

# Excerpts from William Bradford's *Of Plymouth Plantation* with Text-Dependent Questions

## Religious Beliefs

The one side [the Reformers] laboured to have ye right worship of God & discipline of Christ established in ye church, according to ye simplicitie of ye gospell, without the mixture of mens inventions, and to have & to be ruled by ye laws of Gods word, dispensed in those offices, & by those officers of Pastors, Teachers, & Elders, &c. according to ye Scripturs.

The other partie [the Church of England], though under many colours & pretences, endeavored to have ye episcopall dignitie (affter ye popish maner) with their large power & jurisdiction still retained; with all those courts, canons, & ceremonies, together with all such livings, revenues, & subordinate officers, with other such means as formerly upheld their antichristian greatnes, and enabled them with lordly & tyranous power to persecute ye poore servants of God.

## Questions for Religious Beliefs

What did the Reformers believe in?

**Answer:** The Reformers believed that the Church should follow Scripture and God's laws and not laws that people created.

What do the Pilgrims (Reformers) see as the problem with the Church of England?

**Answer:** The Pilgrims thought the Church of England was becoming too powerful. The Pilgrims said that the Church was persecuting others who are trying to be "servants of God."

## Moving to the City of Leiden, Holland (1609)

For these & some other reasons they removed to Leyden, a fair & bewtiful citie, and of a sweete situation, but made more famous by ye universitie wherwith it is adorned, in which of late had been so many learned man. But wanting that traffike by sea which Amerstdam injoyes, it was not so beneficiall for their outward means of living & estats. But being now hear pitchet they fell to such trads & employments as they best could; valewing peace & their spirituall comferte above any other riches whatsoever. And at lenth they came to raise a competente & comferteable living, but with hard and continuall labor.

Being thus settled (after many difficulties) they continued many years in a comfortable condition, injoying much sweete & delightfull societies & spirituall comferte together in ye wayes of God, under ye able ministrie, and prudente

governmente of Mr. John Robinson, & Mr. William Brewster, who was an assistante unto him in ye place of an Elder, unto which he was now called & chosen by the church.

So as they grew in knowledge & other gifts & graces of ye spirite of God, & lived together in peace, & love, and holiness; and many came unto them from diverse parts of England, so as they grew a great congregation. And if at any time any differences arose, or offences broak out (as it cannot be, but some time ther will, even amongst ye best of men) they were ever so mete with, and nipt in ye head betims, or otherwise so well composed, as still love, peace, and communion was continued; or else ye church purged ot those that were incurable & incorrigible, when, after much patience used, no other means would serve, which seldom came to pass.

### **Question for Moving to the City of Leiden, Holland (1609)**

What was life like for the Pilgrims after they moved to Leiden?

**Answer:** They were able to live in peace and holiness in Leiden.

### **Deciding to Emigrate to America**

All great & honourable actions are accompanied with great difficulties, and must be both enterprised and overcome with answerable courages. It was granted ye dangers were great, but not desperate; the difficulties were many, but not invincible. For though there were many of them likely, yet they were not cartaine; it might be sundrie of ye things feared might never befale; others by providente care & ye use of good means, might in a great measure be prevented; and all of them, through ye help of God, by fortitude and patience, might either be borne, or overcome.

True it was, that such atempts were not to be made and undertaken without good ground & reason; not rashly or lightly as many have done for curiositie or hope of gaine, &c. But their condition was not ordinarie; their ends were good & honourable; their calling lawfull, & urgente; and therfore they might expecte ye blessing of god in their proceding. Yea, though they should loose their lives in this action, yet might they have comferte in the same, and their endeavors would be honourable. They lived hear but as men in exile, & in a poore condition; and as great miseries might possibly befale them in this place, for ye 12. years of truce [the truce between Holland and Spain] were now out, & ther was nothing but beating of drumes, and preparing for warr, the events wherof are allway uncertaine.

### **Question for Deciding to Emigrate to America**

Why did the Pilgrims decide to move to America in spite of the dangers?

**Answer:** The Pilgrims knew that it would be difficult to move to the New World, but not impossible. They could not be sure that many of the things they worried would even happen! Also, they were living in exile in Leiden. And there was a threat of war between Holland and Spain.

## Arriving Safely at Cape Cod

Being thus arived in a good harbor and brought safe to land, they fell upon their knees & blessed ye God of heaven, who had brought them over ye vast & furious ocean, and delivered them from all ye periles & miseries therof, againe to set their feete on ye firme and stable earth, their proper elemente. And no marvell if they were thus joyefull, seeing wise Seneca was so affected with sailing a few miles on ye coast of his owne Italy; as he affirmed, that he had rather remaine twentie years on his way by land, then pass by sea to any place in a short time; so tedious & dreadfull was ye same unto him.

But hear I cannot but stay and make a pause, and stand half amased at this poore peoples presente condition; and so I thinke will the reader too, when he well considered ye same. Being thus passed ye vast ocean, and a sea of troubles before in their preparation (as may be remembred by yt which wente before), they had now no friends to wellcome them, nor inns to entertaine or refresh their weatherbeaten bodys, no houses or much less townes to repaire too, to seeke for succoure.

Let it also be considred what weake hopes of supply & succoure they left behinde them, yt might bear up their minds in this sade condition and trialls they were under; and they could not but be very smale. It is true, indeed, ye affections & love of their brethren at Leyden was cordiall & entire towards them, but they had litle power to help them, or them selves; and how ye case stode betweene them & ye marchants at their coming away, hath already been declared. What could not sustaine them but ye spirite of God & his grace? May not & ought not the children of these fathers rightly say : *Our fathers were Englishmen which came over this great ocean, and were ready to perish in this willdernes; but they cried unto ye Lord, and he heard their voyce, and looked on their adversitie...*

## Question for Arriving Safely at Cape Cod

What attitude did the Pilgrims have toward their arrival in Cape Cod?

**Answer:** They thanked God for bringing them safely through the difficult journey. But they realized that they were in a place that was very different from England, with no friends and no comfort.

## The Pilgrims' Exploring Party Lands at Plymouth

From hence they departed, & co[a]sted all along, but discerned no place likely for harbor; & therefore hasted to a place that their pillote, (one Mr. Coppin who had bine in ye cuntrie before) did assure them was a good harbor, which he had been in, and they might fetch it before night; of which they were glad, for it begane to be foule weather.

After some houres sailing, it begane to snow & raine, & about ye midle of ye afternoone, ye wind increased, & ye sea became very rough, and they broake their ruder, & it was as much as 2 men could doe to steere her with a cupple of oares. But their pillott bad them be of good cheere, for he saw ye harbor; but ye storme increasing, & night drawing on, they bore what saile they could to gett in, while they



could see. But herwith they broake their mast in 3 peeces, & their saill fell over bord, in a very grown sea, so as they had like to have been cast away; yet by Gods mercie they recovered them selves, & having ye floud with them, struck into ye harbore.

But when it came too, ye pillott was deceived in ye place, and said, ye Lord be mercifull unto them, for his eys never saw yt place before; & he & the mr. mate would have rune her ashore, in a cove full of breakers, before ye winde. But a lusty seaman which steered, bad those which rowed, if they were men, about with her, or ells they were all cast away; the which they did with speed. So he bid them be of good cheere & row lustly, for ther was a faire sound before them, & he doubted not but they should find one place or other wher they might ride in saftie. And though it was very darke, and rained sore, yet in ye end they gott under ye lee of a smale iland, and remained ther all yt night in saftie. But they knew not this to be an iland till morning, but were devided in their minds; some would keepe ye boate for fear they might be amongst ye Indians; others were so weake and cold, they could not endure, but got a shore, & with much adoe got fire, (all things being so wett,) and ye rest were glad to come to them; for after midnight ye wind shifted to the north-west, & it frose hard.

But though this had been a day & night of much trouble & danger unto them, yet God gave them a morning of comforte & refreshing (as usually he doth to his children), for ye next day was a faire sunshinig day, and they found them sellvs to be on an iland secure from ye Indeans, wher they might drie their stufe, fixe their peeces, & rest them selves, and gave God thanks for his mercies, in their manifould deliverances. And this being the last day of ye weeke, they prepared there to keepe ye Sabath.

On Munday they sounded ye harbor, and founde it fitt for shipping; and marched into ye land [Plymouth], & found diverse cornfeilds, & litle runing brooks, a place (as they supposed) fitt for situation; at least it was ye best they could find, and ye season, & their presente necessitie, made them glad to accepte of it. So they returned to their shipp againe with this news to ye rest of their people, which did much comforte their harts.

### **Questions for The Pilgrims' Exploring Party Lands at Plymouth**

To what do the Pilgrims attribute their safety and survival?

**Answer:** God's mercy.

What happened to the Pilgrims' exploring party before they arrived in Plymouth?

**Answer:** Acceptable details can include:

- It began to snow and rain.
- Their rudder broke.
- Their mast broke.
- The sea became very rough.
- Their sail fell overboard.

How did the Pilgrims react to hearing about Plymouth?

**Answer:** The Pilgrims were comforted by the news.

### **Meeting Squanto, the Native American Who Spoke English**

All this while the Indians came skulking about them, and would sometimes show themselves aloof off, but when any approached near them, they would run away; and once they stole away their tools where they had been at work and were gone to dinner.

But about the 16th of March, a certain Indian came boldly amongst them and spoke to them in broken English, which they could well understand but marveled at it. At length they understood by discourse with him, that he was not of these parts, but belonged to the eastern parts where some English ships came to fish, with whom he was acquainted and could name sundry of them by their names, amongst whom he had got his language. He became profitable to them in acquainting them with many things concerning the state of the country in the east parts where he lived, which was afterwards profitable unto them; as also of the people here, of their names, number and strength, of their situation and distance from this place, and who was chief amongst them. His name was Samoset. He told them also of another Indian whose name was Squanto, a native of this place, who had been in England and could speak better English than himself.

Being after some time of entertainment and gifts dismissed, a while after he came again, and five more with him, and they brought again all the tools that were stolen away before, and made way for the coming of their great Sachem, called Massasoit. Who, about four or five days after, came with the chief of his friends and other attendance, with the aforesaid Squanto. With whom, after friendly entertainment and some gifts given him, they made a peace with him (which hath now continued this 24 years) in these terms:

1. That neither he nor any of his should injure or do hurt to any of their people.
2. That if any of his did hurt to any of theirs, he should send the offender, that they might punish him.
3. That if anything were taken away from any of theirs, he should cause it to be restored; and they should do the like to his.
4. If any did unjustly war against him, they would aid him; if any did war against them, he should aid them.
5. He should send to his neighbors confederates to certify them of this, that they might not wrong them, but might be likewise comprised in the conditions of peace.
6. That when their men came to them, they should leave their bows and arrows behind them.

After these things he returned to his place called Sowams, some 40 miles from this place, but Squanto continued with them and was their interpreter and was a special instrument sent of God for their good beyond their expectation. He directed them how to set their corn, where to take fish, and to procure other commodities, and was also their pilot to bring them to unknown places for their profit, and never left them till he died.

He was a native of this place, and scarce any left alive besides himself. He was carried away with divers others by one Hunt, a master of a ship, who thought to sell them for slaves in Spain. But he got away for England and was entertained by a merchant in London, and employed to Newfoundland and other parts, and lastly brought hither into these parts by one Mr. Dermer, a gentleman employed by Sir Ferdinando Gorges and others for discovery and other designs in these parts.

### **Questions for Meeting Squanto, the Native American Who Spoke English**

What did the agreement between Squanto and the Pilgrims state?

**Answer:** The agreement stated that the Pilgrims and Wampanoag would not hurt or steal from one another, would help each other if either was under attack, and would leave their weapons behind when they met to talk.

Why did the Pilgrims owe Squanto gratitude?

**Answer:** Squanto acted as their interpreter, remaining with them even though he was 40 miles from home. He also showed them how to plant corn, fish, and find other commodities. He brought them to places that would profit them. He stayed with the Pilgrims until he died.

### **The Winter of 1621**

In these hard & difficult beginnings they found some discontents & murmurings arise amongst some, and mutinous speeches & carriages in other; but they were soon quelled & overcome by ye wisdom, patience, and just & equall carriage of things by ye Govr and better part, wch clave faithfully together in ye maine. But that which was most sadd & lamentable was, that in 2. or 3. moneths time halfe of their company dyed, espetially in Jan: & February, being ye depth of winter, and wanting houses & other comforts; being infected with ye scurvie & other diseases, which this long vioage & their incomodate condition had brought upon them; so as ther dyed some times 2. or 3. of a day, in ye foresaid time; that of 100. & odd persons, scarce 50. remained.

And of these in ye time of most distres, ther was but 6. or 7. sound persons, who, to their great comendations be it spoken, spared no pains, night nor day, but with abundance of toyle and hazard of their owne health, fetched them woode, made them fires, drest them meat, made their beads, washed their lothsome cloaths, clothed & unclothed them; in a word, did all ye homly & necessarie offices for them wch dainty & quesie stomacks cannot endure to hear named; and all this willingly &

cherfully, without any grudging in ye least, shewing herein their true love unto their friends & bretheren. A rare example & worthy to be remembered. Two of these 7. were Mr. William Brewster, ther reverend Elder, & Myles Standish, ther Captein & military comander, unto whom my selfe, & many others, were much beholden in our low & sicke condition.

### **Question for The Winter of 1621**

Why did so many people die during this winter?

**Answer:** They were infected with scurvy and other diseases from the voyage. Also, the winter was very cold and they did not have houses yet in Plymouth.

### **The First Thanksgiving Feast**

They begane now to gather in ye small harvest they had, and to fitte up their houses and dwellings against winter, being all well recovered in health & strenght, and had all things in good plenty; For as some were thus imployed in affairs abroad, others were excersised in fishing, aboute codd, & bass, & other fish, of which yey tooke good store, of which every family had their portion. All ye somer ther was no want. And now begane to come in store of foule, as winter approached, of which this place did abound when they came first (but afterward decreased by degrees). And besids water foule, ther was great store of wild Turkie, of which they tooke many, besids venison, &c. Besids, they had about a peck a meale a weeke to a person, or now since harvest, Indean corn to yt proportion. Which made many afterwards write so largely of their plenty hear to their freinds in England, which were not fained, but true reports.

### **Questions for The First Thanksgiving Feast**

The Pilgrims have been in Plymouth for almost a year. Which line from this excerpt signifies this?

**Answer:** "And now begane to come in store of foule, as winter approached, of which this place did abound when they came first (but afterward decreased by degrees)."

What was the result of the harvest and the Thanksgiving feast?

**Answer:** The Pilgrims had food to spare, and everyone was full of food and healthy.

### **Overall Question for William Bradford's *Of Plymouth Plantation***

Why might Bradford have written this in third person point of view instead of first person narrative?

**Answer:** Bradford may have written this in third person so he could talk about everyone involved instead of just his personal experience. In third person, he is



an outside observer and he is able to guess what others were feeling. He can talk about things he did not do because he is not really part of the story. In third person, Bradford can be everywhere at once as he tells the story.

It is possible that Bradford was trying to convince others to come to America. His writing suggests that coming to America is worth the voyage and hardship. He does not tell the reader that he likes America, which could sound biased. Instead he shows how much the Pilgrims grew to love America. Bradford shows, not tells, how great America is.