts to 1800 pounds, paid in installments of 200 pounds and beginning in 1628. The Pilgrims now have a clear schedule for paying off their debts. They divide the debt evenly between households.

Allerton succeeds in talking down the English investors. The fact that he is able to do so testifies to the Pilgrims' sophistication as negotiators (refined over the last fifteen years!) as well as their new economic self-sufficiency.

In the winter, Bradford recalls, a Virginia-bound ship is cast ashore in a storm, near Plymouth. The survivors make contact with Indians, who lead them to the Plymouth Plantation. Bradford arranges to repair the sailors' boat, and also offers them corn and other supplies. The ship sets sail again, but is caught in *another* storm, and this time the passengers beg to live at the Plymouth colony until they can arrange further transportation. Bradford consents, recognizing that both the Pilgrims and the passengers stand to benefit from trade. Later in the summer, the passengers set sail for Virginia.

The Pilgrims continue to treat visitors with kindness and hospitality, going out of their ways to offer them free food and shelter. Bradford's hospitality isn't motivated entirely by generosity, however—he recognizes, quite perceptively, that he's building important trading alliances with the Virginia colonies.

The Pilgrims construct more boats for themselves. When ships arrive from England, they prepare to send Isaac Allerton back to England with full power to negotiate a final agreement with the Virginia Company's remaining investors. Allerton is instructed to obtain a patent for more land, if possible.

The Pilgrims press their advantage by sending Allerton back to England to further reduce their debt and obtain more land for themselves—a sign of their growing population and economic power (and of how their goals seem to have changed from merely seeking religious freedom).

The Pilgrims receive messages from the Dutch colonists who live further south. The Dutch praise the Pilgrims for their success and ask if the Pilgrims are willing to sell or trade beaver skins. The Pilgrims send a message that they are willing to trade with the Dutch and inquire about prices for beaver skin. Hereafter, the Pilgrims maintain a steady trade alliance with the Dutch colony.

As the Pilgrims' colony grows more successful, they trade more and more frequently with their neighbors, such as the Dutch settlers in Manhattan (at the time, the colony of New Amsterdam). The Pilgrims have had good relations with the Dutch in the past, so it's unsurprising that they forge a strong trading alliance now.

The Pilgrims send Allerton back to England with a contract, clarifying that the Pilgrims will pay their debts over the course of the following years, in return for which the investors will furnish them with supplies. Finally, the agreement specifies that the Pilgrims will maintain control of their land and trade after paying off their debts.

Thanks to Allerton's negotiating talents, the Pilgrims have a lighter, more manageable schedule for paying off their remaining debts. Crucially, the Pilgrims reach an agreement whereby they'll continue living in their New England colony after they've paid off their debts—control of the land will remain with them perpetually.

BOOK 2, CHAPTER 9

In England, Isaac Allerton closes the deal with investors, such that the Pilgrims will pay off their debts over six years. On November 17th, 1628, James Sherley sends the colonists notice that, although the colony has sent back beaver and otter skins, they still have "large obligations." Yet the "adventurers," recognizing the profitability of the colony, invest another eighty pounds in supplies for the Pilgrims. Allerton also drafts a contract allowing Sherley to act as the Pilgrims' attorney.

The Plymouth colony is becoming more and more financially successful, which means that English merchants are investing money in it's growth—not just trying to make back their old investments. Once again, this links financial decisions with religious ones.

Allerton returns to Plymouth in the spring with goods. He informs Bradford that he's put Mr. Sherley in charge of their affairs. Allerton also provides the Pilgrims with a patent for the nearby region of Kennebec. Bradford notes, "Allerton had done…good and faithful service: would that he had so continued."

The chapter represents a turning point, as after this Allerton becomes increasingly self-interested, and begins to use his position of power over the Pilgrims for his own selfish advantage.

Later in 1629, the Dutch visit the Pilgrims, bringing linen and sugar. The Pilgrims trade with the Dutch and buy wampum (a kind of shell used by the Indians to make beads), and the Dutch assure them that there's much more of it in Kennebec. In the next few years, the Pilgrims begin trading with the Dutch to a much greater degree, limiting their trade with fishermen. The Pilgrims' new interest in trading wampum also alters Indian society. Previously, the Massachusetts Indians had little wampum, but envied tribes such as the Narragansett Indians for owning so much of it. Recognizing the Indians' desire for more wampum, the Pilgrims begin selling more of it to the Indians. The Indians then start using wampum as currency, even using it to buy guns from the French.

It's another sign of the Pilgrims' growing economic clout that, at least according to Bradford, the supply of wampum in the area grows significantly. Now that the colonists are trading with the Native Americans year-round, certain tribes have an incentive to devote their resources to harvesting wampum and nothing else—essentially adapting to the new system of European capitalism and currency now being forced on them.

The relationship between Indians and guns is worth describing, Bradford says. A few years earlier, one Captain Wollaston led a settlement in Massachusetts, in which there were many "servants" (indentured servants). Mr. Morton, one of the colonists, resented that Wollaston sent so many of these servants down to Virginia. While Wollaston was in Virginia, Morton led the remaining servants in a rebellion against the temporary leader of the colony. As the new leader of his colony, Mr. Morton threw lavish parties and got his new followers drunk. To make more money, he began trading guns with the Indians, who were eager to acquire the weaponry. Countless Englishmen and Dutchmen have now been murdered by Indians, Bradford says, thanks to Morton's trading. Morton not only sold guns to the Indians but also trained them in marksmanship.

Indentured servants barely show up in Bradford's account of Plymouth Plantation, but in fact they were a huge part of early colonial American history. These working-class people, much like the Pilgrims themselves, traveled to America and then worked for years to pay off their debts. Bradford characterizes those like Morton, who led working-class revolts against the colonial authorities, as villainous—a drunken, disorderly con artist. However, many later historians have praised Morton and other similar figures (for example, Nathaniel Bacon) for challenging authoritarian rule.

The Pilgrims decide to write to Mr. Morton and urge him to stop selling guns to the Indians, reminding him that the King has forbidden the practice. Morton "haughtily" replies, "the king's proclamation was no law." Bradford decides to send Captain Standish and armed men to arrest Morton. They do so, take him to Plymouth, and eventually send him back to England. However, Morton "fooled" his guards in England, and returns to America the next year. Bradford regrets having to devote so much space to writing about "so unworthy a person."

Morton is very influential in early colonial history, since he's responsible for selling guns to Native Americans, correcting some of the technological asymmetry in the constant clashes between the Native Americans and the European colonists.

Returning from his latest trip to England, Allerton brings over a minister named Mr. Rogers for the Pilgrims. However, Rogers is quickly found to be "crazed in the brain," and the Pilgrims are forced to pay to send him back to England. Allerton is harshly criticized for wasting so much of the colony's money on such a person. In addition to bringing back goods from England, Allerton begins to sell some of his own goods to the colonists, and to settlers in other areas. In previous years, this hasn't been a problem, but now, Allerton begins selling more and more of his goods, to the point where some of the Puritans become suspicious that he's taking investors' provisions and passing them off as his own.

Allerton's decision to bring Mr. Rogers back to America is the first sign that he's beginning to waver in his devotion to the colonists. Allerton exploits his elite position by selling goods for his own advantage. Allerton's behavior could be interpreted as an example of how "power corrupts"—a position that the English reformers generally shared (and which inspired them to criticize the English prelates early in the century).

In spite of their suspicions, the Pilgrims decide to send Allerton back to England to negotiate a new, more generous patent on Kennebec. His instructions are to renegotiate the land patent and bring back no goods other than hose, shoes, and linen.

As with Weston, the Pilgrims don't particularly trust Allerton anymore, but recognize that they don't have much of a choice but to continue working with him.

BOOK 2, CHAPTER 10

In 1629, Isaac Allerton arrives in England and proceeds with his negotiations. While he's in England, a ship sends many of the reformers who'd been living in Leyden to America, where they arrive in the small town of Salem. Bradford notes what a "wonder" it is that the Christians living in Holland were able to form a thriving colony in the New World. James Sherley sends letters to Bradford, explaining that the colony has become profitable to the point where the investors are willing to send more colonists. The "Leyden companies" arrive in America by May 1630. These new Pilgrims are in debt as a result of their transatlantic voyage, but they work hard to pay off their financial obligations.

Notice that Bradford attributes the splendor of the Plymouth Plantation to both God's majesty and *the Pilgrims' own hard work, instead of one or the other. The Pilgrims saw themselves as being personally responsible for their own lots in life, even if they also worshipped God and thanked him for their success. This combination of Christianity and a strong emphasis on personal responsibility has been interpreted as a distinctly Protestant, or even distinctly American ideology. (However, Plymouth's success creates a new wave of immigration from England, and a new generation of debtors (mostly indentured servants) who must work hard to pay off their obligations. Recently, some historians have written about how the waves of indentured servants in 17th-century America created a permanent underclass that survives in America today.)*

In March 19, 1629, James Sherley sends Bradford a letter concerning Allerton's behavior. Allerton curries favor with important English aristocrats; however, he also asks to be sent to England one further time to settle the patent, a request that Sherley makes in his letter. Bradford insists that, in reality, Allerton wanted more time in England for his own selfish purposes, since the patent could have been settled very quickly.

Bradford is intelligent enough to recognize that Allerton is exploiting his position and, presumably, using the extra time to establish new business deals to make himself richer.

Allerton returns to America and brings Mr. Morton with him, further upsetting the Pilgrims. Morton is now rumored to be a murderer, and his return to America frightens many. Allerton also angers Bradford by bringing far more than the fifty pounds of goods Bradford requested, selling these goods for his own profit. It becomes clear that Allerton is now more interested in his own finances than helping the colony. Yet he also marries the daughter of William Brewster, meaning that he has a reputation for virtue.

Allerton is a complex character: like Weston, Morton, or other "villains" in the book, he's presented as a selfish hypocrite. However, unlike these characters, Allerton is genuinely respected. By marrying a Brewster—one of the most respected families in the Pilgrim community—Allerton gains an unearned reputation for respectability, since people naturally assume that only a very virtuous, honorable man could become William Brewster's son-in-law.

Sherley sends Bradford a letter, dated March 19th, 1629, in which he explains that Allerton has arranged for a separate financial partnership with a man named Edward Ashley. Bradford points out that Allerton was reckless to begin another venture before the Pilgrims had paid off their debts. He adds that Ashley is known to be a "very profane young man," who has lived among the Indians. The Pilgrims agree to join Ashley's new enterprise, recognizing that if they don't, they risk losing English investors and business contacts. After further debate, the Pilgrims send Allerton back to England to close negotiations on the Kennebec patent. Many of the Pilgrims are suspicious that Allerton will pursue his own interests instead of the colony's, but Allerton insists that he'll make up for his errors.

Allerton is clearly pursuing his own business ventures, which means that he's not giving the Pilgrims' finances the attention they deserve. However, as with Weston, the Pilgrims decide that their best, most pragmatic option is to keep working with Allerton: even if Allerton is untrustworthy, he still has too much power over the Pilgrim's business connections in England to cut ties. Also note Bradford's judgment of Ashley's perceived immorality—a religious opinion that affects his financial dealings.

Bradford next relates the story of Ralph Smith, a former minister who traveled to the Massachusetts Bay in early 1629. Smith and his family travel to Plymouth, where he becomes a minister. Around the same time, the Salem governor, John Endicott, writes to Bradford requesting his help treating scurvy victims. Bradford sends a doctor to Salem, and afterwards strikes up a firm friendship with Endicott.

As time goes on, Bradford becomes more confident in his role as a governor of the Plymouth colony. He develops useful contacts with authorities in neighboring colonies and cities, such as Salem.

BOOK 2, CHAPTER 11

In 1630, Ashley proceeds to gather "a good parcel of beaver" to ship back to England in his own name. The Pilgrims recognize that Ashley is trying to profit from the colony instead of helping them relieve their debts, but they have no choice but to continue working with him. No supplies arrive for the Pilgrims, leading some to believe that Ashley is neglecting his duties.

Ashley and Allerton are trying to gather their own resources to sell in England. This is a major problem for the Pilgrims, since every beaver fur that Allerton and Ashley sell represents a fur that the Pilgrims could have sold to escape from debt.

After some time, the Pilgrims elect to send Mr. Edward Winslow to England to investigate Ashley and Allerton's behavior. They give Winslow authority to discharge Allerton from his duties to the Pilgrims. Then, in the summer, an English ship finally arrives. However, the ship has barely survived a storm, meaning that it's lost most of its provisions. The sailors report that Allerton will soon be back in America aboard a ship called the *White Angel*. Shortly afterwards the *White Angel* arrives; however, Allerton insists that most of the ship's goods aren't intended for the Pilgrims. Around the same time, Ashley is arrested for selling guns to Indians, and sent away from America. He later drowns on a voyage home from Russia. The Pilgrims send letters to Mr. Winslow asking him to dismiss Allerton from "having anything to do with any of their business."

The Pilgrims eventually decide that's it's not in their interests to cooperate with Allerton and Ashley anymore. Even if it means losing some business connections in England, they send Winslow to discharge Ashley from his duties. Note that, like many of the villainous characters in the book, Ashley meets with an untimely end at the hands of an angry God—a clear punishment for his sins, according to Bradford.

Another milestone of 1630 is the execution of John Billington—the first use of the death penalty in the Plymouth Plantation. Bradford arranges for Billington to be tried for murder, and Billington is found guilty. John Winthrop, the governor of the Massachusetts Bay, advises Bradford to execute Billington immediately, since Billington, a "profane Londoner," has been a troublemaker for a long time.

The idea of using the death penalty in Pilgrim society might sound rather un-Christian—but in fact there's a lengthy Biblical precedent for executing sinners, and it fits the Pilgrims' emphasis on the harsher and more judgmental aspects of Christianity. The use of the death penalty in Plymouth, one could argue, signals the growing strength and confidence of the Pilgrim state headed by Bradford—people approving of state-sanctioned violence means that the state is successfully maintaining its authority.

In the summer of 1630, disease breaks out in the colony of Charlestown. In a letter, a member of the Plymouth Plantation who is staying in Charlestown reports that many in Charlestown look to Plymouth for guidance in their time of crisis. Bradford concludes his chapter by celebrating how Plymouth grew "out of small beginnings" to become a respected colony.

Once again, Bradford takes it as a sign from God that his colony is blessed with health while other, presumably less Christian colonies are afflicted with disease.

BOOK 2, CHAPTER 12

In the year 1631, Ashley and Allerton are no longer a part of the Pilgrims' business affairs, thanks to "the hand of God." Business begins to run smoothly, and Winslow sends supplies from England. However, Sherley charges the shipment from the *White Angel* to the Pilgrims, despite the fact that, according to Allerton, the *White Angel* brought no provisions for them.

With Ashley and Allerton out of the picture, the Pilgrims resume making money and sending supplies back across the Atlantic. However, there's still the matter of the White Angel, *a vessel that, at least in theory, was meant to bring the supplies that keep the colony running.*

Bradford receives a letter from Winslow explaining that Allerton has taken the *White Angel* for himself and intends to sell it in Spain, rather than allowing it to make shipments on the Pilgrims' behalf. "To this day," Bradford reports, Sherley and Allerton control the ship. On November 19th, 1631, Sherley sends a letter to Bradford, regretfully explaining that the Pilgrims will need to pay for the ship's costs.

English businessmen demand some payment for the White Angel, *and since Allerton is nowhere to be found, Plymouth must make up the cost of the vessel. This seems pretty unfair, since the Pilgrims have already been harmed by the* White Angel's *absence, and shouldn't be punished for Allerton's misconduct.*

Bradford offers a few thoughts about Sherley's letters. First, it seems clear that it was Allerton's idea to purchase the *White Angel* and use it for his own profit. Furthermore, after the *White Angel* was wrecked in the storm, Allerton tried to charge the Pilgrims for his losses, believing that he was entitled to their help considering all he'd done for them in the past. Bradford prays that one day, Allerton will "see the evil of his ways." Bradford also notes that the *White Angel* was clearly never intended for Pilgrims, as the bill of sale was made out to Sherley's own name, and Allerton later testified to the same effect in a trial on September 7, 1639.

Bradford's commentary here shows both the worldly practicality and the religious high-mindedness of the Pilgrims—and how they link these together without seeming to see any contradictions. On one hand, Bradford is savvy and meticulous about Allerton's relationship with his ship—he produces convincing evidence that the Pilgrims shouldn't be charged for the vessel. Bradford then goes on to make a religious judgment of Allerton, and takes the generous (if passive-aggressive) approach of saying that he'll pray for Allerton's soul.

Bradford will now go over the details of Mr. Allerton's accounts, which weren't fully understood until some time after 1631. As early as the late 1620s, it's clear, Allerton was in debt. Allerton transported shipments of beaver fur back from America to sell for his own profit; in doing so, Allerton limited the profitability of the Pilgrims' colony. Allerton also pursued poor business ventures to get out of debt—at one point, he hired a "drunken crew" to make a shipment, and lost all the goods aboard the vessel.

In retrospect, Allerton was a corrupt businessman for much longer than Bradford realized at the time. As early as the 1620s, Allerton was selling material for his own profit instead of looking out for the good of the colony. Bradford again emphasizes how his "villains" are associated with other sins like drunkenness, and are punished by God for their immorality.

Also in 1631, a man named Sir Christopher Gardiner arrives in Massachusetts. Gardiner is a descendant of the notorious Bishop of Winchester, who persecuted many of "God's saints" in the previous century. Gardiner is known to live with a "comely young woman" believed to be his concubine. In Massachusetts, he flees from his community to live with Indians. Later on, Indians approach Bradford about arresting Gardiner, and Bradford offers them a reward for doing so, on the condition that they bring him alive. With Gardiner in custody, Bradford sends him to John Winthrop in Boston.

Bradford emphasizes Gardiner's sinful qualities by noting that he's descended from a notoriously corrupt Bishop who exemplified the corruption of the old Catholic Church (especially as perceived by Protestants). The passage also alludes to John Winthrop, the governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony and the deliverer of the famous "city on a hill" speech, regarded as one of the key pieces of Puritan writing.

Gardiner later tries to sue Bradford for allowing the Indians to hurt him during his capture. In early 1632, Gardiner sends his petition to the royal Privy Council in England, asking for a full investigation into the state of affairs in America. The Council issues a degree that the New England colonies (including Plymouth and the Massachusetts Bay), regardless of the actions of individuals, are in excellent health, and that their prosperity is beneficial for England itself.

The Plymouth Plantation passes the Council's examination: clearly Bradford has created a powerful, well-organized, and economically viable colony in New England. Once again the notion of profitability seems more important than any ideals or religious beliefs supposedly underpinning the colony.

BOOK 2, CHAPTER 13

In 1632, Isaac Allerton sails to England in the *White Angel*. He later sells the ship in Spain, as he had originally planned—"what became of the money he best knows," Bradford writes. Although Allerton's actions have increased the colony's debts, Plymouth continues to thrive. The Pilgrims produce plentiful corn and raise strong cattle—commodities that they ship back to England for a high price.

Allerton proceeds with his plans to sell the White Angel, *apparently indifferent to the economic hardship his behavior is causing the Pilgrims. However, the Pilgrims manage to continue paying off their obligations—presumably due to hard work and God's continued approval.*

The Pilgrims' growing fortunes create new problems, however: they need more land. Furthermore, the church is becoming less united. The Pilgrims who live in an area known as Duxbury demand that they be included in "a distinct body." To preserve unity, Bradford arranges to give plentiful Duxbury land to handpicked Pilgrims, in the hopes that they'll inspire their neighbors to attend the same church. In the coming years, Bradford's attempts to preserve unity fall short: as the community expands, some Pilgrims insist on their own church. "This," he writes, "I fear will be the ruin of New England."

The growth of the Plymouth Plantation creates a logistical problem, and in some ways the plantation is a victim of its own success. On one hand, the colony is getting larger and wealthier, which means that it needs more land. But more land means that the people are more spread out and isolated, and therefore less loyal to Bradford's centralized authority. Bradford speculates that this process of decentralization will corrupt New England. Despite this, for years New England remained a close-knit, well-organized territory, because, although the towns were becoming more spread out, the state authority was becoming more powerful and aggressive (which readers should notice in the final chapters of the book).

Later in 1632, a ship returns from England, bringing goods Mr. Sherley has sent to the Pilgrims. The Pilgrims accept the goods and send the ship back with eight hundred pounds worth of goods. They also send Sherley detailed records of Allerton's accounts, asking Sherley to go through them and identify all instances of wrongdoing. The ship is caught in a storm near Virginia, but the crewmembers are able to get to land with the letters in their possession.

Bradford continues to give details of financial transactions and trade between the colony and England.

BOOK 2, CHAPTER 14

In 1633, Edward Winslow becomes the new governor. Ships return from England, bearing news from Sherley about Allerton's finances. Sherley regretfully explains that he's been unable to make any progress in shifting the burden of debt away from the Pilgrims and onto Allerton—as a result, the Pilgrims are going to have to pay for some of the debts Allerton accumulated.

1633 marks a turning point, because Bradford steps down as Governor. This might suggest that the community is stable and complacent enough that it can afford to switch leaders. It also reminds readers that Plymouth is, at least in theory, a democratic community, in which leaders lead for short periods of time before being replaced (however, notice that Bradford doesn't write about how Winslow becomes governor, or if Bradford himself was continually reelected for his long period as governor).

Around the same time, Roger Williams—"a godly and zealous man" with "very unstable judgment"—rises to become a minister in Massachusetts. His teachings are acclaimed, even after his opinions become very eccentric. When controversy arises, he applies to transfer to Salem, where he becomes even more eccentric and controversial. Bradford simply writes that he pities Williams and prays that God will bring him back to a righteous path one day.

Roger Williams is another famous figure of early New England history: he's noted for taking the Protestant doctrine of predestination to its logical extreme, arguing that good behavior and frugal living made no difference to one's salvation. Bradford seems to respect Williams' intellect, even if he disagrees with Williams's conclusions. (The historian Andrew Delbanco has written about the paradox of Puritan society: Puritans believed in the soul's predestination, and yet, with the exception of Roger Williams, everybody behaved as if God would judge them for their behavior and deeds.)

The Pilgrims learn from the Dutch of a fertile territory near what would eventually be known as the Connecticut River. Slowly they begin to explore the territory and trade with Indians there. Meanwhile, the Indians try to convince the Massachusetts colony to trade with them near the Connecticut River. The Plymouth and Massachusetts governors confer about building joint trading houses in Connecticut, but Massachusetts has too many financial problems at the time, so Plymouth becomes the first English colony to expand into Connecticut.

Plymouth builds on its economic advantages by allocating resources for the colonization of the Connecticut River territory. In this way, it seems to outperform the Massachusetts Bay Colony, which, according to Bradford, is too poor and disorganized to explore (although the Massachusetts Bay Colony was actually larger than Plymouth).

Around the same time, the Dutch, realizing how strategically useful Connecticut could be, begin to expand into the territory themselves. They build fortresses and forbid the Pilgrims from expanding any farther from Plymouth. However, the Dutch eventually allow some Pilgrims to pass through Connecticut, perhaps afraid that fighting will lead to a full-scale war.

As the European colonies in America become larger and more stable, they begin to compete with one another militarily. As before, the colonies aren't exactly preparing for war; rather, they demonstrate their military might in an effort to deter war.

Later in 1633, an "infectious fever" breaks out, claiming the lives of many colonists. The Plymouth physician, Samuel Fuller, is killed—a huge loss to the community. However, the settlers are able to send home a huge supply of beaver furs, paying off a significant chunk of the colony's debts.

Note that Bradford doesn't assume, as he might otherwise, that the plague is a sign of God's disapproval or punishment.

BOOK 2, CHAPTER 15

In 1634, Thomas Prince is chosen to become governor. Throughout the year, the colony receives letters from Mr. Sherley, explaining once again that the Pilgrims will have to pay Allerton's debts.

The Pilgrims are faced with the same crisis over and over: paying off considerable debts.

Early in the year, a man named Hocking, from the nearby Piscataqua settlement, comes to Kennebec to trade. The Pilgrims in Kennebec warn Hocking not to trade on their land, since their patent gives them sole rights to trade in Kennebec. However, Hocking persists in trading. When the Pilgrims try to stop him, Hocking shoots a Pilgrim, at which point another Pilgrim shoots Hocking, killing him. Afterwards, a controversy breaks out, with the Piscataqua settlers claiming that the Pilgrims shot first. A Pilgrim is apprehended in Massachusetts and accused of having taken part in the attack in Kennebec, and the Plymouth leadership sends Captain Myles Standish to negotiate his release. Massachusetts's leaders agree to free the unfortunate Pilgrim; however, they demand that Standish return to Massachusetts to testify regarding Hocking's death.

The Hocking affair suggests that, as a result of stronger trading networks, English settlers are traveling more and communicating with people from other colonies, increasing the probability of conflict. But second, and more interestingly, it suggests the stratification of the colonies: Bradford arguably gives the impression that the leaders in Massachusetts are more loyal and friendly to their counterparts in Plymouth than to their own (presumably working-class) individual colonists, and would prefer to preserve trade-conducive peace than to wage war over Hocking.

Prince and Bradford try to decide how to handle the Hocking controversy. John Winthrop advises them to hold council with the Massachusetts and Piscataqua colonies. The Pilgrims do so, and send out letters asking the leaders of the surrounding colonies to meet in Boston with any relevant witnesses and evidence. However, when the Pilgrims arrive in Boston, they find that only a few Massachusetts magistrates have showed up—and nobody from Piscataqua. Nevertheless, the representatives confer, and eventually agree that Hocking was responsible for his own death.

The Hocking affair is also a milestone in the history of cooperation between New England colonies. As per Winthrop's request, the colonies hold a trial in Boston (which, even at the time, was the central New England city). However, the trial is an embarrassing failure, since few representatives show up. In the future, however, the colonies learn how to work together more successfully.

Also in 1634, the Pilgrims send Mr. Winslow back to England to discuss Hocking's death and to close accounts with the investors in England, since the period of their contract is expired. Winslow also brings nearly four thousand pounds of beaver, an impressive sum of money. The Pilgrims also send boats to trade with the Dutch. During one encounter, a Dutch boat raids a Pilgrim boat, partly because the commander of the Dutch boat, the Dutch Governor, is exceptionally drunk. The Pilgrims later chase after the Dutch and retrieve their goods. They try to take legal action against the Dutch, but the matter is resolved through "the mediation of friends."

Another conflict breaks out between the Dutch and the Plymouth colonists. Bradford doesn't go into any detail about how the conflict is resolved (does "mediation of friends" mean that the mediation is a private matter, or that there's some kind of public hearing regarding the incident?). Once again, however, the colonies preserve peace with one another, perhaps recognizing that everybody stands to gain from free, peaceful trade.

A tribe of Indians living in Connecticut begins to suffer from a mysterious disease that virtually wipes out their entire population. A small battalion of Dutch traders, who'd previously been living among the Indians, are able to get away from the epidemic and reach Plymouth, where the Pilgrims treat them kindly and provide them with food. The Dutch are "very grateful for this kindness." Many more Indians die of the "pox," including Sachem, a powerful chief. By divine providence, Bradford says, not a single Englishman dies.

Little did Bradford realize that this "mysterious disease" was, in all likelihood, spread by European settlers whose ancestors had long since developed immunities to it. Bradford attributes the English settlers' survival to divine mercy—but modern readers know that their survival was a matter of biology, genetics, and luck.

BOOK 2, CHAPTER 16

Edward Winslow arrives in England, where he gets a warm welcome, thanks largely to the ample supply of furs he brings. Moreover, Winslow learns that the *White Angel* will not be charged against the Pilgrims—but Winslow is still asked to testify about the state of the colonies before the "Right Honorable Lords Commissioners for the Colonies in America." Winslow explains that both the Dutch and the French have encroached on the Connecticut territory, building forts and interfering with England's patent.

It's suggested that the English investors recognize the profitability of the Plymouth colony, and therefore don't feel the need to charge the Pilgrims for the White Angel. *However, the colony's profitability has brought it into conflict with the Dutch and French colonists, who also seek to expand their trading routes and landholdings.*

Winslow's testimony leads some members of the Commission to propose allowing the colonists to resolve the trade dispute in their own way. However, Sir Ferdinand Gorges, a member of the Commission (and father of Robert Gorges) is planning to serve as Governor General, and wants to establish his authority over New England, "disturbing the peace of the churches." However, Gorges' plan comes to nothing. In the following days, Winslow is questioned by the Lords, and his character is called into question—it's suggested that he's an immoral man for marrying couples without proper religious authority. Winslow is imprisoned for seventeen weeks for his alleged abuse of power. He's released, and the Commission never sends forces to resolve the trade dispute.

Winslow's testimony is an important moment for the Plymouth colonists. At this moment, the New England colonies face the possibility of coming under the control of one overarching Governor, Sir Ferdinand Gorges. However, in the end, the English crown never sends Gorges to run the colonies. This is good news for the colonists, since it allows them to continue practicing their own religion and running their own affairs. (Bradford doesn't say why *the English never send Gorges to America, but in part it's because the English state was weak at the time, due to plague and economic problems.)*

On September 7th, 1635, James Sherley sends the Plymouth colony a letter explaining that he's sending the Pilgrims a letter of attorney that will enable them to sue Allerton for the costs of the *White Angel*.

The Pilgrims further strengthen their finances when Sherley arranges for them to sue Allerton.

In 1635, the Pilgrims sustain a heavy loss from the French colonists. In Penobscot harbor, French colonists, led by one Monsieur d'Aulnay, take control of several English settlers' homes in the name of the King of France. The Pilgrims retaliate by sending an armed brigade, led by Myles Standish, to sail to the harbor and demand that the French return the property. However, Standish quarrels with the captain of the ship, a man named Girling—first over Girling's payment and then about the proper time to fire on the French. Girling clumsily begins shooting before the ship has even reached the harbor, wasting their supply of gunpowder. Embarrassed, Standish has no choice but to turn back.

Although the Pilgrims are economically self-sufficient and fairly healthy, they lack a strong military. This becomes a major problem because neighboring colonies can steal English property with impunity, embarrassing the New England settlers (though of course Bradford doesn't comment on the fact that the colonists first stole the land from the Native Americans). While Bradford doesn't dwell on the d'Aulnay affair for long, it's a very influential moment in Pilgrim history, inspiring Bradford to strengthen Plymouth's defenses (in the next few years, the Pilgrims fight a war and form a military alliance with their neighbors).

The Pilgrims try to resolve the dispute with the French by contacting the Massachusetts Bay Colony. The Massachusetts leadership supports the Pilgrims but claims that it cannot spare resources to deploy troops. Toward the end of 1635, they send troops for the Pilgrims' mission, but apologize for being unable to provide more. Around the same time, Massachusetts merchants begin trading with the French, providing them with ammunition. To this day, Bradford writes, the French disrespect English trade and English property, largely because of the guns and ammunition they've obtained through *English* merchants.

Plymouth tries and fails to get military assistance from the Massachusetts Bay Colony. As a result, the Plymouth settlement experiences a humiliating defeat—the French colonists snatch away the Pilgrims' property, and the Pilgrims are unable to reclaim it. Less than a decade later, however, Plymouth forms a strong military alliance with Massachusetts, ensuring that enemy colonies won't be able to do this again without facing opposition.

In August, a storm decimates the Pilgrim community, especially near Connecticut. The same month, there's a lunar eclipse. Shortly afterwards, settlers in the Massachusetts Bay venture into Connecticut, knowing that the storm has cleared the area—and in doing so, they interfere with the Pilgrims' land rights. In the end, the colonists reach a treaty: the Plymouth settlers will keep their property along with "a 16th part of all they bought from the Indians," leaving the remaining territory for the Massachusetts settlers. However, the memory of the Massachusetts settlers' rudeness is not soon forgotten.

The Pilgrims quarrel with the Massachusetts Bay Colony settlers in the Connecticut area. However, they reach a treaty with Massachusetts, ensuring that both colonies will be able to own property in Connecticut. Bradford's noting of the lunar eclipse is an interesting aside, as he hardly ever comments on nature or larger external events except as they relate to the colony. The storm and eclipse so close together might be seen as bad omens.

Edward Winslow, still in England, is under orders to recruit a new minister for Plymouth. He recruits a man who dies just before the voyage, meaning that he must quickly find a replacement. He settles on a man named Mr. Norton. Norton is unsure if he wants to live in Plymouth; in the end, he spends a year in Plymouth, but then moves to another colony.

The chapter ends on a depressing note: in just one year, the colony experiences a humiliating defeat, quarrels with one of its key allies, experiences a devastating storm, and can't even recruit a preacher.

BOOK 2, CHAPTER 17

In 1636, Edward Winslow, now back in America, is re-elected governor. Though the Pilgrims have begun to sue Mr. Allerton for the cost of the *White Angel*, they hear nothing. However, they send a thousand pounds of beaver to England, and later send more. The Pilgrims hear back from Sherley that London is in the grips of a plague, meaning that the fur market is poor. This disappoints the Pilgrims, since they've traded on credit with the Dutch and now have no money to repay them. The Pilgrims decide not to send more furs back to England, in the hopes that the plague will subside. Some Pilgrims claim that they've paid off their debts with interest, even including the cost of the *White Angel*.

Winslow works as Governor in Plymouth for a number of years. In the meantime, the Pilgrims proceed with suing Allerton. The tables have turned: once, Allerton held all the power, due to his influential business contacts and lucrative trade deals. Now, the Pilgrims have much more economic power and political clout than Allerton does. The Pilgrims are also in a position where they can decide whether or not to ship supplies back to England—and in this case, they don't.

Since 1634, Bradford writes, the Pequot Indians have been at war with the Narragansett. The Pequot attempt to forge an alliance with the Massachusetts Bay Colony, governed by John Winthrop; however, Winthrop quickly finds the Pequot to be "a very false tribe," and breaks off any alliances with them. Bradford will not elaborate on the Pequot conflicts with the Narragansett, since he suspects that other historians will cover them in much more detail.

At the end of the chapter, Bradford alludes to the growing conflict between differing Native American tribes—and between Native Americans and the English colonists. However, Bradford doesn't delve into great detail about the Pequot, meaning that he seems to take Winthrop at his word when he says they're untrustworthy.

BOOK 2, CHAPTER 18

In early 1637, the Pequot openly attack English settlers in Connecticut. In response, Massachusetts settlers ask the Plymouth General Court to join them in declaring war against the Pequot. The Plymouth leadership replies by voicing its support for the war, but without the authority of the General Court. John Winthrop writes a letter to the Plymouth leadership, explaining that he awaits a "full resolution" from Plymouth. He acknowledges that the Massachusetts colony didn't support Plymouth in its dispute with France, but argues that the current conflict with the Pequot is far more serious. He also acknowledges the Plymouth leadership's concerns that Massachusetts has collaborated with France, and hasn't respected the Pilgrims' Kennebec trading rights, but insists that the Pilgrims have a Christian duty to support Massachusetts. Finally, he warns that if Massachusetts wins the war against the Pequot single-handedly, the settlers will "think ill" of Plymouth for years to come.

As Bradford portrays the event, the Pequot attack the English out of the blue, without any provocation. Other historians have disputed Bradford's characterization of the conflict, arguing that the Pequot were incensed by the English settlers' invasion of their land near the Connecticut River. (In previous chapters, Bradford has written about Plymouth's disputes with the French and the Massachusetts Bay Colony, but not, surprisingly, with the Native Americans, to whom the Connecticut territory belonged.) Bradford recognizes that backing out of the war will give Plymouth a credibility problem with Massachusetts—and therefore, it's in the best long-term interests of the colony to fight.

Meanwhile, the Pequot try to make an alliance with the Narragansett against the English. However, the Narragansett remember their own quarrels with the Pequot, and resolve to join the English instead. The Plymouth courts agree to send fifty soldiers to fight the Pequot. Bradford says that he will not describe in any great detail what happened in the ensuing fight in Connecticut. However, the English, "with great courage," burn down an enemy fort, killing some four hundred people. The Narragansett refrain from killing any Pequot Indians as they run out of the burning fort, leaving this task to the English. Later, the Plymouth and Massachusetts armies resolve to wage further war against the Pequot.

Even nearly four centuries later, Bradford's description of the conflict with the Pequot (later termed the First Pequot War) is shocking. He describes, in the same flat, plain style he's used throughout the book, the way that pious Christians burn down forts containing hundreds of Native Americans who, it's fair to presume, saw themselves as protecting their rights to their own land. Plymouth and Massachusetts essentially strengthen their claims to Connecticut through force, not trade or treaty.

On May 28, 1637, Governor Winthrop sends a letter to the Plymouth colony, reporting that his soldiers have killed dozens of Indians with their swords. The Indians fire arrows at the English, but only three Englishmen are hit. The army captures many prisoners, and the male children are sent to Bermuda as slaves, while the women and female children are sent to local towns. The Pequot chief, Sassacus, is beheaded, ending the war with the Pequot tribe.

The English settlers defeat the Pequot because of their superior military technology, more than any other single factor. The English are brutal in their treatment of Native American prisoners, sending the women and children into a lifetime of slavery. (American history classes often claim that European colonists didn't use Native Americans as slaves—but even Bradford's account disproves this.)

Later in the year, the Pilgrims receive letters from England explaining that Sherley hasn't distributed any money to the rest of the company. The Pilgrims agree to "discharge Mr. Sherley from his agency."

After Mr. Sherley refuses to perform his duties adequately, the Pilgrims discharge him, reflecting Plymouth's increasing independence and financial power.

BOOK 2, CHAPTER 19

In 1638, Thomas Prince is chosen as Governor. During that same year, three men are executed for robbery and murder: Arthur Peach, Thomas Jackson, and Richard Stinnings. It's found that Peach, a soldier in the Pequot War, was planning to defect to the Dutch colony, along with Jackson, Stinnings, and another man named Daniel Crose. It's also revealed that Peach has "seduced" a maidservant and must leave to avoid disgrace. The four men flee the colony and quickly run into a group of Narragansett Indians. Peach attacks and kills one Indian; immediately afterwards, he and his friends are arrested by the Narragansett and brought to "Mr. Williams" (i.e., Roger Williams). Williams manages to pacify the Narragansett for a time, but eventually they bring the men back to Plymouth. Though some object that Englishmen should be executed for killing a "mere" Indian, the Plymouth leadership agrees to execute the men, giving the Narragansett "satisfaction." (However, Crose escapes from captivity before he can be executed.)

It's interesting that, just one year after waging the Pequot War against the Native Americans, the Pilgrim leaders prosecute their own citizens with greater severity and bloodthirstiness than ever before—it's as if the war has set a new precedent for violence in Plymouth. Notice that the Plymouth leadership maintains its alliance with the Narragansett, prosecuting its own people for fighting with the Narragansett. Readers might interpret the Plymouth leaders' behavior as a sign that they respect Native Americans and consider them human beings with rights (which is more than can be said for other colonists of the time)—but it could also be argued that the Plymouth leaders are just trying to maintain a useful strategic alliance with the Narragansett.

The Pilgrims receive many more letters from England, explaining that the investors have been unable to obtain any money from Mr. Sherley. Investors have also failed to obtain high prices for the goods the Pilgrims shipped them, and attempt to charge the Pilgrims for the losses. The Pilgrims send back more furs and other goods; however, Bradford writes, "this did not stay their clamor, as will appear hereafter."

In some ways, the Plymouth Plantation is better organized and economically healthier than England itself: England is still recovering from a brutal plague that's weakened its labor force and its market for luxury goods. Plymouth, on the other hand, has profited from a victory in the Pequot War.

In the same year, American prices for cattle and corn are exceptionally high, bringing great wealth to the colonists. The original Plymouth settlers, who own stock in the colony, begin to prosper. However, the colony experiences a setback when an earthquake occurs in early June. Who, Bradford asks rhetorically, can stay God's hand? In the following years, temperatures are unseasonably cold. Bradford will leave it to naturalists to judge whether the temperature drop was responsible for the upcoming poor harvests.

The Plymouth Plantation begins to prosper, thanks to its economic productivity and the territory it protected in the First Pequot War. Yet even in the midst of its success, the colony experiences a horrible earthquake. Throughout the book, Bradford has interpreted natural disasters as signs of divine punishment—yet as usual, he doesn't draw the same conclusion regarding his own people, and instead interprets the earthquake as a sign of God's power.

BOOK 2, CHAPTER 20

Bradford says that he will discuss 1639 and 1640 together, since they were a calm time in Plymouth history. Plymouth acquires new land, and there are various controversies with Massachusetts over the borders of the new towns. The Plymouth and Massachusetts courts both appoint commissioners (including Bradford himself) to find fair boundaries. In the end, the commissioners divide the new communities along the Hingam River and nearby Bound Brook. The new Plymouth land patent is taken out in Bradford's name, extending to his heirs and associates.

Although 1639 and 1640 seem to be slow periods, they're actually very important in Puritan history. In the aftermath of the Pequot War, Plymouth and Massachusetts enjoy a degree of cooperation, mediated by the court system, that they've never experienced before.

The Plymouth Plantation receives a few important letters from England, requesting further goods to help Mr. Sherley pay off his own obligations to investors. The colonists are highly reluctant to do so, but ask John Winthrop's advice. Winthrop advises the Pilgrims not to send any goods back to Sherley. The Pilgrims are still irritated at having been blamed for falling behind in their debts for so many years, when in reality, they were the *victims* of corruption and laziness. Furthermore, many of the original colonists have no desire to go into debt once again, since they're now financially comfortable and getting older.

The Pilgrims have nearly paid off their own debts, and therefore are reluctant to go into debt again to help Mr. Sherley. The cultural influence of the Pilgrims' debt can still be felt in American society—their slow, steady working off of their financial obligations reinforced ideals of hard work and individual responsibility that later formed the cornerstone of the American capitalist ideology.

BOOK 2, CHAPTER 21

In 1641, Mr. Sherley writes to William Bradford, the Governor of Plymouth once more, about his financial situation. He urges Bradford to send more money, claiming that the Pilgrims' accounts are not yet settled. He also suggests that the Pilgrims might one day return to England, since the influence of Catholicism has almost been vanquished there.

Bradford is governor of Plymouth once again, and so it falls to him to correspond with Sherley. Notice that Sherley raises the possibility of the Pilgrims returning to England. Although Bradford doesn't address this statement, it should be clear by now that Bradford and the Pilgrims have no intention of returning: they've established their own society and their own unique culture in America.

The original shareholders living on the Plymouth Plantation must decide how to close their affairs with Sherley. They make detailed records of all their debts to Sherley, and come up with the figure of 1400 pounds, taking a "solemn oath" that the figure is no greater than that. On October 15, 1641, they write out an agreement for Mr. Sherley, in which they offer the sum of 1400 pounds as a final payment for the *White Angel* and all outstanding debts. Bradford writes, "Next year this long and tedious business came to an issue … though not to a final end."

The Puritans decide that they owe Mr. Sherley 1400 pounds, and swear that the amount is no greater than that. The Pilgrims remain—or at least claim to remain—extremely honest about their financial situations, in contrast to many of the businessmen they have to deal with.

Bradford next discusses the career of Reverend Charles Chauncey, who had arrived in Plymouth in 1638. Chauncey serves as a minister in the community, but argues with other religious authorities about baptismal rites. He claims that sprinkling the infants with water is "unlawful," and that the correct practice is to dip the infant in water (which the Pilgrims haven't done, due to cold weather). Chauncey leaves for another community rather than compromise. Around the same time, the Plymouth community goes through financial troubles; prices drop, and many Pilgrims migrate to other towns.

The Plymouth Plantation has its own unique religious practices, adapted (however slightly) to the New England environment. Notice that, much as the Pilgrims themselves left their community rather than compromise on their religious convictions, Chauncey is now leaving Plymouth rather than compromise his own.

BOOK 2, CHAPTER 22

In 1642, the Pilgrims finally resolve their disagreements with English investors. On June 14th, James Sherley writes a letter to the Plymouth colonists, explaining that he will make good on the Pilgrims' terms. For the next four years, however, the Pilgrims and investors still have to straighten out various minor financial affairs with England.

By the 1640s, the Pilgrims are free of their financial burdens. For twenty years, debt was like a second religion for the Pilgrims, inspiring them to stick together, work hard, and be responsible for their own actions throughout the year. Even after the debt is paid off, the Pilgrims continue to uphold these virtues.

BOOK 2, CHAPTER 23

In 1643, on April 18th, William Brewster dies after a long illness. Bradford wonders if Brewster's life was made worse by his "former sufferings," but concludes that these pains and illnesses made his life richer by adding to his honor. Bradford says he will now write something of Brewster's remarkable life.

As the book nears an end, its tone becomes more retrospective and wistful—never more so than in Chapter 23, when Bradford writes about Brewster's long, happy life.

Brewster was educated at Cambridge University, where he studied religion, as well as Latin and Greek. He was then appointed an ambassador to Holland, where he won many friends. When he retired to live in the country, he did much good in his community by promoting religious values. He also began to campaign against the corrupt prelates and bishops of England, eventually leading a widespread English reform movement.

William Brewster was one of the key leaders for the English Separatist movement: he used his expert theological training to lead the North English people in his own unique interpretation of Protestantism, attacking the corruption and needless complexity of the English prelate system.

Brewster was instrumental in leading the Christian reformers into Holland, and was their leader for more than a decade. During this period, he was regarded by both the Dutch and his English followers as a great public speaker and teacher; he was also praised for his abstinence, faith, and tenderness.

Brewster's charismatic preaching and theologizing was an important factor in keeping the Pilgrims united during their time in Leyden.

Bradford marvels that so many virtuous Pilgrims, not just William Brewster, lived to a remarkably old age—indeed, Brewster lived to be eighty years old. In spite of the fact that the Pilgrims live hard lives and sometimes want for food and shelter, their faith keeps them strong.

Many Puritans did, indeed, live extraordinarily long lives in New England (although many of them died in childbirth, or of disease, too)—and as usual, Bradford credits their successes to their faithfulness and God's approval.

Bradford next describes how the Narragansett form an alliance against the English, alongside whom they'd fought in the Pequot War. In response, the leaders of Massachusetts, Connecticut, New Haven, and Plymouth form a close alliance. According to the alliance, these "United Colonies" would defend one another and share expenses in all future wars. The United Colonies alliance also requires the appointment of new leaders—commissioners and presidents—to serve on a council.

The United Council was a major milestone in New England history because it marked one of the first times when the New England colonies worked together. Not coincidentally, the impetus for this alliance was militaristic: the colonies wanted to make sure that they could defend their property from Native Americans and colonists from other nations. As such, the alliance marked a point when the colonists celebrated their collective European and Christian identity, instead of emphasizing their religious differences (as they'd often done in the past).

At the first meeting of the United Council, held in Boston, the Council considers the immanent conflict between the Narragansett and the Pequot. At the time, Chief Uncas of the nearby Monhig tribe is feuding with Chief Miantinomo of the Narragansett. The Council, many of whose members are friendly with Uncas, decides to tell Uncas that they'll support him in his attacks on the Narragansett. Shortly afterwards, Uncas captures and executes Miantinomo.

The chapter ends with the first test for the United Council: the conflict between the Narragansett and the Pequot tribes. Bradford contrasts the order and cooperation of the New England colonies with the perceived disorder of the Native American tribes.

BOOK 2, CHAPTER 24

In 1644, Edward Winslow is chosen governor of Plymouth. The original Plymouth settlement has become small and bare, since most of the population has moved to surrounding towns. A group of church leaders agrees to move the new Plymouth church to a nearby place called Nauset, some fifty miles away. Realizing that nobody will come to such a remote church, the leaders change their decision. However, the new church is already under construction by this time. When it's finally completed, almost nobody attends it.

The Pilgrims again face logistical challenges: the community is becoming more and more spread out, and therefore less culturally and economically unified. But although the pilgrims become more spread out geographically, they're still united in their opposition to Native Americans—as Bradford will show later in the following chapter.

The same year, a conflict breaks out with the Narragansett Indians. The Narragansett urge the Massachusetts Governor to support a retaliatory war against Uncas. The Governor forbids such a conflict, and threatens to start a war if the Narragansett harm Uncas. However, the Narragansett kill many of Uncas's men. Uncas asks for support from the United Council, and the Council agrees, but makes it known that they'll enforce peace between tribes. The Narragansett seem to accept peace, and promise to send their men to the United Council for punishment if they should attempt to attack Uncas's Monhig tribe.

The United Council bills itself as a peacekeeping force, whose sole purpose is to protect its own citizens. Indeed, the Council was partly designed to promote peaceful trade, to the collective advantage of the English settlers in New England. The Council had an incentive to intervene in the conflict between the Native Americans, then, because the conflict interfered with trading.

BOOK 2, CHAPTER 25

In 1645, the Narragansett Indians renew their attacks on Uncas and the Monhig. They kill many of Uncas's men; in response, the United Council holds a meeting on July 28th. They send word to both tribes to send representatives for negotiation or else risk war. The Narragansett refuse to send representatives, and around the same time, Roger Williams sends a letter to Plymouth, explaining that the Narragansett are contemplating war. The United Council drafts a declaration of war against the Narragansett and assembles an army to fight them.

The United Council responds to the conflict between the Narragansett and the Monhig Native Americans by issuing a declaration of war; however, its goal is seemingly not to wage an actual war. Rather, the Council's goal seems to be promoting peace and, just as importantly, peaceful trade and communication between its member colonies.

The United Council sends its declaration of war to the Narragansett, and the Narragansett send back an "insolent" messenger to heap "scorn and contempt" on the Council. Seeing that war is inevitable, the Plymouth leadership assembles 190 men, led by Myles Standish, to fight the Narragansett.

The Council members respond to the Narragansett's escalations by assembling troops for a full-scale war. Once again a common enemy helps unite the otherwise often disconnected colonies.

Just before the men are due to leave, the Council sends messengers to the Narragansett, explaining that if they make reparations, the English settlers will accept peace. Three days later, a group of three Narragansett messengers arrives in Boston, offering to pay reparations of corn and wampum and to return all settlers they've captured in the past. Finally, the Narragansett messengers promise that their tribe will cease attacking neighboring tribes. The Council accepts the messengers' surrender, and "thus was the war pending at this time prevented."

The Council calls the Narragansett tribe's bluff, taking its military forces to the brink of war, only to hear from the Narragansett that they've surrendered. In this way, the Council establishes itself as the most powerful authority in the New England area. In the following fifty years, New England's leadership would become much more aggressive and ambitious in its aims. But the near-war of 1645 was an important step forward for military cooperation between the colonies.

BOOK 2, CHAPTER 26

In May of 1646, three military vessels arrive near Plymouth. The captain has sailed from the West Indies, and he's brought a crew of "eighty strong fellows, but very unruly." The crew spends about a month in Plymouth, spreading "sin and money." During this month, the captain argues with one of his own men, accidentally killing him with the hilt of his sword. The captain is tried but eventually acquitted, since his opponent had a reputation for being argumentative. The captain later dies when he falls from his horse and lands on his sword's hilt—and some say that this proves "the hand of God."

The final chapter begins with an anecdote much like others in the book: Bradford describes how an unruly, sinful man eventually gets his just desserts (although, as with earlier examples, Bradford himself doesn't say that God is responsible, but only repeats what "others" have said).

Later in 1646, Edward Winslow travels to England. His mission is to defend the Massachusetts government from slander, as a group of "discontented persons" in the colony has been criticizing their leader. In the end, Winslow succeeds in defending the government officials from slander; however, he is "detained" due to "great upheavals in the government" and has now been gone for four years.

As this passage would suggest, the book ends without complete closure—it's likely that Bradford intended to write much more before he succumbed to illness (Bradford died in 1657). But even so, Bradford does end the book soon after one of the pivotal events in New England history—the formation of the United Council—offering some kind of conclusion.

The book ends with a lengthy list of "those who came over first in the Mayflower" in 1620. Of these people—approximately one hundred—about half died of disease after landing in Plymouth, and many others were too elderly to bear children. Nevertheless, in the year 1650 the descendants of the first wave of Plymouth settlers number some 130 people, and thirty of the original colonists are still alive. Bradford concludes, "Let the Lord have the Praise, Who is the High Preserver of men."

In the final portion of the book, Bradford lists more than one hundred people who traveled to New England on the Mayflower, *and then thanks God for taking care of them and blessing the Plymouth Plantation with prosperity. Bradford was, there can be no doubt, a devoutly religious man—yet it can certainly be argued that Bradford sacrificed (or adapted) some of his religious convictions in order to ensure a thriving colony, prosecuting colonists whose views differed from his own and massacring Native Americans. The Pilgrims thrived in New England because their religious faith impelled them to work hard and take responsibility for their actions, but they also thrived because of they way they subjugated the Native Americans and used violence to control their own people.*

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