

Governor Bradford Discovers the Folly of Communism And the Wisdom of Piece Work

William Bradford was the *Governor* of the colony of Plymouth Massachusetts, the first English settlement in New England, and he kept a yearly chronicle: *Of Plymouth Plantation 1620-1647*. One item in there, on page 120 of the 1991 Knopf edition, has been pounced on by latter day *conservatives* as providing proof that **Communism Does Not Work** because it is **contrary to human nature**.

With the agreement of the settlers, Bradford assigned a garden plot to each family in place of the previous arrangement where they were all supposed to work the fields together and share the crop. And this new arrangement caused them to work harder and produce more food he says. And that inspires him to arrive at a **much larger conclusion**:

The experience that was held in this common course and condition, tried sundry years and that amongst godly and sober men, may well evince the vanity of that conceit of Plato's and other ancients applauded by some of later times; that the taking away of property and bringing in community into a commonwealth would make them happy and flourishing, as if they were wiser than God.

Milton Friedman's five part video series **Free to Choose** features repeats of a comment by Steve Allen based upon this observation by Bradford: *The Pilgrims tried a form of socialism over 300 years ago; unfortunately for their fair-minded plans they prospered only after they were allowed to keep for themselves all the food they grew, and to use it or sell it as they saw fit.* Rush Limbaugh's Thanksgiving special program also recycles this Great Truth: the *Pilgrims* discovered that *Communism* just doesn't work.

But Bradford's original remarks cannot stand up to a serious historical scrutiny. In the first place, Plymouth Plantation was a **CAPITALIST EXPERIMENT**, not a Communist Experiment. The reason they could not divide up the land is that they had signed a contract with the *Adventurers* = the *investors* who put up the **capital** to pay for the voyage and the supplies the *planters* needed. *Plymouth Plantation* was a **joint stock company**. Every actual colonist had one share, plus additional shares at 10 L each, if he could afford them. The *Adventurers*, who stayed behind in England, owned one share for each 10 L of capital they had invested. Ten pounds, circa 1620, would be the equivalent of several thousand dollars in modern money.

The binding legal agreement the *Planters* had signed with the *Adventurers*, which is given on page 40 of *Plymouth Plantation*, was that all of the land the colony owned, together with any improvements, would remain undivided until the end of 7 years, when it would be divided among all of the stockholders according to how many shares they owned. Bradford did not divide the land among the colonists, when they each got their garden plot, because he was legally prevented from doing it. What they did instead was to institute a kind of **piece work system**--*you raise it, you eat it, otherwise you go hungry--every man for himself--and every woman for herself.* But Plymouth remained a Company Town and there was still **no private property** in land.

Bradford's remark, if it was really aimed at Plato, is completely off the target. He obviously had not read Plato's *Republic*. His suggestion that people working a field together had some connection with Plato's model is silly. The editor, **Samuel Eliot Morison**, notes that an English translation of Jean Bodin's *de Republica* (1586) was part of Bradford's estate and that he presumably had read Bodin's criticism of

Plato's *Republic*: *such a Commonweal should also be against the law of God and nature . . . which expressly forbids us to . . . desire anything that another man's is.*

sexual liberation / children raised by the government

The Communism of Plato's *Republic* has nothing to do with people working a garden plot together. It only applies to the ruling class, who are exempt from manual labor, and who are supported by the state. For this class, Plato decrees, not only the abolition of private property, but also **the abolition of the family**--the abolition of sexual morality, the abolition of monogamy and the abolition of children being raised by their mothers and fathers. The men and women of the ruling class of Plato's *Republic* are to regularly change sexual partners and avoid monogamous bonds. When babies are born, they are to be immediately taken away from their mothers and raised in a government nursery. The mothers are never to know which kid is theirs, so, when they visit the government nursery, they will be equally affectionate towards all the children. Thus Plato decrees.

This **abolition of the family** is the main reason for Plato's **communism** and directly tied to it. At the very beginning of the *Republic*, Plato links **private property** and **the family** before he goes on to abolish both. The obvious source of Plato's animus against the family is his own homosexuality. It is usually concealed, but there is a basic hostility to the family from those who find themselves incapable of forming a monogamous bond and excluded from having families of their own. Envy is the mother of malice.

Plato's *Republic* also calls for exposing infants to die to reduce population. His ideology of a totalitarian state from which private property and the family have been banished was preserved down through the centuries by secretive groups committed to sexual liberation, like the Freemasons. It surfaced during the French Revolution and became a major doctrine of 19th century Communism.

It is safe to say that Bradford and the other colonists would have been horrified if they had actually read Plato's *Republic* and anyone had seriously proposed that Plymouth Plantation should be modeled upon it. And of course no one had. Neither had anyone proposed that Plymouth try to practice the **ALL THINGS COMMON** of the New Testament Christians, but that was Bradford's real target for which his unfounded criticism of *Plato* became a surrogate.

tried sundry years

There is a peculiar jump in Bradford's remarks. He proceeds from an isolated and doubtful fact to a pretentious and unfounded conclusion. Had they in fact tried some sort of *communism* for *sundry years*? They only tried the **factory farm** style arrangement for two growing seasons, 1621 and 1622. As of 1623 they had their individual plots to work. Half of them died the winter of 1620-1621 and many of the rest were too sick to work. The seed they brought with them from England wouldn't grow. All they had to plant was the corn they had *borrowed* from an Indian cache when they first arrived in late 1620. Plus, how *sober* they were is open to question. The watchword of the Puritans was **Never Drink Water**. Like other people of the time they always had beer or cider on the table since the water was crawling with *e coli*.

A major problem in both years was a large group of single men who had never belonged to the Leyden church and who joined the *Pilgrims* at the last minute at the insistence of Weston acting on behalf of the *Adventurers*. This group is referred to by Bradford as the *strangers*. And they became a major source of disunity in a group which had been a united church community when they left Holland. So there was a peculiar disarray caused by the deaths of the first winter and the fact of all these *strangers* who did not

share the beliefs or the history of the *Pilgrims* and who felt put upon if they were asked to work for the widows and orphans who survived that first terrible winter--as Bradford describes.

Plymouth's Real Problem

One obvious problem with Plymouth was *too many chiefs*. They were all owners--except for the servants they brought with them. No one could be fired. It was not clear who was in charge. In any productive situation there has to be some sort of work discipline. The nucleus of the group had been the *Pilgrims* from the Leyden Church, but Pastor John Robinson remained in Leyden. Fewer than 100 of the 400 members of the Leyden church made it to Plymouth. And the Co Owners of Plymouth Plantation were the Adventurers back in England. Nominally, the colony was subject to the authority of King James and the **Council for New England**, but they were at least three months round trip sailing time away on the other side of the Atlantic.

Actually, nothing is commoner in the so-called *Capitalist System* than groups of people working together *in common* to produce something of which they later get some share. You may not have much personal incentive to work hard, but, if the boss is looking over your shoulder, you do it. Did George Washington's farm hands decline to work because they were producing for somebody else's benefit? Of which they belatedly got a very small share. But nobody accuses Washington of practicing *Communism*. More like good old *Free Slave Market Capitalism*. Which is even now replacing *Communism* in China. It is a basic characteristic of *capitalism* that those who do the work receive the smallest share of what is produced. Factory workers in places like Indonesia get \$ 2 a day making the sport shoes that sell for \$ 200 a pair in the U.S. Tiger Woods and Michael Jordan are paid millions just for endorsing the shoes. *To each, according to his celebrity*. It is true that, if you are paid by the bag of cotton, instead of by the hour, it does give you an incentive to pick more cotton instead of taking a nap when the guy with the whip leaves the field. The whip of economic necessity drives most of us. Almost any economy works or halfway works if people work at it and insist on making a go of it. And nothing works if you don't. The slave plantations of the founding fathers worked after a fashion. They made money from them for many years. The rest of us are still paying the bill for the messed up ex slave populace which they left behind. It is their enduring legacy to America. Millions in prison and tens of millions still living in slums.

Does Human Nature = Self Interest? Is working hard at something because you care about those who will receive the benefit **contrary to human nature**? It is contrary to some human natures perhaps. But it is typical of mothers and fathers that they work hard and sacrifice much for their families. And it is not that uncommon to find people who go a long ways out of their way to help people who are no relation. It is true that, as St. Paul states, no real community is possible with extortioners and drunks--those whose addiction pushes them to swipe your shoes to buy a bottle.

From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs describes a good family in which people really do love one another. What does the baby produce except squeals, squalls and dirty diapers? Yet baby gets the best of everything. Meanwhile, the old man, who is working a double shift to make ends meet, is lucky if he gets a lunch in a brown paper bag.

Those who assume that *self interest* is the only viable motive for the imperial economy also assume that the empire can rely upon the patriotic willingness of young men to sacrifice themselves for *their country*. Or somebody's country. Abstractions like *Freedom* and *America*. Especially if they are conscripts. Or desperate for employment. They may have signed up because they desperately needed the bonus, but, officially, they died for the most altruistic and idealistic of motives. While the manufacturers made a bundle selling bad merchandise to the war department at inflated prices. They pursue **self interest** while our military heroes die young for the sake of the **national interest**.

Bradford barely mentions it, but a number of the Plymouth colonists brought servants with them who did the work for them. The same was true of the Boston colonists. And these servants were not far from being slaves even if they had some hope of eventual liberty. The Indians they captured were the slaves of the Puritans--the concubines in some instances. It never occurred to Bradford that the basic economic rights of these people to live their own lives and enjoy the fruits of their own labors had been taken away from them by the Puritans. The way the Pilgrims appropriated a cache of Indian corn before they even settled at Plymouth illustrates the spirit which marked them afterwards. *Finders Keepers, Losers Weepers.*

Bradford's Real Target

There is obviously something else behind Bradford's off target shot at Plato's *Republic*: It was a surrogate argument against the *communism* of the radical Christians of the 16th century who had re-established **ALL THINGS COMMON** as part of their discipline. Bradford was unwilling to say what he really meant: the experience of the Plymouth settlers showed the impracticality of the communal sharing which marked the original Christian community and which had been revived by several 16th century Christian groups. Bradford gave Plato a cheap shot while he shied away from arguing against the New Testament or those who took it more *literally* than he did.

William Bradford devoutly believed that the church to which he belonged had re-established the original Christian Church. At the beginning of his history (page 3) he describes how Satan had attacked the Reformation in England lest *the churches of God revert to their ancient purity and recover their primitive order, liberty and beauty*. And Bradford's church had gone into exile in Holland rather than compromise on basic principles like *congregationalism*, which they believed to be essential to the re-establishment of the original Christian Church. On page 18 he says of the Leyden Church that *they came as near the primitive pattern of the first churches as any other church of these later times have done*. So this Scrooby / Leyden / Plymouth Church stood for the restoration of *primitive* Christianity. How serious they were is shown by their refusal to celebrate Christmas, which they regarded as a later pagan addition to the *primitive order* of the Church.

But that raises the obvious question as to what the elders of Bradford's Church thought of the **PRIMITIVE ORDER** of the Christian community which is described in Acts 2.44 and 4.32 as having *All Things Common*. Acts 4.35 *unto every man according as he had need*. And these texts were underlined by the example of other radical Christian groups who had also migrated to Holland to escape religious persecution. During the 12 years that Bradford lived in Leyden, he must have had direct or indirect contact with so called *Anabaptist* groups such as the Mennonites or the Moravian Brethren or the Hutterites which also considered themselves to have re-established primitive Christianity. Some of these congregations took *All Things Common* very seriously and attempted to put it into practice. And some of them succeeded. And some have persisted from Bradford's time right down to modern times. The *Hutterites* have been doing it for 400 years. They later migrated to America.

the root cellar

Several years ago, I visited a Hutterite community where I was shown a remarkable 100 year old Ukrainian style root cellar filled with many, many jars of preserved food which they had canned. All by itself it constitutes a refutation of Bradford's sole criteria: whether people working a field together and later sharing the produce is a viable economic arrangement. Whatever criticisms might be made of their way of life, on the single question that Bradford raises, they prove him wrong. The Hutterites abandoned *communalism* for a while when they migrated from Germany to the Ukraine. But then they prayed over it and went back to it. Since they believe in it, and have done it for many generations, they

don't find it that hard to do. Bradford's group had never done it and never believed in it. They had made no serious effort to practice Christian communalism, and their problems with their novel Capitalist-mandated factory farm system in their novel and desperate wilderness situation prove nothing about the practicality of *all things common* as practiced voluntarily by a limited group which devoutly believes in doing it.

The Hutterites have several dozen communities in North and South Dakota. And also in Canada where many of them moved after they were persecuted for their pacifism in the United States during the first World War. Another basic question about the pretended *primitive Christianity* of the Plymouth settlers is why they were so ready to wage war against the natives of New England and take their land. In their very first encounters, they were already firing their muskets at the Indians and helping themselves to their corn. Plymouth supported the wars which dispossessed the Indians and allowed the Plymouth settlers to acquire large estates. The Plymouth Church did not allow any Christian grave side ceremonies but the coffin might be accompanied by a group of soldiers who fired several volleys as it was lowered into the grave ! They apparently thought that this ceremony was perfectly compatible with the purity of the original Christian church ! And their folly is still very much with us.

Obviously there is a fundamental difference between Christian *communism* practiced voluntarily by a real **COMMUNITY** of serious Christians and the attempt by a totalitarian government to forcibly impose something called *Communism* on a non believing secular society. As is pointed out by a remarkably prescient article on *Communism* in the 1890 Encyclopedia Britannica written 25 years before the Bolshevik Revolution put the *Communists* in charge of imperial Russia. You could walk away from *New Harmony*, Indiana, Robert Owen's 19th century utopian *Communist* experiment, if it didn't suit you. It was not so easy to walk away from the society run by Lenin and Stalin. Whatever *communism* might mean on a purely voluntary and limited small scale, it was bound to become something entirely different when forcibly imposed upon the entire nation by a government bent on a total transformation of society. That defines *totalitarianism*. Like America in World War I and World War II. The militarized empire can only pretend to have a *free market economy*. Neither *freedom* nor *community* is compatible with a standing army.

Like most of the *Puritans*--although not all of them--Bradford believed in State Christianity. Even though the Scrooby Church group had been persecuted outlaws in England and even though they insisted upon the principle of *Congregationalism*, they never comprehended the basic truth of the primitive Christian church that it is **NOT OF THIS WORLD** and that it cannot be established by armed men. [John 18.36] As Tertullian wrote in his *APOLOGY* about 200 A.D.: *Nothing could be more foreign to the Christian than the state.*

Judging from Pastor John Robinson's letter, read to the group just before they sailed from Southampton, he expected them to set up a *civil government . . . choosing such persons as do entirely love and will promote the common good*. Despite their escape from persecution by the state power of England, Robinson and Brewster signed 7 articles in 1617 which acknowledged not only the authority of King James but also the authority of the Anglican Church. This was required of them before they were allowed to emigrate to America. Bradford does not mention these articles in his history. The editor suggests that *This was not a frank statement of the Pilgrims' position; but they doubtless felt that once in America they could do as they liked.* (PP 31) Aside from the question of the moral compromise involved, they would have had to eventually submit to Anglican State Church authority except for the Puritan Revolution in England and King Charles I having his head cut off. It shows how unwilling they were to pay the price for insisting upon the necessary independence of the church from the state. So it isn't surprising that, as soon as they saw the chance to get hold of secular power, they took it. They had

once been jailed for their beliefs. Now that they had the whip hand, they were ready to do the same to others.

Both Boston and Plymouth copied Calvin's totalitarian Church State in Geneva and accepted the Puritan *Commonwealth* of England established by the wars of Oliver Cromwell. Bradford forced an Anglican clergyman into exile from Plymouth for daring to conduct an Anglican service without government permission. And, to the end of his life, he expected the State to pay the Minister and called for laws to enforce religious conformity. The phrase that Bradford uses: *bringing in community into a commonwealth* shows that he really did not believe in a Christian Community which would remain a voluntary community independent of State Power and unwilling to take up arms or enforce church discipline by fines and jail etc.

Like *Christendom*, *Commonwealth* is a bastard concept which can be traced back to the original heresy of the Imperial so-called *Church* of the Roman Empire, in which, for the first time, an apostate section of the Christian Church made a deal with *the ruler of this world*. [see *The Church of the Empire*] *Commonwealth* is the fiction of a **good** empire which supposedly promotes *the common good*, even while it conscripts **common men** into wars which perpetuate the **common evil**. It perpetuates **wealth** for the privileged few and poverty for the **commoners**--*Common Poverty*.

Two Kinds of Communism

The *communism* described in *Acts of the Apostles* has an entirely different foundation from that which Plato advocated 500 years earlier. It is only a source of confusion when the same word is applied to both. The *All Things Common* of the primitive Christian Community naturally developed from their attempt to live the Christian life mandated by Jesus Christ: John 13.34 *A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. 35 By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.* That is the **sign** of the true Christian church. How can you *love one another* if you refuse to share with one another? There was no such thing as a *rich Christian* in the early Church. You were rich or you were a Christian but you couldn't be both.

As Acts 5.4 indicates, the early Christian Church did not abolish private property. But they adopted a tradition of voluntary sharing which was clearly incompatible with any of them having a superfluity of goods while the others remained in need. The early Christians could hardly have avoided this whole-hearted sharing, one with another, if they took seriously the *new commandment* that Jesus gives us to *love one another as I have loved you*.

That was in fact the most conspicuous sign of the early church, as a Roman official once exclaimed: *See how they love one another!* Tertullian writing about 200 AD said: *So we, who are united in mind and soul, have no hesitation about sharing property. All is common among us--except our wives. . . . What wonder then, if friends so dear have a common meal?* *Apology* 39.11 & 14

But all of the marks of the early church disappeared from the Imperial Church of the 4th century which was a mass church on a minimal basis. Like the modern church. (see *The Church of the Empire*, Chapter XIII *Everybody's Church: wheat & tares*) The transcendent faith of the early Christians was an antidote to that obsession with the pursuit of material goods which is characteristic of worldly *Christians*. Their trust in God and their confidence in one another insulated them from that gnawing fear which pushes people to *store up treasure* here in pursuit of the illusion of security.

Plato's *abolish the family* and **sexual liberation** mandate for the *new society* not only survived Plato's time but it was preserved down through the centuries by libertine and fag friendly secret societies like the 18th century Freemasons to which many of the American founding fathers belonged, as did many prominent English and French intellectuals. A mandate for sexual liberation was half concealed behind the proclamation of *liberty* that marked both the American Revolution and the French Revolution. And it emerged as a major component of the *utopian COMMUNIST MOVEMENT* of the early 19th century launched by Charles Fourier, Henri Saint-Simon and Robert Owen, the movement later reshaped by the writings of Karl Marx and other theoretical *socialists*.

Robert Owen was a successful industrialist who established the first model of a *communist* village in the company town surrounding his factory in England. Then he put up the money to launch New Harmony, Indiana as the model of the new world order. He truly believed that he had designed the society of the future and he appealed to other capitalists to invest in it. When he addressed a joint session of Congress in February 1825 at the invitation of President (and Freemason) James Monroe and another joint session in March 1825 at the invitation of President John Quincy Adams, he avoided spelling out the most controversial principles of his new social order. It wasn't until his July 4th 1826 oration--*Declaration of Mental Independence*--at New Harmony that he let it all hang out: *abolish a trinity of the most monstrous evils: marriage, religion and private property*. He did not follow Plato in calling for babies to be separated from their mothers at birth, but, he wanted the mothers to be *supervised by matrons* and, from the age of two, he wanted children to live in dormitories and attend school. *All the children will be brought up together as one family*.

The mandate to abolish religion, the family and private property was still included in the *scientific socialism* of Karl Marx. In Part Two of the *Communist Manifesto* he gives an exposition of it under the head of *Community of Women*. A program prepared by Engels for an 1850 Congress of the Communist League declares that *all children will be raised in national institutions at public expense*. The Bolsheviks tried to put this program into practice in Russia after the Revolution of 1917. But it caused a major amount of social destruction and encountered a great deal of passive resistance before Stalin moved away from it under the pressure of mobilizing the population in World War II.

20th Century Stalinism has a historical and spiritual connection with the Communism of Plato's *Republic*. Neither of them has any connection with the Christian communism of the New Testament. The antagonism between them is shown by the Bolshevik attack upon the surviving remnants of Christian communes in Russia and the attack upon the sexual morality which is the basis of Christian family life. By 1932 there were no more absentee landlords or big estates in Russia, only peasant proprietors living on small family farms. But the dogmatic animus of the Bolsheviks against the family and their faith in giant collectivized industrial style agriculture led to the deliberate starvation of 10 million peasant farmers in the Ukraine in the winter of 1932-1933. (cf Robert Conquest *Harvest of Sorrow*)

The same set of ideas was revived again in America by the New Left and Radical Feminist movements of the late 1960s. The feminists used a book by Engels as their bible: *The Origins of Private Property, the Family, and the State*. This book presents a specious anthropological *scientific* basis for sexual liberation and communal child raising. The pseudo scientific writings of red anthropologist Margaret Mead are still used as texts in some universities. They provide *proof* of the *natural* and *primitive* basis of *free love*. Like Plato, Mead's peculiar personal sexuality pushed her to find *scientific* validation for the original ideology of the Communist Movement. Historically, this ideology of rebellion against sexual morality is hard to trace, because it is regularly concealed or half concealed from the public behind a veil of secrecy. It is like an underground river in society. You have to dig deep to follow the course it takes and it has escaped the notice of superficial scholarship. Pushing women into the work force and placing

their kids in *child care centers* is still a major goal of modern feminists, although many of them are oblivious of the rest of the radical feminist ideology and ignorant of the original sources of the movement.

The End of Community: Bradford's Lament

The *conservative* commentators pick up Bradford's peculiar out of focus remark about the communism of Plato and use it to argue that the Plymouth settlers launched *capitalism, private property* and *free enterprise* in America and went on to live happily ever after. They ignore the rest of Bradford's book, which tells a very different story for anyone who takes the time to read it.

Bradford's year by year chronicle begins with 1620 and ends with 1646. Even though he lived another 10 years, he stopped writing it. Why? He did add a few notes in later years on the blank pages left in between his handwritten pages. The most startling of these, added towards the end of Bradford's life, is a bitter lament for the loss of the Christian community which had migrated to Plymouth. It can fairly be regarded as the real ending of his book. It is an epitaph for *Plymouth Plantation*, which achieved material success at the price of spiritual disaster. Like America itself.

In his original manuscript [page 33 of the Morison edition] he had quoted a letter from Pastor John Robinson and William Brewster, written in Holland just before the emigration to America: *We are knit together as a body in the most strict and sacred bond and covenant of the Lord, of the violation whereof we make great conscience, and by virtue whereof we do hold ourselves straitly tied to all care of each other's good and of the whole, by every one and so mutually.*

Bradford's lament, written many years later, on the blank page opposite, as a comment on this letter, tells how the original Christian community had disappeared: *O sacred bond, whilst inviolably preserved ! How sweet and precious were the fruits that flowed from the same ! But when this fidelity decayed, then their ruin approached. . . . that subtle serpent hath slyly wound in himself under fair pretences of necessity and the like, to untwist these sacred bonds . . . I have been happy, in my first times, to see, and with much comfort to enjoy, the blessed fruits of this sweet communion, but it is now a part of my misery in old age, to find and feel the decay and want thereof (in a great measure) and with grief and sorrow of heart to lament and bewail the same. And for others' warning and admonition, and my own humiliation, do I here note the same.*

What Bradford ruefully notes here is the complete dispersal of the original Plymouth church community as they pursued the opportunities to acquire wealth in the new world.

From the very beginning, Plymouth was well on the way to becoming a secular society. The original Christian community forged by persecution in England and preserved in exile in Holland began to disintegrate even before they arrived in America. And, as we can see from Bradford's later lament, there was nothing left of it by the time he was an old man. They didn't even have a minister in Plymouth by the time Bradford died in 1657 and nearly all of the original congregation had been scattered by their pursuit of land and trade. They became a business corporation and a civil society before they scattered to various townships, leaving only a remnant of the original Christian church community in Plymouth.

The same theme of *ruin* appears in several other places in his book: *the ruin of New England, at least of the churches of God there.* [PP 252-253] This was written in 1632 when the original colonists were moving away from Plymouth to their new corn and cattle farms. This rapid exodus was driven by the large migration of more and more English Puritans to Massachusetts Bay and the opportunities it created for those already established in New England.

Expanding Opportunities

In 1629, about 350 new settlers arrived in Salem. Then, in the spring of 1630, 13 ships sailed from England to Boston Harbor. Thousands more arrived in the following years, before the outbreak of the Puritan Revolution in England put a temporary halt to it. This created a booming business in corn and cattle to be sold to the newcomers at premium prices. The demand for corn and cattle pushed the price up to record levels, and the Plymouth colonists who were already in the corn and cattle business were in a position to take advantage of it. But there wasn't enough land available in the vicinity of the town of Plymouth. And the colonists began moving to other sections of the land granted to them under their *patent*. As Bradford describes:

The people of the Plantation began to grow in their outward estates, by reason of the flowing of many people into the country, especially into the Bay of the Massachusetts. By which means corn and cattle rose to a great price, by which many were much enriched and commodities grew plentiful. And yet in other regards this benefit turned to their hurt, and this accession of strength to their weakness. For now as their stocks increased, and the increase vendible, there was no longer any holding them together, but now they must of necessity go to their great lots. They could not otherwise keep their cattle, and having oxen grown they must have land for plowing and tillage. And no man now thought he could live except he had cattle and a great deal of ground to keep them, all striving to increase their stocks. By which means they were scattered all over the Bay quickly and the town in which they lived compactly till now was left very thin and in a short time almost desolate. . . . And if this had been all, it had been less, though too much; but the church must also be divided, and those that had lived so long together in Christian and comfortable fellowship must now part and suffer many divisions. . . . And this I fear will be the ruin of New England, at least of the churches of God there, and will provoke the Lord's displeasure against them. [PP 252-254]

Because Plymouth did not have a deep harbor like that of Boston and because the usable farm land in the vicinity was limited, the Plymouth group considered moving to Nauset in 1644. *Some were still for staying together in this place, alleging men might here live if they would be content with their condition, and that it was not for want or necessity so much that they removed as for the enriching of themselves.* Thus did the Desire for Riches undermine the Plymouth community. *And thus was this poor church left, like an ancient mother grown old and forsaken of her children. (PP 334)* That is the original of the perennial sad story whereby the pursuit of the American Dream of wealth leads us to leave behind community and family. Bradford laments the steady erosion of the Plymouth community but he still does not acknowledge the fundamental question as to how a Christian Community can survive when its individual members pursue the opportunities for wealth, as he did also. Originally, several hundred people had voluntarily gone into exile in Holland for the sake of preserving their religious community. Now the lure of riches had got hold of them and caused them to steadily disperse to take advantage of the opportunities provided by New England. Bradford's earlier refusal to seriously and prayerfully consider what property foundation a real Christian community requires was the *subtle serpent* which came back to bite him. *And for others' warning and admonition, and my own humiliation, do I here note the same. Be warned !*

What Price Progress ?

In a footnote about the Duxbury group which moved to the other side of the Bay, Morison comments that "Bradford's efforts to stop what would now be called *progress* are amusing and pathetic. The great Puritan emigration to the Bay created such a market for corn and cattle that the compact settlement at Plymouth no longer sufficed for the increased production." This comment by Morison shows that he does not understand what **CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY** had meant to William Bradford--the community

which the pursuit of wealth so relentlessly eroded. Indeed, most people would not understand it, because they have never had the experience of a real *COMMUNITY* worthy of the name. The Plymouth Colonists not only shrugged off *all things common*, they ignored the other fundamental New Testament admonitions, such as that *the love of money is the root of all evil*. Their pursuit of great estates led them to move away from those who had once belonged to the same community. *COMMUNITY* became the tattered label on an empty jar.

The original idealistic purpose of the Pilgrims is described by Bradford on page 25 of *Plymouth Plantation* as *a great hope and inward zeal they had of laying some good foundation, or at least to make some way thereunto, for the propagating and advancing the gospel of the kingdom of Christ in those remote parts of the world*. On page 19 he describes the church community in Leyden: *such was the true piety, the humble zeal and fervent love of this people (whilst they thus lived together) towards God and His ways, and the singleheartedness and sincere affection one towards another, that they came as near the primitive pattern of the first churches as any other church of these later times have done*. He says of Pastor John Robinson that *none did more offend him than those that were close and cleaving to themselves and retired from the common good*. [18]

Bradford's Inheritance

Bradford does not spell out what Pastor Robinson meant by *the common good* or how much sharing was expected of the several hundred members of the Leyden church. But this quotation suggests that there was more of an emphasis than Bradford himself was comfortable with, judging from what he did with his own property. His peculiar and gratuitous disparagement of the non-existent or rapidly eroding *communism* of Plymouth looks suspiciously like pointing the finger at a scapegoat.

The nucleus of the Scrooby church, including William Bradford, escaped from England to Holland in 1608 and moved on to Leyden in 1609. On coming of age in 1611, Bradford inherited a small country estate in Bentley-cum-Arksey England which he sold. It consisted of a house, cottage, garden and orchard--9.5 acres. One of his hagiographers speculates that he gave much of the money to his church. But there is no record that he did, so this speculation only underlines the question. That assumption doesn't square with the fact that he bought a house and set up a weaving business in Leyden with the money. He also got married. If he didn't like money, quite possibly his wife did.

There are various aspects of the life of William Bradford which he neglects to mention in his book and which his hagiographers neglect to explore. *Of Plymouth Plantation* does not mention the fact that his wife apparently committed suicide by jumping over board after they arrived in Massachusetts and before they settled at Plymouth. Another neglected fact is that they had left their 5 year old son behind in Holland. He didn't come to New England until 1626. No one explains why. That fact suggests a reason as to why Mrs. Bradford committed suicide.

He sold his Leyden property before leaving for America. On page 38 he writes: *So those that were to go prepared themselves with all speed and sold off their estates and (such as were able) put in their moneys into the common stock, which was disposed by those appointed for the making of general provisions*. This is a place where, without much harm to modesty, Bradford might have clarified what he himself did, by simply substituting *such of us as were able* for *such as were able*. The record of what he had done earlier and the record of what he did later, after he arrived in New England, indicate that Bradford was not inclined to donate much of his capital to the *common good* or the *common stock*. His remarks contra *communism* provide a somewhat feeble justification for his lack of enthusiasm. *God doesn't want us to share our property. It isn't NATURAL*. It does appear that Bradford may have fallen

short of the standard set by his pastor, as reported by Bradford himself. And he had enough conscience to be bothered by it.

Acts 2.45 and 4.34-35 states that early Christians who owned property sold it and *laid* the money *at the apostles' feet* to be distributed to everyone in the **community** who had need. William Bradford's claim that his church had returned to *the primitive pattern of the first churches* and re-established *their ancient purity* implies that they followed the example of the early Church in respect to property. But, if they had, Bradford had not.

Bradford's Pursuit of Property

Bradford does not acknowledge that he himself, as the Governor of Plymouth, set the most conspicuous example of that pursuit of land and trade which eroded the original community of Plymouth. By the time of his death in 1657 he was one of the richest men and one of the largest property owners in the colony. He provided his three sons with large estates. His widow--his second wife--could live on the stock he owned in the Kennebec trade.

Bradford and an elite group of Plymouth colonists had taken over a monopoly of the fur trade by agreeing to assume the responsibility for the debt still owed to the Capitalist backers of Plymouth Plantation back in England. Much of his book is occupied with the further dealings they had with these less than honest English merchants, like James Sherley. The pious protestations of Sherley's letters about his great faith in God and his great love for the Plymouth Puritans did not prevent him from charging them 30 per cent interest and failing to keep an accurate record of the beaver and otter pelts they sent him to pay down their debt. He persisted in pulling the Plymouth group into doubtful deals in which they always came up owing him twice what they had calculated--according to Bradford's account, anyway. It was 1645 before they finally got clear of his entanglements.

But the dishonesty wasn't all on one side. Isaac Allerton, Plymouth's agent and Elder Brewster's son in law, could not resist the temptations which trans Atlantic trade put in his way. Years later, Bradford et al were still paying bills he had incurred. And, even though he is writing the account, some of Bradford's own deals appear to be less than scrupulous. One of Sherley's letters indicates that their English agents bribed officials to obtain the Warwick patent--*many locks must be opened with the silver, nay the golden key.* [PP 384] These Puritans pioneered *American Capitalism* = bribing government officials to get hold of lucrative licenses and public lands. Sherley manages to somehow associate it with Saint Paul, as if Paul were the patron saint of bribing officials: *So the Lord Keeper furthered it all he could, and also the soliciter. But as Festus said to Paul, "With no small sum of money obtained I this freedom."* (As Morison points out, it was actually the centurion, not Festus, who said this.) These fellows provide some lessons in how to read *The Bible* to justify any damn thing you want to do. Not that modern Christians need the lessons.

the fur trade

While it lasted, the New England fur trade was very lucrative. Bradford writes: *Though the partners were thus plunged into great engagements and oppressed with unjust debts, yet the Lord prospered their trading, that they made yearly large returns and had soon wound themselves out of all if yet they had otherwise been well dealt withal.* (page 252) It was not just altruism which led the *partners* with capital to take on the debt owed to the *Adventurers* by all of the colonists, in exchange for a monopoly of trade. These *partners* formed a trading corporation from which the other Plymouth settlers were excluded. Bradford held on to his capital and made use of it.

The competition for trading forts to carry on the fur trade led them into armed conflicts with the French, the Dutch and even fellow Englishmen, one of whom was killed in a battle over the fur trade on the

Kennebec river in Maine. [PP 262 ff] After pioneering the fur trade on the Connecticut River, the Plymouth group was forced out by the Boston group.

The New England fur trade was a major source of the wealth of the colonists in the early years. But it was exhausted after a few years. The same thing happened as the fur trade was pushed further and further west. There was a Free For All economy in early America with everybody and his brother grabbing whatever they could. By 1838 the beaver were almost gone even from the Rocky Mountains. So they switched to buffalo hides. By 1900 the buffalo were gone. By 1900 half the American forest was gone. Large areas of American farm land had lost its fertility. The annual run off of tons of eroded top soil muddied what had once been clear streams. The *Pilgrims* and the *Founding Fathers* pioneered all of it.

teach a man to get a fishing monopoly

Bradford and the *Undertakers* also had a monopoly of offshore fishing. The hope of obtaining such a monopoly for the New England coast had been a part of the promotion for the original Plymouth Plantation venture and a number of the original *Adventurers* backed out when they didn't get it. Contra the admonition to *teach a man to fish, instead of giving him a fish*, catching the fish is not the problem. Even if he was the County's most **COMPLEAT ANGLER**, the Scotsman or Irishman who caught a salmon in the English landlord's river was liable to 6 months in *gaol* if he was caught. And it was no different with the fishing rights off the New England coast, which were decided by who had won the most recent war--the French or the British--or who had been most successful in bribing the King's ministers.

This Land Was Your Land, But Now It's Our Land . . .

Every American school child has heard the story of the Plymouth colonists sharing the first Thanksgiving with the local Indians. Few of them have heard of Captain Myles Standish putting the severed head of an Indian chief on a pike atop the Plymouth stockade, which is much more representative of their dealings with the Indians. Nor have they heard of the wars which brought the Indian lands into the hands of the colonists by the end of the century.

The major source of Bradford's wealth was the land he acquired from the wars of extermination which the Puritan Settlers of Plymouth and Boston waged against the Indians of New England. The predatory and relentless way that these *Puritans* dispossessed the original owners became the major fact of American economic history. They pioneered in genocide and armed robbery. The musket proved to be much more potent than the Bible for the launching of *the kingdom of Christ* as they defined it. But *the Bible*, as they read it, was necessary to justify these wars of extermination.

A major reason the *Plymouth* location was selected in 1620, at the site of an abandoned Indian village, is that the land had already been cleared for agriculture by the Indians who had lived there. So there were already fields cleared for planting. The Plymouth settlers did not have the labor of clearing the land of the heavy forests of New England with the tools of 1620. Which would have made their difficult situation even more desperate. So they in effect appropriated the labor of the Indians as well as their land without compensation. The Indians had cleared this land with even more primitive tools than those of the Plymouth settlers of 1620. That was typical of the original American *system*, however you label it. It is how Jesus defines *usury*: *reaping where you did not sow and taking up what you did not lay down*.

convert them before you kill them

In a December 19th 1623 letter to Bradford, Pastor John Robinson writes: *Concerning the killing of those poor Indians, of which we heard at first by report, and since by more certain relation. Oh, how happy a thing had it been, if you had converted some before you had killed any ! [PP 374]* But Bradford and the rest of the Plymouth settlers were committed to a policy of taking Indian lands which inevitably led to wars of extermination aimed at getting rid of the Indians. Even those who converted were dispossessed. *I am going to make you an offer you cannot refuse. I'll swap you this bible for your land.*

By relentless wars the Plymouth and Boston Puritans acquired all the land which had once belonged to the Wampanoags, the Pequots, and the Narragansetts. Those who weren't killed were captured and sold into slavery. A remnant wound up paying a yearly *tribute* of corn to Massachusetts in exchange for permission to go on living on land which had once been theirs. The Puritans of New England believed in their *private property* and had no scruples about getting hold of somebody else's property when they got the chance. They believed they had a mandate from The Lord to *extinguish Indian titles* to New England land, which then became their property. They believed in *rent*. They didn't believe in paying rent for the Indian lands they occupied, rather they believed in collecting rent, if they had the muskets to collect it. Which they did. A founding principle of the American economy. cf. George Washington offering to lease the land on the other side of the mountains, still more or less occupied by Indian tribes, which the Virginia legislature had given him.

a sweet sacrifice

On pages 295-296 Bradford gives a second hand account of the massacre of the Pequot Indians in 1637 in which Plymouth's 50 men did not participate only because the battle was over before they set out. The Puritan forces set fire to the village which was surrounded by a wooden palisade--*those that scaped the fire were slain with the sword . . . and very few escaped* *It was conceived that they thus destroyed about 400 at this time. It was a fearful sight to see them thus frying in the fire and the streams of blood quenching the same, and horrible was the stink and scent thereof; but the victory seemed a sweet sacrifice, and they gave the praise thereof to God, who had wrought so wonderfully for them, thus to enclose their enemies in their hands and give them so speedy a victory over so proud and insulting an enemy.* Is this a biblical observation ? More like pre biblical in the assumption that the Lord savors human sacrifice. It gives some measure of how far the mind of William Bradford had been warped by Christian Militarism from anything resembling the faith of the original Christian church.

There are similar pious justifications in the writings of the Boston Puritans for this massacre of the Pequots at what later became *Fort Mystic*. Captain John Underhill declared that: *Sometimes the Scripture declareth women and children must perish with their parents. We had sufficient light from the word of God for our proceedings.* The united New England colonists burned the Indian villages, executed the captive warriors in cold blood, took what slaves they wanted from the women and children and shipped the rest to the slave markets in the West Indies. There was a Puritan settlement in the West Indies which had adapted itself to the slave trade. Captain Stoughton claimed one Indian woman and Lieutenant Davenport took another. (207 *The Gentle Radical: Roger Williams* Cyclone Covey) No doubt the Indians attacked the settlers when they could and thereby provided the excuse for the attacks by the colonists. And there was a criminal element among the Indians as there was among the colonists, which provided the provocation for an attack upon the whole tribe. But the Pequots were forced to defend themselves from the constant encroachments of the Puritan colonists who obviously meant to displace them from their homes. And they did not pretend to be *Christians*, unlike their attackers.

advancing the kingdom

The *Constitution of the New England Confederation*, signed in 1643, was the charter of a military alliance against the Narragansetts. In typical Puritan fashion, it takes God's name in vain, starting off with: *Whereas we all came into these parts of America with one and the same end and aim, namely to advance the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ and to enjoy the Liberties of the Gospel in purity and peace.* So they exterminated the Indians and occupied their land in order to establish *the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ*. In order to establish little tyrannical church states modeled upon Calvin's Geneva and, later, Cromwell's England.

A little later they get down to what it was really about: *the whole advantage of the war (if it please God so to bless their endeavours), whether it be in lands, goods or persons, shall be proportionately divided among the said Confederates.* That is, the surviving Indians would be sold as slaves and their lands and *goods* divided up among the Puritans. This document, which is given in Appendix XII, page 430 on, displays the kind of skunk scented self righteousness which has justified American wars ever since. Even while the Boston colonists were completing the destruction of the Indians they were raising funds in England for Harvard College to bring about the *conversion of the Indians*. (PP 414, footnote 2) Those that hadn't been killed or sold into slavery.

The way that both Plymouth and the Massachusetts Bay Colony dealt with religious nonconformity belies the commitment to *the Liberties of the Gospel*. No sooner were they clear of the Anglican religious tyranny than they established their own religious tyranny. Boston exiled and persecuted non conforming Christians. Quaker women were publicly whipped. Quakers and Baptists were hung in Boston Common. To the end of his life Bradford was pushing for laws to criminalize and punish religious nonconformity. A month after he died, Plymouth passed a law against the Quakers, following the lead of Boston.

Exterminating the Narragansetts in Jesus Name

Eighteen years after the death of William Bradford, his son, William Bradford junior, was a Major in the so-called *King Philip's War* in which the Plymouth militia got rid of the last of the local Indians, the Wampanoags and the Narragansetts. Their land was taken by Plymouth and sold to a group of investors who founded Bristol Connecticut. By 1676 there was only a remnant left of the Narragansetts. Thus clearing the way for the establishment of *the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ* and the *Liberties of the Gospel* as defined by the Puritans. How fortunate that Governor Bradford led them away from the pernicious practice of raising carrots in common !

Taking the name of Jesus in vain to provide the propaganda cover for military operations in pursuit of loot has marked the American Empire ever since. In 1899 President William McKinley explained to a group of ministers that the murderous occupation of the Philippine Islands by the American army was necessary in order *to educate the Filipinos, and uplift and civilize and Christianize them, and by God's grace do the very best we could by them, as our fellow-men for whom Christ also died* (McKinley was actually a Freemason.) And also because *we could not turn them over to France or Germany--our commercial rivals in the Orient--that would be bad business and discreditable.* Teddy Roosevelt offered a more realistic argument: it was no different from what Americans had already done to the Indians. He told the truth that time.

American Myths: The Pilgrims of Plymouth

The Myth about the early colonists is that they sought only homes for themselves and freedom to practice their faith. They were soon seeking all the land they could get and working it with servants and slaves or holding it for speculation. While practicing religious tyranny in their new Church States.

Roger Williams described them: *They have a depraved appetite after . . . great portions of land, land in this wilderness, as if men were in as great necessity and danger for want of great portions of land, as poor, hungry, thirsty seamen . . . after a long and starving passage.* (letter to Major Mason, June 22nd 1670) The pursuit of Indian lands drove the wars of extermination against the Pequots and Narragansetts. A later writer testifies to the pursuit of land as a source of **wealth without work**: *This hunger after Land seems very early to have taken rise in this Province, & is become now a kind of Epidemical madness, every Body eager to accumulate vast Tracts without having an intention or taking measures to settle or improve it.* (Peter Wraaxall writing in 1754 in New York)

The myth is that a Christian community grew into a Christian nation. The truth is that the early Christian communities of America were soon absorbed into a pseudo *Christian* empire. The Christian values which had carried them through a time of poverty and persecution did not long survive in a new situation of prosperity and power. Because of their secular *Christian* values, they could not resist the lure of great estates.

It wasn't just that these colonists had an unlimited appetite for grabbing land, but that they soon left behind any scruples as to what they would do to get it. Including massacring the former owners. And selling the survivors into slavery. To top that off, instead of just shrugging off armed robbery and homicide, they picked up their bibles and justified it as *God's Blessing* and the way by which *the kingdom of Jesus Christ* would be established in the New World. They were in the Satanic tradition of Eusebius who once proclaimed that Constantine's Court was *the kingdom of Jesus Christ*. Not surprisingly, what the Puritans established was another empire which worshipped *the ruler of this world*, and offered human sacrifices to him--another kingdom ruled by Anti Christ.

The old hymn says: *There's no discouragement Shall make him once relent His first avowed intent To be a pilgrim.* But the gospel plainly warns that the *word* of the gospel will not grow if it is *choked by riches* (Matthew 13.22.) and that *It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of God.* (Matthew 19.24) To say nothing of a man who has grown rich through slaughter and spoilation. The *Pilgrims* were too preoccupied with finding Old Testament verses to justify the slaughter of the natives and the taking of their land to pay attention to the warnings found in the New Testament about wealth and riches. That is America's moral and spiritual heritage from *the pilgrims*.

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[from the essay on **COMMUNISM** in the 1890 Britannica VI 217]

"There are some charges made against communism which may be brought with at least equal force against the economic and industrial arrangements which now prevail. One of them is that communism does not avail itself sufficiently of the motive of self-interest in order to obtain from each labourer the best and most conscientious work of which he is capable. If, it is urged, the result of a man's industry belongs not to himself solely but to the whole community of which he is a member, he will not throw the same energy and zeal into his work as he will if everything which he produces belongs solely to himself. There can be no doubt of the truth of this statement; self-interest is a force on which industrial machinery chiefly relies for motive power. But it is remarkable that the prevailing system of working for fixed weekly wages checks the play of self-interest in the workman much more completely than it is checked in a communistic society by the fact that the results of his labour of each are shared by all. A workman who is in receipt of fixed weekly wages has no motive to reach any higher standard of excellence or expedition in his work than such as will prevent him from being discharged for bad work or laziness. It is a complaint constantly heard among employers of labour that the only ambition of the men seems to be to see how little work they can do for their wages. The actual existence of this feeling among workmen is proved by many of the rules of trades' unions,--such as that which limits the number of bricks which a hod-man is allowed to carry, and which in one case forbade the use of wheel barrows in taking bricks from one spot to another."

"The Manchester Bricklayers' Association has a rule providing that *any man found running or working beyond a certain regular speed shall be fined . . .* It was urged by the trade unionists in the textile manufactures of Lancashire and Yorkshire as a serious argument for placing impediments in the way of the employment of women in these industries that they were apt to take a pride and pleasure in the excellence and rapidity of their work, and that their vanity was such that a word of praise or encouragement from the overlooker would cause them to redouble their exertions."

Mrs. Fawcett is making a good point here which reflects upon Governor Bradford's indictment of *communism*. Any system in which the fruits of your labor do not come right back to you tends to erode the self-interest motive. Of course one answer to this is a piece work system which is basically what Bradford introduced at Plymouth.

But if there is no motive beyond simple *self interest* society will soon be in a bad way. If a man does not love his wife and children enough to work hard to take care of them, if he only cares about his own gratifications, they will suffer from it.

We expect men to do a good job on all sorts of things which primarily benefit others. We expect the plumber and the auto mechanic to do a good job at a fair price. Even though his immediate self interest may push him to cut corners and inflate his bill. We expect people to do a good job when building bridges and highways upon which we all depend. Otherwise, the bridge may collapse.

We blandly assume that those who join the army are motivated by complete altruism, ready to sacrifice their very lives for their country--the rest of us who avoid risk and sacrifice. It may be mostly pretence, but there does have to be something in people which motivates them to sacrifice themselves for something which lies outside themselves. This also is part of *human nature*. If it isn't, our society is in real trouble.

It is in real trouble now because of that unscrupulous pursuit of wealth without work which has come to permeate our entire rip off economy.