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Governor William Bradford's relationship with Antiquity

A case study of references to Antiquity in Puritan literature

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11-9-2017

Bachelor Thesis - Prof. dr. B.M.C. Breij

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INTRODUCTION

Most commonly known for his book *History of Plymouth Plantation*, describing the voyage of the *Mayflower* to New England and the annals of the first year of the Plymouth Colony, William Bradford (1590-1657) has been a leading figure among the Puritan Separatists¹ as governor of the colony in Plymouth. Peter Gay has called him “Caesar in the Wilderness”,² because Bradford was, like Julius Caesar, “a man of affairs who incidentally wrote history”, rather than a historian.³ Harvey Wish, in his introduction to *Of Plymouth Plantation*, chose to compare Bradford to another historian, saying that “in writing *Of Plymouth Plantation*, Bradford created more than a journal of a small community in which he must have known everyone by name; it became a historical classic of the seventeenth century. Like Thucydides, he professed the utmost accuracy of narrative...”⁴ The comparison of William Bradford with two of the most famous historians of the ancient world shows how highly Bradford has been thought of and it creates a first link between Bradford and Antiquity. There is however much more that relates Bradford to Antiquity than these two comparisons.

In his works, Bradford shows a strong interest in Antiquity and a vast knowledge of it: he makes very specific references to ancient authors, he cites them, and he also quotes in Greek and especially Latin. But even though his works (especially *Of Plymouth Plantation* and the *Third Dialogue*) make it clear that Bradford’s familiarity with Antiquity is undisputable, not a lot has been said about the actual nature of his relationship with Antiquity. Most authors state that Bradford had a great historical and linguistic knowledge, but neglect the reasons why he refers to certain Greek and Roman authors or why he quotes in Greek and Latin. Therefore it is my intention to look at Bradford’s references to Antiquity and his quotes in Greek and Latin. My goal is to assess whether he uses these references in a positive or negative context, if this context corresponds with the original context, and from there determine Bradford’s motive for these references and what we can deduct from that about his position towards Antiquity.

To determine the nature of William Bradford’s bond with Antiquity, we should start with establishing where his knowledge of the Greek and Latin language and culture came from.

Cotton Mather (1663-1728) states in his major work, the *Magnalia Christi Americana*, that William Bradford was “well skilled in history, in Antiquity, and in philosophy”. Mather also affirms that Bradford “had mastered the Greek and the Latin” among others.⁵ A reason for Bradford’s interest in

¹ Puritanism was a religious reform movement in the late 16th and 17th centuries that sought to “purify” the Church of England of remnants of the Roman Catholic “popery”, the Separatists were any of the English Protestants in the 16th and 17th centuries who wished to separate from the perceived corruption of the Church of England and form independent local churches. (britannica.com)

² Gay, Peter, *A Loss of Mastery: Puritan Historians in Colonial America*, 1966, p. 26.

³ Westbrook, Perry D., *William Bradford*, 1961, p. 148.

⁴ Bradford, William, ed. Wish, Harvey, *Of Plymouth Plantation*, 1962, p. 19.

⁵ Mather, Cotton, *Magnalia Christi Americana*, 1702, p. 113-114.

the Greek (and also Hebrew) language can be found in his *Third Dialogue*, when he says the following about the Catholic Church: “We may add hereunto how they have preferred the vulgar Latin above the originals, and made it authentick in the trials of all doctrens and controversies, though it is knowne to be very corrupte.”⁶ Although this can explain his knowledge of the particular languages, the motive that Bradford gives here for his study of these languages, is to study them as biblical languages. When we look at Bradford’s literary works, it becomes clear that he was not only familiar with ancient languages in their Christian context, but also in their pagan context. We find especially a considerable amount of Greek and Latin quotations in his later writings, such as the *Third Dialogue* and some of his poems, which he, according to Westbrook, wrote when he was probably much more familiar with the ancient languages than when he was writing his earlier, and major work *History of Plymouth Plantation*, which was written between 1630 and 1651.⁷ Bradford does indeed quote more in Greek and Latin in his *Dialogue* than in *History of Plymouth Plantation*, but it is in *History of Plymouth Plantation* that he makes most of his actual references to pagan Antiquity. His familiarity with pagan Antiquity therefore must have already been existent when he was writing this book as well, so a different explanation could be that his choice for quoting more in Greek and Latin (and referring less) in his later works could be related to the subject matter or genre of these writings.

The extent of Bradford’s knowledge is remarkable, especially if we consider the fact that he had never attended university, and therefore must have been, at least partially, self-taught. William Bradford became an orphan at the age of seven and was placed under the guardianship of two uncles. Being ill for a long time himself at a young age, he spent a great amount of time reading, which sparked his interest in the Bible. During the time that he was living with his uncles, he must have attended a school in the neighborhood, where he learned to read. At the time, this was an exceptional privilege for someone of Bradford’s social class. Together with his family, he went to services of the established church, but at the age of twelve he started to visit the services of Richard Clyfton. It was at these services that Bradford first met William Brewster, a man who would become a friend and substitute father to him, and it was this William Brewster who has aided young Bradford a great deal in his studies. Bradford eventually moved in with the highly respected Brewster and his family, with whom he then lived until 1613.⁸ At the time, this William Brewster was attending many Separatist services in the area of Scrooby⁹ and he later became the ruling elder of the English Separatist Church in Leyden and Plymouth.¹⁰ He had attended Cambridge University and was said to be a real man of the world who had been very much involved in politics and diplomacy. Moreover he

⁶ Bradford, *Third Dialogue*, 1652, p.5.

⁷ Westbrook, 1961, p. 18, 97-98, 102-103.

⁸ Westbrook, 1961, p. 20.

⁹ Scrooby is a small town in Nottinghamshire, on the border with Yorkshire. William Brewster was the bailiff, the overseer, of Scrooby. (Westbrook, 1961, p.23.)

¹⁰ Brewster moved first to Leyden and later to Plymouth (New England) together with Bradford and a group of other Puritan Separatists to escape religious persecution by the Church of England. (Westbrook, 1961, p.23.)

allegedly had a library of over four hundred volumes with a varied range of subject matter at the time of his death, which was exceptionally large for that time. Westbrook states that, considering Brewster's Cambridge education, it is without a doubt that from this man Bradford first got an interest in learning and that Brewster most certainly helped him in his studies.¹¹ In my opinion, a twelve year old boy with such a fascination for the Bible who managed to choose by himself to attend the Separatist services because they inspired him more than those of the Church of England, in my opinion already shows an interest in learning (so even before meeting Brewster). I do believe, however, that Brewster, and Brewster's previously mentioned diverse library, must definitely have added to this existing interest and encouraged him further in his learning of not only theology but also other subjects, helping him to become the great intellectual that he was.

But although his knowledge was extensive, how exceptional was it really that William Bradford had this kind of knowledge of languages and history? Among the Puritans and Bradford's contemporaries in general, such knowledge was actually not that unusual. Just before the Puritan era, the Renaissance had taken place with a huge revival of classical literature, of which the influence was undeniably still noticeable among the Puritans.¹² At the time, the classical languages were still very much present in the schools because they were considered to be fundamental for the study of modern languages, so Puritans as well as Anglicans¹³ studied Latin and Greek authors elaborately.¹⁴ One could expect protest against some of these authors, because their beliefs would sometimes not correspond with the Christian beliefs. Indeed it was sometimes feared that in studying the classics, students might gain from certain pagan writers moral notions that disagreed with Christian morality. However, the general idea was that "pagan religious beliefs, as well as the rest of pagan philosophy and arts and sciences, had been derived originally from the truth revealed to Adam and later to Moses. Thus all pagan knowledge and art were corruptions of the truth, not simple falsehood, and contained some glimmerings and shadows of the truth, even of Christianity."¹⁵ In other words, pagan writers were not thought to be completely incorrect, and they could sometimes even evidence the truthfulness of Scripture, and thus people continued to study them, despite the occasionally dubious morality. So because of the Puritans' vast education in the classics and the notion that pagan writers could deliver evidence of the truthfulness of their own beliefs, it is no surprise that use of such pagan authors can be found in Puritan literature. However, a problem that occasionally did occur with quoting pagan authors, was that the original context of the quotation had to be ignored to fit the Christian context

¹¹ Westbrook, 1961, p. 23-24.

¹² Miller, Perry & Johnson, Thomas H., *The Puritans*, 1938, p. 19,20.

¹³ Anglicanism was one of the major branches of the 16th-century Protestant Reformation and a form of Christianity that includes features of both Protestantism and Roman Catholicism. (britannica.com)

¹⁴ Sasek, Lawrence A., *The Literary Temper of the English Puritans*, 1961, p. 77.

¹⁵ Sasek, 1961, p. 78.

better. This was not always the case, but it remains a hazard when looking at classical allusions in Puritan works.¹⁶

Due to the Puritans' religious preoccupation, certain pagan authors were of course preferred over others. According to Wallace W. Marshall, Puritans considered ancient philosophers to be "allies in the war against atheism and popular religious skepticism, and they frequently referred to them in order to demonstrate that true philosophic wisdom always led to religion".¹⁷ Indeed the authors that can be found most frequently in Puritan literature, were the moralists, the historians and the philosophers. Seneca and Plutarch were admired in particular and were the two pagan authors who were most frequently referred to by Puritans.^{18, 19} But even though Marshall and Sasek both agree that pagan philosophers were very popular among the Puritans, their reasons behind that statement seem to differ. According to Sasek, the Puritans' admiration for pagan philosophers derived from their occasionally common morality and the belief that those philosophers sometimes evidenced the truthfulness of the Puritans' religion. Marshall focusses on the suggestion that their philosophy promoted religion and could therefore be used as support for Puritans against atheists. Marshall's statement here might be a bit extreme. Some of the pagan philosophers did have a religion, but their philosophy was certainly not always related to their religious beliefs. So the idea that the Puritans used them as an example of how true philosophic wisdom would always lead to religion, seems less likely than Sasek's more nuanced theory that Puritans used the pagan philosophers mainly because of shared moral notions, and in some cases to evidence the truth of Scripture.

Ancient historians such as Plutarch, Livy and Tacitus, had already often served as examples for the earlier Renaissance historians and their influence continued in the Puritan era. The interest in historiography that characterized this period of time, played an important role among different groups of people who moved to New England as well. They all had their own motives for writing down their histories. On the one hand, for nonconformists and Anglicans the divine providential significance of history was especially interesting (providence that we can also find in writings like the *Aeneid*). People such as the English colonists on the other hand, no matter what their religious background was, hoped that by writing down the histories of their colonies, they could incite others to join them.²⁰

Of the pagan writers, poets were less popular among the Puritans for two main reasons: their big amount of amatory works, and that they often sought for "elegance of expression at expense of the truth". Yet "less popular" means that references to even those poets can be still found in Puritan literature. What often happens, is what Sasek calls "a combination of sources", meaning that examples

¹⁶ Sasek, 1961, p. 90, 91.

¹⁷ Marshall, Wallace W., *Puritanism and Natural Theology*, 2007, p. 70.

¹⁸ Sasek, 1961, p. 84, 86.

¹⁹ Bradford himself also makes several references to Seneca in *History of Plymouth Plantation*, but he does not mention Plutarch by name. Still Bradford is likely familiar with Plutarch's work, because in *History of Plymouth Plantation* he does refer to Plutarch's *Cato Minor*, which I will discuss further on page 7.

²⁰ Westbrook, 1961, p. 70-71.

from both pagan poetry and Scripture are used in the same sentence to illustrate the same phenomenon, such as longevity or authority. Since their way of thinking was viewed by the Puritans as nearly the opposite of Puritan principles, it was seen as evidence that something was universally acknowledged and thus indisputable, when these poets would admit something that agreed with the principles of the Puritans. The point of that was that if even those heathen poets admitted it, it must be true; or if even they think so, than Christians should certainly do too.²¹

What we can conclude is that the study of pagan literature was still a large part of Puritans' education and that it has unquestionably left its mark on Puritan literature. And although not all pagan authors were equally accepted due to deviating morality, Puritans kept finding ways to refer to those pagans in their own literary works.

To return now to William Bradford, I will divide Bradford's references in two groups: the ones where he shows a positive attitude towards Antiquity and the ones where he shows a negative one. Using the knowledge we have of the Puritans' moral objections against certain elements of pagan Antiquity, and at the same time their approval of other elements, I will attempt to explain this division of his by means of his religious background, to eventually determine the true nature of Bradford's bond with Antiquity. I will start with the references where Bradford speaks positively of Antiquity, and after that I will continue with the ones where he speaks of it negatively. Not only the general references to Antiquity but also the quotes Bradford has made in Greek and Latin will be discussed. I am going to focus on *History of Plymouth Plantation* and the *Third Dialogue*, because those are his most important works. His other works, the *First Dialogue* and what is left of his poems, will also be dealt with briefly.²²

EXEMPLARY PAGANS

Bradford pays specific attention to a certain group of pagan writers: the Stoics. Stoicism has always been popular with Christians since Christian morality shows many similarities with Stoic morality. Both attach importance to a certain inner peace and freedom of not letting themselves be influenced by what they perceive as a futile and perishable earthly world: letting oneself be guided too much by passions and emotions will prevent one's soul from reaching higher levels of peace and spirituality. The Puritans demonstrate in their literature, as I have mentioned earlier, that they are particularly fond of Seneca. He is also the author most frequently referred to by Bradford, but Seneca is not the only Stoic Bradford speaks of.

The first Stoic who is pointed out by Bradford in *History of Plymouth Plantation*, is emperor Marcus Aurelius. Bradford refers to Marcus Aurelius in a comparison that he makes between the

²¹ Sasek, 1961, p. 87-89.

²² There must have been a *Second Dialogue* as well, but unfortunately it has not been passed on.

famous emperor and John Robinson, the governor of the congregation that came to Leyden, when Bradford talks about the relationship between Robinson and his congregation.

“Yea such was the mutuall love, and reciprocall respecte that this worthy man had to his flocke, and his flocke to him, that it might be said of them as it once was of that famouse Emperour Marcus Aurelious, and the people of Rome, that was hard to judge wheather he delighted more in haveing shuch a people, or they in haveing such a pastor.”²³

Bradford uses in this fragment a comparison with this Roman emperor to illustrate the great leadership of Robinson. The “mutuall love, and reciprocall respecte” that Bradford talks about, exists both between John Robinson and his congregation and between Marcus Aurelius and the Roman people. The comparison of these two leaders with a pastor, and the congregation and the Roman people with a flock, gives the fragment a very Christian tone, which is obvious in the case of Robinson, but it also suggests that Bradford considered Marcus Aurelius (who was not a Christian, but a Stoic) an example of what a good, Christian leader should be like.²⁴

Another Stoic who is considered by Bradford a noble, admirable man, is Cato the Younger. Bradford discusses in *History of Plymouth Plantation* the events that took place when Cato was in Utica, and makes a comparison between the Romans and certain members of Bradford’s congregation. The congregation to which Bradford belongs, after fleeing England, stays in Holland for several years. When the congregation decides to leave Holland and to sail to New England, not all members of the congregation choose to join them. Some members are afraid to come along on this journey, because they consider themselves unable to endure the hardships of it, even though they agree with the Separatist cause. Bradford tells us that this same problem also existed when they decided to flee from England to Holland.

“For many that came to them, and many more that desired to be with them, could not endure that great labor and hard fare, with other inconveniences which they underwent and were contented with. But though they loved their persons, approved their cause, and honoured their sufferings, yet they left them as it weer weeping, as Orpah did her mother in law Naomie, or as those Romans did Cato in Utica, who desired to be excused and borne with, though they could not all be Catoes. For many, though they desired to injoye the ordinances of God in their puritie, and the libertie of the gossell with them, yet, alass, they admitted of bondage, with danger of conscience,

²³ Bradford, *History of Plymouth Plantation*, p. 40.

²⁴ Although it is to be expected that as a Stoic Marcus Aurelius was appreciated by the Puritans, there was also an increase of persecutions of Christians under Marcus Aurelius’ reign. Bradford shows at the very beginning of *History of Plymouth Plantation* that he has a strong opinion about these persecutions (I will discuss this on p. 18-19), so it is curious that he speaks so highly here of an emperor who persecuted Christians. Either Bradford is not aware of these persecutions, or he believes that the fact that Marcus Aurelius was a Stoic outweighs the persecutions that took place under his reign.

rather than to indure these hardships; yeah some preferred and chose the prisons in England, rather then this libertie in Holland, with these afflictions."²⁵

This fragment is an example of the previously mentioned 'combination of sources': Cato and the Romans (pagan literature) as well as Orpah and Naomi (Scripture) are given as examples of the same phenomenon. Naomi, who was originally from Judea, had two sons, one of them was married to Ruth and the other to Orpah. When Naomi hears that the Lord has ended a hunger that had been going on in Judea, she wishes to return to her native land. She tells her two daughters-in-law to do the same thing and return to their homeland, Moab. At first, Ruth and Orpah both say that they will go with Naomi to live with her and her people in Judea. Ruth indeed goes with her, but Orpah's loyalty to her rich home country Moab is too strong. Orpah is not truly willing to give this up in order to go to the far less wealthy Judea and live as a Jew, and therefore she leaves.²⁶ The connection that Bradford makes between the tale of Orpah and Naomi and the situation of the Puritans is clear: both Orpah and some members of the congregation choose not to follow through with what is considered the best thing to do, because they believe they are unable to endure the hardships of it.

Bradford refers to the contrast between the Romans and Cato the Younger in this same context, because of the manner in which the Romans dealt with hardships that came with their ideals: Cato, unwilling to live under the government of Julius Caesar, decided to kill himself, while other Romans tolerated it that Caesar came to power.²⁷ Cato is greatly admired by Bradford for his loyalty to his ideals. Bradford compares those who join the journey to New England to Cato, and those who do not join to the Romans who accepted a way of life which opposed their principles.

The life and death of Cato were written down by Plutarch, who was very popular among the Puritans. This reference cannot be seen as a direct reference to Plutarch himself, since Plutarch and his work are neither mentioned by name nor cited. However, Bradford must have gotten this information about Cato in Utica from either Plutarch's work or a later version of the story based on the work of Plutarch.

Both references that Bradford makes are understandable choices, but in my opinion the one to Cato and the Romans comes closer to the Puritans' situation than the reference to Orpah and Naomi. Just like the Romans, the members of the congregation who decided to stay behind when the congregation moved to Holland, and those who later chose to stay in Holland instead of joining the journey to New England, do not completely denounce their ideals, but they find themselves incapable of enduring the hardships that come with those ideals.

William Bradford and the other Puritans who were not like the Romans and who had the perseverance of Cato, then sailed to New England. Their journey on the *Mayflower* had not been an easy one. It was an incredibly long journey and there were many people on the ship with limited

²⁵ Bradford, *History of Plymouth Plantation*, p. 44-45.

²⁶ Book of Ruth, 1.1,4-19.

²⁷ Plutarch, *Cato Minor*, LXXI-LXXII.

resources. Because of that, many passengers died during the voyage and never made it to the much desired coast of New England. It is therefore not hard to imagine the relief when they finally arrived in New England.

“Being thus arrived in a good harbor and brought safe to land, they fell upon their knees and blessed the God of heaven, who had brought them over the vast and furious ocean, and delivered them from all the periles and miseries therof, againe to set their feete on the 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 of the coast of his own Italy; as he affirmed, that he had rather remained 20 years on his way by land, than pass by the sea to any place in a short time.”²⁸

The Puritans have here just arrived at Cape Cod in New England after a long journey at sea.

Bradford talks about the hardships they had to endure at sea and how relieved they were to finally see land again. He refers to Seneca to express just how hard the Puritans’ journey had been for them, because if even the great, Stoic philosopher Seneca was strongly affected by being at sea, one can only imagine how rough it must have been for simple Puritans like them. However, Seneca has not said in his *epistula* that “he had rather remained 20 years on his way by land, than pass by the sea to any place in a short time”. Seneca actually says that according to him, the real reason why Ulysses took ten years to sail home from Troy, was not because he had angered Neptune, but because he had to stop frequently due to seasickness. And that if it took Ulysses ten years to get home because of this, it would take him, Seneca, twenty years, so much was seasickness troubling him.²⁹ One of the possible causes for this alteration is that Bradford simply didn’t remember literally what Seneca had said in his *epistula*. A second possibility is that Bradford has altered Seneca’s words because he himself wished that they could have made their journey to New England by land, even if it had taken them twenty years to get there. Bradford’s motive, even with this alteration, to refer to Seneca in this specific situation remains the same: Seneca is probably the most famous Stoic philosopher, and if even he was so severely affected by travelling at sea, then it is more understandable that such a journey had been so hard on the Puritans.

Besides the general references that William Bradford has made to Antiquity, there are also a few references in the form of Latin quotes. One of these is in another letter that Bradford has included in *History of Plymouth Plantation*. This is a letter from John Robinson to William Brewster. Robinson

²⁸ Bradford, *History of Plymouth Plantation*, p. 95.

²⁹ Seneca, *Epistula* 53.4: “*Incredibilia sunt quae tulerim, cum me ferre non possem: illud scito, Ulixem non fuisse tam irato mari natum ut ubique naufragia faceret: nausiator erat. Et ego quocumque navigare debuero vicensimo anno perveniam.*” (“Incredible are the things that I have endured, when I could not endure myself: know this, that Ulysses was not born with the sea being so angry at him, that he shipwrecked everywhere: (but) he was seasick. And I too, if I will have had to sail, will arrive in twenty years.”)

in the part of the letter where the fragment below is taken from, advises Brewster on how he should deal with so called “learned men” when they come to him on the plantation.³⁰ Those “learned men” could be other Elders who want to impose a different doctrine on Brewster, his congregation and the plantation.

“*Consilium capere in arena*”³¹

This proverb in Robinson’s letter comes from Seneca’s 22nd *epistula* to Lucilius: “*Vetus proverbium est gladiatorem in harena capere consilium; aliquid adversarii vultus, aliquid manus mota, aliquid ipsa inclinatio corporis intuentem monet. Quid fieri solet, quid oporteat, in universum et mandari potest et scribi; tale consilium non tantum absentibus, etiam posteris datur. Illud alterum, quando fieri debeat aut quemadmodum, ex longinquo nemo suadebit, cum rebus ipsis deliberandum est.*”

(“The old saying is that the gladiator makes his plan in the sand; a look of his opponent, a movement of the hand, even the bending of the body, gives some warning to the one who watches him. What is normal to be done, what is fitting, can in general be ordered and written down; such advice is not given only to those that are absent, but also to the descendants. In regard to that other thing, when or how it has to be done, nobody will advise you from afar, when it has to be decided in these very situations”).³² First of all it is important to note that the difference between *arena* and *harena* (sand) is merely one in spelling. The point is that one can only truly decide what to do, when he already finds himself in the situation he needs to decide on. Like a gladiator cannot plan in advance how he can best defeat his opponent (because he is unable to know beforehand how his opponent will act), William Brewster, to whom this letter is addressed, will not be able to decide how to deal with people who have opposing ideas, until he actually meets them. Robinson’s context is then in fact more fitting than Seneca’s original context, because in Robinson’s letter the saying is actually applied to a specific situation. It is important to note about this reference that it is not made by William Bradford, but by John Robinson. So here there is in *History of Plymouth Plantation* a second example of a Puritan who is familiar enough with Seneca to quote him.

³⁰ William Brewster was at the time the ruling Elder of Plymouth Plantation.

³¹ Bradford, *History of Plymouth Plantation*, p. 174.

³² Seneca, *Epistula* 22.1-2.

WHAT EVEN THE HEATHENS KNEW

In the references that I will discuss here, Bradford refers to pagan authors in order to give a certain authority to his own words. The aim is to show that already the pagans of ancient times had ideas similar to the ones that Bradford now presents. By doing so Bradford makes his ideas seem more evident to his audience.

Bradford includes many letters in *History of Plymouth Plantation*: letters written by him or to him, as well as letters from other members of the congregation and other people who play an important role in the Puritans' journey. The fragment below comes from a letter from Robert Cushman³³ to Edward Southworth³⁴, which discusses how the new plantation should be governed.

*“Have not the philosophers and all wise men observed that, even in settled common wealths, violent governours bring either themselves, or people, or both, to ruin;”*³⁵

Cushman refers to “the philosophers and all wise men” who have stated that violent governors lead to ruin. There are some difficulties with this reference. First of all, although Bradford considered this letter important enough to include in his book, the letter is not written by William Bradford, but by Robert Cushman. Secondly, it is very difficult to define who Cushman actually means when he is talking about “the philosophers and all wise men”. It is worth considering whether this is important or not for the actual reason behind this reference. It could have been Cushman's intention to make a very general reference, because there are just too many philosophers and wise men who have denounced violent government to name them individually. Also, Cushman has no need to name all of those philosophers individually in order to make his point. If we were to take only pagan authors into consideration, there are still many philosophers and wise men that Cushman could be referring to. One of the pagan philosophers that Cushman could have had in mind, is Seneca. At the very beginning of his essay *De Clementia*, he makes a statement that he believes the emperor Nero, or any emperor for that matter, should be able to utter with pride. Seneca discusses the great power that an emperor has, the potential that the emperor has to suppress everyone with that power, and how often this power is unfortunately abused. He believes that the emperor should not be led to impulsive and unjust

³³ Cushman often served as an agent for the Leyden church. (Bradford, *History of Plymouth Plantation*, p. 52.)

³⁴ Edward Southworth was member of the Leyden congregation who did not join them to New England (Bradford, *History of Plymouth Plantation*, p. 89.)

³⁵ Bradford, *History of Plymouth Plantation*, p. 91.

punishment by things such as foolhardiness and empty glory.³⁶ Because Seneca writes so explicitly against abuse of power and the importance of acting in a just and calm manner, and because he is such a popular pagan writer among Puritans, it is likely that Cushman has at least Seneca in mind when he refers to “the philosophers”. Seneca does not use the exact same words as Cushman did when talking about the issue of violent governing, but we do get a similar notion from his words to Nero in *De Clementia*.

After the congregation has settled in New England, the members of the congregation enter a period of extreme famine. They overcome this harsh time with a great deal of patience, as Bradford says.³⁷ As an illustration of how well the Puritans deal with these hard times, Bradford decides to insert a quote from one of Seneca’s *epistulae*.

“Which makes me remember a saying of Seneca, Epis. 123: That a great part of liberty is a well governed belly, and to be patient in all wants.”³⁸

What stands out, is that Bradford mentions within the text which *epistula* he is referring to, and that he portrays this fragment as a quotation from Seneca. Seneca’s own words in the *epistula* are: “*Quidquid vult habere nemo potest, illud potest, nolle quod non habet, rebus oblatiis hilaris uti. magna pars libertatis est bene moratus venter et contumeliae patiens.*” (“Nobody can have whatever he wants, but this he can: not to want what he does not have, but to use happily the things offered to him. A great part of liberty is a good-humored stomach and one that tolerates rough treatment.”)³⁹ So there are clear similarities between Seneca’s words and what Bradford quotes, especially the first part of that specific sentence (“*magna pars libertatis est bene moratus venter*”) he has translated very literally. The second part of the quote (“*contumeliae patiens*”) has been altered by Bradford, but his translation still corresponds with the general message of Seneca’s *epistula*. Seneca discusses in this *epistula* the human struggle between pleasure and virtue. In Seneca’s context, the meaning of the quote is that it gives a man a certain amount of freedom when he does not want too much: he will not always be able

³⁶ Seneca, *De Clementia*, I.1.2-3: “*Quas nationes funditus excidi, quas transportari, quibus libertatem dari, quibus eripi, quos reges mancipia fieri quorumque capiti regium circumdari decus oporteat, quae ruant urbes, quae orientur, mea iuris dictio est. In hac tanta facultate rerum non ira me ad iniqua supplicia compulit, non iuvenilis impetus, non temeritas hominum et contumacia, quae saepe tranquillissimis quoque pectoribus patientiam extorsit, non ipsa ostentandae per terrores potentiae dira, sed frequens magnis imperiis gloria.*” (“It is my decree, which nations it fits to be completely destroyed, which ones banished, to whom freedom to be given, from whom it to be taken, which kings become slaves, of which kings the head is to be surrounded with a crown, which cities should fall and which ones should rise. In such a great number of things, nor anger, nor juvenile enthusiasm, nor the foolhardiness and stubbornness of men, which have often even expelled patience from the calmest hearts, nor glory itself through the terrors of power that must be displayed, (glory that is) dreaded, but often present in great powers, will have led me to unjust punishments.”)

³⁷ Bradford, *History of Plymouth Plantation*, p. 175.

³⁸ Bradford, *History of Plymouth Plantation*, p. 175.

³⁹ Seneca, *Epistula* 123.3.

to get what he wants, so if he is used to not to desire too much, then he does not miss it either when it is not there. In my opinion, even with the alteration that Bradford has made to Seneca's words, Bradford does not use these words out of their context and the quote does fit the situation the Puritans find themselves in well. The point is in Bradford's case as well as Seneca's that liberty comes from not needing anything.

When Plymouth Plantation started to take shape, the settlement had to be organized and the land had to be divided among the new inhabitants of the plantation. The rule was set that "to every person was given only one acre of land, to them and theirs, as nere the towne as might be, and they had no more till the 7. years were expired. The reason was, that they might be kept close together for more saftie and defence, and the better improvement of the generall employments."⁴⁰ Bradford then makes a comparison between their organization of the land and that of the Romans as described by Pliny the Elder.

*"Which condition of theirs did make me often thinke, of what I had read of Pliny of the Romans' first beginnings in Romulus' time. How every man contented him selfe with 2. Acres of land, and had no more assigned them. And chap. 3. It was thought a great reward, to receive at the hands of the people of Rome a pinte of corne. And long after, the greatest presente given to a Captaine that had gotte a victory over their enemise, was as much ground as they could till in one day. And he was not counted a good, but a dangerous man, that would not contente him selfe with 7. Acres of land. As also how they did pound their corne in morters, as these people were forcte to doe many years before they could get a mille"*⁴¹

The book that Bradford is referring to here is Pliny the Elder's *Naturalis Historia*. It is remarkable how accurately Bradford refers to specific chapters: it is quite possible that he had the *Naturalis Historia* with him on his journey to New England, since he is able to name the exact chapters within Pliny's enormous work. Because Bradford is referring to Pliny so precisely, it is interesting to see how exact he has been in transferring Pliny's words into his own text. Where Bradford says "how every man contented him selfe with 2 acres of land, and had no more assigned them", Pliny has said "*bina tunc iugera p. R. satis erant, nullique maiorem modum adtribuit*"⁴² ("then two acres were enough for the Roman people, and assigned to nobody a larger amount"), so that part has been translated quite literally. The next thing that Bradford cites from Pliny is that "It was thought a great reward, to receive at the hands of the people of Rome a pinte of corne."⁴³ And long after, the greatest

⁴⁰ Bradford, *History of Plymouth Plantation*, p. 175.

⁴¹ Bradford, *History of Plymouth Plantation*, 175-176.

⁴² Plinius Maior, *Naturalis Historia*, 18.2.7.

⁴³ "*dona amplissima imperatorum ac fortium civium quantum quis uno die plurimum circumaravisset, item quartarii farris aut heminae, conferente populo.*" ("The biggest gift for generals and courageous citizens was the most land that someone could plough in one day, furthermore a quarter or half of a sextarius of grain, which the people bring to him.") (Pliny the Elder, *Naturalis Historia*, 18.3.9.)

presente given to a Captaine that had gotte a victory over their enemise, was as much ground as they could till in one day.” Bradford makes here an interesting change in saying that this kind of reward was meant for a captain, whereas Pliny says it was meant for “*imperatorum ac fortium civium*”, generals and courageous citizens. Probably Bradford has chosen to change this into ‘captain’, because it is more fitting to his own situation and more relatable for his readers. The curious thing about the last part of the fragment in *History of Plymouth Plantation*, is that this is not what follows in the *Naturalis Historia*. Pliny continues the chapter with discussing last names that have their roots in agriculture. But when Bradford states that “he was not counted a good, but a dangerous man, that would not contente him selfe with 7. Acres of land.” he actually refers to the next chapter of the *Naturalis Historia*.⁴⁴ “As also how they did pound their corne in morters, as these people were forcte to doe many years before they could get a mille” must be something that Bradford has added about the situation of his own people, it is not something that Pliny has written in this context. It is difficult to determine who Bradford refers to when he talks about “these people”. He seems to be referring to the Romans instead of the Puritans. The problem with that is that the Romans did in fact have some sort of mills to grind their grain.⁴⁵ So either Bradford does mean the Puritans with “these people” after all, and therefore tells us how they did not have any mills for the first couple of years, or he is talking about the Romans, in which case he is wrong in thinking they did not have any mills.

Bradford makes this comparison to the way in which the Romans organized the land in order to in a way justify the organization of Plymouth Plantation. The Romans themselves often valued the simplicity and sobriety of their agricultural history and it is imaginable that the Puritans greatly respected the Romans for such values. So when Bradford writes that even the Romans already had such an organization, this comparison must make the organization of the land of Plymouth Plantation look much more reasonable. That importance of simplicity and sobriety can also clearly been seen in the words of Manius Curius which Bradford refers to here, that he must be deemed a dangerous citizen, not a good one, for whom seven acres of land are not sufficient.

What we can deduct from these three references, is that the motive behind them is to add a certain authority and justification to Bradford’s (or in the case of the first reference: Cushman’s) words. These things that Bradford and Cushman are saying, were already known among even the pagans, so they should be acknowledged even more by the Puritans.

⁴⁴ “*Manii quidem Curii post triumphos inmensumque terrarum adiectum imperio nota dictio est perniciosum intellegi civem cui septem iugera non essent satis;*” (“There is certainly a famous saying of Manius Curius, after his triumphs and an enormous addition of lands to the empire, that he must be deemed a dangerous citizen, for whom seven acres are not enough.”) (Pliny the Elder, *Naturalis Historia*, 18.4.18.)

⁴⁵ Pliny tells us in a different part of the *Naturalis Historia* how grain should be pounded by using a mortar (*Naturalis Historia*, 18.23.97-98): “*Maiores pars Italiae nudo utitur pilo, rotis etiam, quas aqua verset, obiter et mola.*”, “The larger part of Italy uses a bald pestle, and also wheels, which water rotates, and furthermore also a millstone.” In this passage Pliny discusses how all different sorts of grains and seeds should be processed, so the context is very different from Bradford’s. What we can deduct from *Naturalis Historia* 18.23.98, is that the Romans in fact did have some sort of mill, even though Bradford seems to imply that they did not.

Except for the quote from Seneca's 22nd *epistula*, all the Latin quotes in *History of Plymouth Plantation* are in the year 1642.⁴⁶ The Latin in year 1642 of the book is solely used to talk about subjects that are considered improper, which makes the Latin in this part of *History of Plymouth Plantation* irrelevant when studying Bradford's references to pagan Antiquity.⁴⁷ I will therefore not discuss this fragment in-depth, because the Latin quotes in it are unrelated to Antiquity. In the fragment Bradford tells us how "wickedness" started to grow in the community, and how there was "a breakout of sundry notorious sins".^{48, 49} One of the major sins that Bradford wants to see punished is sodomy, and that is what this passage of *History of Plymouth Plantation* focuses on. Bradford asks the ministers Reynor, Partridge and Chauncy which acts of sodomy are to be punished with death. The letters in which these ministers answer that question have all been included in *History of Plymouth Plantation*, so Bradford discusses the subject quite extensively. It is in this passage of the book that we can find most of the Latin, because Bradford and the ministers use Latin to talk about such a subject as sodomy in a more concealed manner. The text edition⁵⁰ that I have used has however omitted the passage in which all the Latin is used, for which the editor has given the following reason: "Here follow clerical opinions, of Reynor, Partridge and Chauncy, which it has been deemed proper to omit, together with a page or two ensuing."⁵¹ This fragment of the text is such a digression that I understand the editor has taken it out.

The *Third Dialogue* and the much shorter *First Dialogue* take place between the two groups of men: one group consists of men who are born in New England (called the "young men"), the other of men who came from overseas (the "ancient men"). The young men / Bradford in both *Dialogues* ask the ancient men questions about the church, which the ancient men / Bradford then elaborately answer. The use of a dialogue to express one's own ideas is something very familiar from pagan

⁴⁶ *History of Plymouth Plantation* is organized in the way of annals, so each chapter of the book represents one year on the plantation.

⁴⁷ In the *Third Dialogue* out of all nineteen times that quotes in Greek or Latin were used, Bradford only did that once for this same reason.

⁴⁸ Bradford, *History of Plymouth Plantation*, p.363-364.

⁴⁹ Bradford gives three reasons for this rise in sin: 1. the Devil carries a greater spite against the Puritans than against other Churches, because they are closer to the Gospel and therefore preserve more than others the holiness and purity of it. 2. Because of the extremely strict laws against sins, those sins will escalate more if they do arise. 3. There are not necessarily more sins, but they are just more often discovered. (p. 364-365.)

⁵⁰ Forgotten Books Classic Reprint Series.

⁵¹ Bradford, *History of Plymouth Plantation*, p. 367.

literature. The fact that Bradford has chosen this form to communicate his ideas to the readers of his works, shows that Bradford was quite likely familiar with the use of written dialogue in Antiquity for this same purpose. Bradford's *First Dialogue* is about how the Puritan church came to be and what its essence is. There are no references to pagan Antiquity in this *Dialogue*, except for some words cited in Latin from Scripture, and the mention of Eusebius' work, which is already from the 4th century AD. The *Third Dialogue* discusses the differences between the Churches that existed at the time, starting with the one that is the worst according to the Puritans: the Roman Catholic Church. Bradford then continues with the Episcopal Church (which is already better than the Catholic one, but still needs a great deal of improvement), the Presbyterian Church (which is almost good), and eventually the Congregational Church (to which they belong). I find that this structure is very similar to the one used by Plato in the dialogues of Socrates: the starting point of the discussion is something that makes no sense at all, but the discussion gradually leads closer to the truth. The difference between Socrates / Plato and Bradford is that according to Bradford the truth is actually found, namely the Congregational Church, whereas in Socrates' dialogues the truth remains hidden. In contrast to the *First Dialogue*, we do find references to Antiquity as well as quotes in Greek and Latin in the *Third Dialogue*. In fact, there are more quotes in the *Third Dialogue* than in *History of Plymouth Plantation*, but the number of actual references to Antiquity is smaller in the *Third Dialogue*. The Greek and Latin quotes in the *Third Dialogue* are all either from Scripture or from Christian authors like Cyprian and Tertullian and especially poet Mantuan⁵², so these quotes are not from any pagan authors of the ancient world. Since majority of quotes can be found in the lines said by the "ancient men", a possible reason for the many quotes in the *Dialogue* is to give more authority to their words.

Although the Latin quotes in the *Third Dialogue* do not constitute of references to Antiquity, I have still decided to mention the *Dialogues* here, because of the dialogue-structure which reminds us of Plato, and because the amount of Latin quotes in the *Third Dialogue* in comparison with that in *History of Plymouth Plantation* in my opinion remains noteworthy.

Towards the end of his life, Bradford has written several poems, which are not well known. One of these poems is written in 1654 and it is named *Some Observations of God's Merciful Dealing with Us in This Wilderness, and His Gracious Protection over Us These Many Years. Blessed Be His Name*. The editor of the *Third Dialogue*, Charles Deane, is not sure if these verses have actually been written by Bradford, or if they were originally part of a Commonplace Book and therefore a collection of verses from different authors. Considering the actual content of the poem and Latin sentences that have been included between the lines, something that Bradford is fond of doing⁵³, it is however quite probable that these verses have been written by Bradford himself. So assuming that these verses are

⁵² An Italian Carmelite reformer, humanist and poet from the 15th century. (wikipedia)

⁵³ In *History of Plymouth Plantation* we also have a Latin quote inserted in the text that is placed there because it fits the context well. In the *Third Dialogue* we see this even more often, although these quotes come from early Christian authors. In any case it is a phenomenon we have seen before in Bradford's work and therefore it is reasonable to assume that Bradford is the author of these verse lines as well.

indeed of William Bradford, the lines that are particularly interesting in this current research are those four lines that have Latin citations written underneath.

*“Lord, shew mercy, and graciously spare,
For thy name’s sake, those that thy servants are,
And let their lives be precious in thy sight;
Divert such judgments as fall on them might;
Give them not up into these heathens’ power,
Who like the greedy wolves would them devour,*

**Vox fera, trux vultus, verissima mortis imago, - Ovid⁵⁴*

And exercise on them their cruel rage,

quamquam lupi, saevae plus feritatis habent.^{55, 56}

With torments great and most salvage⁵⁷.

Atrocitatem anhelat omnis barbarus.⁵⁸

They’re not content their foes only to kill,

Homo homini lupus.⁵⁹

But, most inhumanely, torment them will.”

The fact that Deane thought it might be possible that this poem is not written by Bradford but comes from a commonplace book, is quite interesting, because Bradford is said to have written something like a small commonplace book himself. Deane states that the original manuscript of the poem above is followed by a collection of Latin sentences from various authors, of which only two leaves now remain.⁶⁰ Unfortunately, Deane decided not to include these two leaves in this text edition and the manuscript seems to be untraceable. As a result, I am not able to include in this research the information that can be deduced from that manuscript about William Bradford’s position towards pagan Antiquity. Although I do not deem it likely that Deane is right when stating that this poem may not have been written by Bradford, it is quite probable that Bradford used a commonplace book to find quotes that fit his context. The four quotes come from three different authors, but are all concerned with the same theme: people that are ferocious and savage like wolves.

⁵⁴ Ovid, *Tristia*, V.7.17: “A ferocious voice, a savage face, the truest image of death.”

⁵⁵ Ovid, *Tristia*, V.7.46: “*quamque lupi, saevae plus feritatis habent.*”, “they have more wild ferocity than wolves do.”

⁵⁶ Bradford’s version of the quote says “*quamquam*”, while in Ovid’s *Tristia* it is written “*quamque*”.

⁵⁷ “Salvage” should be read as “savage”.

⁵⁸ Schoppe, C., *Mercurius Bilinguis*, p. 26. (“*De fortitudine & imbecillitate*”): “no. 423. *Atrocitatem anhelat barbarus.*”, “a barbarian exhales savagery.”

⁵⁹ Hobbes, T., *De Cive*: “A man is a wolf to a man.” & Plautus, *Asinaria* 495: “*lupus est homo homini*”, “a man is a wolf to a man”.

⁶⁰ Bradford, *The Third Dialogue*, p.74.

The poem as a whole is a praise of God's protection of the Puritans during their journey and in New England and also a supplication to keep protecting them, God's true servants, and to strike down the heathens. In the part of the poem that I discuss here, Bradford begs God to spare them from the heathen Indians. The first two Latin quotes that Bradford has scribbled underneath his verse lines, originate from the fifth book of Ovid's *Tristia*. Ovid talks here about the Getae, a barbaric people according to him, with whom he was living after being banished from Rome in 8 AD. Taking into account Ovid's context and that of Bradford in these verses, Bradford's choice for these lines is very fitting. He makes in a way a comparison between Ovid's barbaric Getae and the heathen Indians.

"*Atrocitatem anhelat omnis barbarus*" comes from a book of Latin grammar called the *Mercurius Bilinguis*, written by German scholar Caspar Schoppe (1576-1649). Schoppe uses many short exemplifying phrases to illustrate the Latin grammar, almost in the way of a commonplace book.

The expression "*homo homini lupus*" originates from Plautus' play *Asinaria*, where it is written as "*lupus est homo homini*". Bradford has probably quoted the expression not from Plautus, but from his contemporary Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679), who in the dedication of his book *De Cive* wrote the expression in the form which Bradford has quoted. The quote does fit the context of Bradford's verses, but it would have been more fitting if it had been written underneath "who like the greedy wolves would them devour", since both those lines compare men to wolves.

What we know about the Latin quotes in this poem is where they originally come from, but we do not know for sure whether Bradford actually quotes from these original sources or (which is more plausible) from a commonplace book. Although Bradford does not literally express an opinion about them, I do consider these quotes to be positive references. William Bradford in his poem refers to Ovid, Schoppe and Hobbes since he feels like he can relate their quotes to his own words and the situation he describes. This means that he considers Ovid, Schoppe and Hobbes to be people with similar viewpoints. The fact that Bradford feels like he can relate to these authors is what makes the references positive.

HEATHEN EMPERORS, COMMUNIST PHILOSOPHERS, AND BEASTLY PRACTICES

Although William Bradford had a clear respect for pagan Antiquity and truly admired certain pagan writers, he, like other Puritans, did not agree with every aspect of Antiquity and its writers. So now that the references in which Bradford shows a positive attitude towards Antiquity have been discussed, the same needs to be done for the negative references to Antiquity and its pagan people.

One of the worst things the pagan Romans have ever done to the Christians were the persecutions in the early times of Christianity. Bradford looks back at these persecutions in the very beginning of *History of Plymouth Plantation*. He starts his book with a flashback to the beginning of the Christian faith, and discusses the hardships that Christians have had to endure since the beginning of time. Important to note is that all of those hardships, according to Bradford, have been imposed by

Satan. Preceding the fragment below, Bradford tells how Satan has already tried in vain to prevent the spreading of the gospel by torturing, banishing and imprisoning martyr Saints.

“He (Satan) then begane to take his anciente strategemes, used of old against the first Christians. That when by the bloody and barbarous persecutions of the Heathen Emperours, he could not stoppe and subuerte the course of the gossell, but that it speedily overspred with a wounderfull celeritie the then best known parts of the world, He then begane to sow errours, heresies, and wounderfull dissentions amongst the professours them selues, (working upon their pride and ambition, with other corrupte passions incident to all mortall men, yea to the saints them selues in some measure,) by which wofull effects followed; as not only bitter contentions, and hartburnings, schismes, with other horrible confusions, but Satan tooke occasion and advantage therby to foyst in a number of vile which have since been as snares to many poore and peaceable souls even to this day. So as in the anciente times, the persecutions by the heathen and their Emperours, was not greater then of the Christians one against other;”⁶¹

Bradford mentions the “heathen emperours” twice in this fragment. The first time he refers to the persecutions by the emperors as another method of Satan to prevent the spreading of the gospel (in which Satan did not succeed).⁶² The second time that Bradford refers to the “heathen emperours” in this same fragment, he does so in order to illustrate the gruesomeness of the persecutions of the Puritans by the Church of England. Bradford states that these persecutions by the Church of England are no less evil than the persecutions of Christians by the Roman emperors in the early times of Christianity. In doing so, Bradford implies that any Christian who persecutes other Christians, is in fact just like the pagan emperors who persecuted the early Christians. So because they persecute other Christians, they themselves are in the end more pagan than Christian.

.?. years after their arrival at Cape Cod, William Bradford becomes the governor of Plymouth Plantation. Organizing the plantation and laying down the rules of the plantation become some of his major tasks. In the beginning of the Plymouth Plantation, the people all worked together for the community in the fields of the plantation. After a couple of years, this started to cause discontent among some members of the community. There were for example young men who did not like the fact that they were also spending their time and energy working the fields not just for their own families, but also for others who did not have as much strength to work the fields themselves. These men wanted instead to be allowed to take care of only their own families. William Bradford agreed that this

⁶¹ Bradford, *History of Plymouth Plantation*, p. 23-24.

⁶² One of these persecutions was the one under emperor Decius in 250 AD. The largest persecution of Christians (The Great Persecution) took place under the reign of Diocletian and Galerius in the early 4th century AD.

situation had to change and that people should be allowed their own land on which they would work to support their own families instead of having to work for the community.⁶³

“The experience that was had in this commone course and condition, tried sundrie years, and that amongst godly and sober men, may well evince the vanitie of that conceit of Platos & other ancients, applauded by some of later times – that the taking away of property, and bringing in community into a common wealth, would make them happy and flourishing; as if they were wiser than God. For this comunitie (so farr as it was) was found to breed much confusion and discontent, and retard much imployment that would have been to their benefite and comfote. For the yong-men that were most able and fitte for labour and service did repine that they should spend their time and streingth to worke for other mens wives and children, with out any recompence”⁶⁴

Plato discusses in his *Politeia* the way the state should be organized and certain elements of this organization can be considered communist.⁶⁵ Plato says that for the guardians (φύλακες), the leaders of the state, not only wives and children should be common property, assigned to each as is fitted, but they should also have no other properties.⁶⁶ Plato’s reason for the “taking away of property, and bringing in community into a common wealth” was that when everything that is good and everything that is bad is shared by the whole community, there would be fewer arguments over property (or none at all), which would lead to a better state.⁶⁷ The first thing that I find curious about this fragment is that such communist ideas as are mentioned here by Bradford are actually quite fundamental in (early) Christianity. The attitude which is shown here by the Puritan community including Bradford himself seems contradictory with the early principles of the Christian faith. The reason why Bradford is against a communist organization of the plantation is that they have already tried that “sundrie years” and it did not work. The communist organization has caused “much confusion and discontent” within the community and that is why Bradford concludes that they need to find a different way of organizing Plymouth Plantation.

⁶³ This is then followed by Bradford’s previously mentioned explanation of the organisation of Plymouth Plantation, in which he refers to Pliny the Elder’s *Naturalis Historia*.

⁶⁴ Bradford, *History of Plymouth Plantation*, p. 146-147.

⁶⁵ I am aware of the fact that in Bradford’s time, let alone Plato’s time, terms such as communism, anticommunist and procommunist did not exist yet. Using these anachronisms, however, makes the explanation of Bradford’s reference to Plato easier to understand.

⁶⁶ Plato, *Politeia*, V.464.b-c: “Καὶ μὲν δὴ καὶ τοῖς πρόσθεν γε ὁμολογοῦμεν· ἔφαμεν γάρ που οὔτε οἰκίας τούτοις ἰδίας δεῖν εἶναι οὔτε γῆν οὔτε τι κτῆμα, ἀλλὰ παρὰ τῶν ἄλλων τροφήν λαμβάνοντας, μισθὸν τῆς φυλακῆς, κοινῇ πάντας ἀναλίσκειν, εἰ μέλλοιεν ὄντως φύλακες εἶναι.” (“And now we also agree with the previous things: because we have said that there should be no own homes for them, nor land, nor some possession, but that, receiving it from others as recompense for their guardianship, they all eat the food in common, if they are truly going to be guardians.”)

⁶⁷ Plato, *Politeia*, V.464.c-e.

At first I found it strange to see Bradford refer to Plato in a negative context, because Christians are generally quite fond of Plato. Bradford also states that these communist ideas of Plato and other ancients were then “applauded by some of later times”. These “some of later times” can only be other Christians, who were in favor of a communist organization. Communist ideas were an important part of early Christianity (think about monastic life), so that makes it logical that based on such ideas early Christians were positive about Plato. Whether these early Christians actually got these ideas from Plato is debatable, since they could have gotten it from the Gospel, but the fact that Plato had similar ideas could contribute to their appreciation of him. That early Christians and Plato shared similar ideas, raises the question why Bradford uses Plato as an example instead of his own Christian predecessors. A plausible reason is that Bradford refers to Plato because he considers communism to be something that is purely pagan, not Christian. This would mean that Christians from early times adopted these communist ideas from paganism and that that is how communist ideas ended up in Christianity. With this in mind, Bradford’s reference to Plato implies that they, the Puritans, should not follow the principles of communism, because then they are just like the pagans.

When after a hard period of famine and shortages some help came to the plantation from overseas and from trade with the Indians, the people of the plantation do not handle these new goods the way Bradford wants them to. Instead of sticking to their principles of simple and modest life, they partied and squandered the newly gained provisions.

“And after they had gott some good into their hands, and gott much by trading with the Indeans, they spent it as vainly, in quaffing and drinking both wine and strong waters in great excess, and, as some reported, 10li. worth in a morning. They allso set up a May-pole, drinking and dancing aboute it many days together, inviting the Indean women, for their consorts, dancing and frisking together, (like so many fairies, or furies rather,) and worse practices. As if they had anew revived and celebrated the feasts of the Roman goddess Flora, or the beastly practices of the mad Bacchinalians.”⁶⁸

In this fragment, the Puritans were not at all acting like Puritans should. When some relief came after a long period of hardship, they decided to drink excessively and dance and invite women of local tribes for their company. Bradford, of course, does not appreciate such behavior and he compares here the behavior of the Puritans to the behavior of the Romans at the “feasts of the Roman goddess Flora” and the “beastly practices of the mad Bacchinalians”. Flora is an Italian goddess whose main festival, the Floralia took place from the 28th of April to early May and marked the flowering time of the grain.

⁶⁸ Bradford, *History of Plymouth Plantation*, p. 238.

The festival is said to have been of an erotic and extravagant nature and is generally considered a 'boisterous and happy' event.⁶⁹ The Bacchanalia started as a 'private transfer of the Bacchus mysteries' from Greece to Etruria. It is said that in Rome a woman from Campania began to add various innovations to the existing rituals, such as the initiation of men, the performance of ceremonies at night, and she also made the ceremonies more frequent than they used to be. This is how the Bacchus mysteries began to lose their original dignity and became a "pretext for promiscuity, crime and superstitious frenzy". Simultaneously there were such a number of people participating in the Bacchanalia that it came to be perceived as a threat to the Roman state.⁷⁰ Such religious celebrations were probably about as pagan as celebrations could get in the minds of the Puritans. Bradford even uses terms as "mad" and "bestly" to describe them. So in comparing the Puritans' behavior to such pagan celebrations, Bradford wants to show how much he denounced this kind of behavior.

When Bradford in the *Third Dialogue* discusses the different churches of the past, he starts with the one that is according to him most removed from the truth: the Roman Catholic church. The "ancient men" explain to the "young men" everything that is wrong with the Catholic church. One of the issues that comes up is the worshipping of Saints; this was something that was not supported by the Puritans.

"By these few instances you may see how idolatrusly they worshiped, & prayed unto their saints; not only equeliseng them with God & Christ, but often ascribing more honour unto them then to the Lord him selfe. And yet many of them, it may be justly doubted, they were rather miserable wretches in hell, then saints in heaven. We may also add, how they not only thus joyned them with God in their praires & invocations, but also swore by their names, some times singly, and sometimes joyntly with God; as, by God, and our Lady; and, So help me God, & all the saints, &c. All which considered, made Lodovicus Vives, (an ingenuous Papist) confess, that he could find no difference betwixte the opinione that the Christians have of their saints, & that which the Pagans have of their Gods; when as they give them the same honour, that is given to God him self.

Vives, in August: de Civit: Dei·1·8·C·ult·"^{71, 72}

Bradford says that the Saints the Catholics worship are in fact miserable wretches in hell instead of Saints in heaven. He then refers to Ludovicus Vives (1493-1540) who had said that there was no

⁶⁹ Brill's New Pauly, "Flora", "Floralia".

⁷⁰ Brill's New Pauly, "Bacchanalia".

⁷¹ Bradford, *The Third Dialogue*, p. 13.

⁷² Deane: "Of Saint Augustine's *De Civitate Dei* was printed in 1592 the edition with commentary of Ludovicus Joan Vives, which Bradford quotes in the text ... Vives was one of the revivers of literature, and famous for his learning." (Bradford, *The Third Dialogue*, p. 13.)

difference between how these Christians viewed their Saints and how the Pagans viewed their gods.⁷³ Augustine discusses in this chapter of his *City of God* the compassion of God, contrasting good and bad, just and unjust, pious and impious. Vives' comment that Bradford is referring to, is about Augustine's words "*qui reddet unicuique secundum opera eius*"⁷⁴. The response Vives gives to this line in Augustine's work is: "*Reddet.] Vulgo habetur reddit. Augustin. melius: nam de futuro seculo loquitur Apostolus, & Graecè est, ὃς αποδώσει ἐκάστω.*"⁷⁵ It seems however that Vives' comment has little to do with the worship of saints or pagan gods, but solely with Augustine's choice for the future tense *reddet*.⁷⁶ So Bradford's interpretation of Vives' words in his reference to Vives appears to be wrong. But nevertheless Bradford's motive for the reference⁷⁷ is clear: by comparing the worshipping of Saints to the worshipping of Pagan Gods, he indirectly says that the Catholics are no better than the Pagans are actually not real Christians, because they waste time on worshipping Saints instead of God.

In the same *Dialogue*, Bradford also compares the organization of the Catholic Church with that of the Roman Empire.

"The framing and squaring of the government of the church according to the government of the nations of the world, hath been the ground of much error and mischeefe; as hath been rightly noted by some, that dioceses or patriarkships have been first framed according to the divissions of the Roman provinces in that ancient empire; and the pope could never be satisfied till he had gott the emperor's place, and power, and constituted a senate of cardinals, as a court meet to sustainte his majestie, and

⁷³ Bradford also addresses the idolatrous worshipping of the pagan gods in another one of his poems (which has not been included in Deane's edition of the *Third Dialogue*), *On the Various Heresies in Old and New England with an Appeal to the Presbyterians*:

"How learned was the Apostle Paul,
Employed in labors more than all.
The heathen poets he then knew,
And great learned men he overthrew.
And after the apostles' days,
What learned fathers did God raise,
The philosophers to oppose,
From whom so many errors rose.
Their heathen gods they did defend,
And greatly for them did contend,
And all that foul idolatry,
Defending errors learnedly." (www.poemhunter.com)

⁷⁴ "Who will give to each according to his works." (Rom. 2.)

⁷⁵ "He will give.] It is generally considered that he gives. Augustine should have said: because the Apostle speaks of future times, and the Greek is: he will give to each."

⁷⁶ Bradford's idea that Vives was comparing worship of saints with that to the worship of pagan gods could come from different interpretations of *vulgo* and *reddit*. This would be a possibility if Bradford sees *vulgo* as a form of *vulgus* (people) and if he considers the subject of *reddit* not to be God (which is the subject that Augustine implies), but to be the pagans and the Catholics. It seems to be the closest interpretation where Bradford could have gotten his reference from. It is however very far-fetched and it is far more probable that Bradford simply got it wrong.

⁷⁷ The reference that he wants this reference to be.

support his greatness, him self being head of an œcumenicall councill, and all the provinciall & other subordinate sinods which so long bore swaie in the world.”⁷⁸

The first thing that should be noticed is the fact that a religious institution is being compared to an empire⁷⁹ here, which already gives a very negative notion to the Catholic Church. Bradford focuses on how the Catholic Church is centered around greatness and power, stating how “the pope could never be satisfied till he had got the emperour’s place, and power, and constituted a senate of cardinals”. Bradford’s main reason behind this comparison is that the Roman Empire is in general nothing but a pagan world. So in comparing the Catholic Church to the Roman Empire, he says that the Catholics are in fact no better than those pagans and are therefore not at all Christian.

What can be deduced from the references in this chapter, is that Bradford makes all the negative references to Antiquity for the very same reason: criticizing Christians. By comparing certain objectionable behavior of the Puritans or other Christians to that of pagans, he implies that anyone who behaves in this manner or approves of this behavior, is not a real Christian, because such actions belong to pagans, not Christians.

CONCLUSION

As demonstrated by looking at Bradford’s references to Antiquity, his attitude towards that period of time is not at all one-sided, but in fact rather complex. In the works that have been studied, Bradford shows three motives for positive references to Antiquity. First of all he refers to certain pagans because he believes his (Puritan) audience should view them as examples. Secondly he makes references to Antiquity in order to give authority to his own words and ideas: even the pagans from those ancient times already knew that things had to be done in a certain way. Lastly he quotes in Latin several times from different authors, because he finds these quotes relevant for his context. Bradford could have gotten these quotes either from their original source texts or from a commonplace book.

At the same time the negative references all serve the same purpose, namely to criticize Christians. With these references he focusses on issues with Antiquity such as the persecutions of Christians, ideas that he disagrees with, or pagan rituals. So there is not one general opinion that Bradford (and other Puritans) had about Antiquity. There is a strong division between elements of this ancient era that they accept and admire, and elements that they detest and condemn.

I have been able to base this research on the major works of William Bradford: *History of Plymouth Plantation*, the *First Dialogue*, the *Third Dialogue*, and some of his verses. The major

⁷⁸ Bradford, *The Third Dialogue*, p. 47-48.

⁷⁹ A pagan empire, to make matters worse.

limitation of this research has been that not all of Bradford's works are accessible. Unfortunately there seemed to no longer exist a *Second Dialogue*, and the manuscript of the two page collection of Latin sentences from various authors that Deane mentioned, appeared to be untraceable. Especially the inaccessibility of this little Latin commonplace book that Bradford has created, has impaired the extent of my research. Further research to discover the true nature of William Bradford's position towards Antiquity will be possible if that manuscript will eventually be found.

In the end, this research has provided insight in the position of William Bradford himself towards the ancient world, but it has also shown us in a way how much alive Antiquity was in his time, and how much pagan authors were often still respected in an era controlled by religion.

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