

William Bradford (1590-1657)

Key Designation: Father of the Separatists in the New World

Key Background Information:

- ◆ Grew up in a wealthy farm family in Yorkshire
- ◆ Experienced numerous tragedies to the death of his parents at an early age
- ◆ Due to illness in childhood, he focused on studying the Scriptures and theology
- ◆ Heard Puritan preaching at age 12 that impressed him
- ◆ Led to Separatist views as a result of hearing William Brewster, John Robinson, and Richard Clyfton at Scrooby Manor. These men believed that the Anglican Church was beyond reform, just as Luther discovered the Roman Catholic church was beyond reform.
- ◆ Robinson led a group of 50 from England after King James' persecutions, to the Amsterdam, and Bradford joins them. The struggling congregation had to relocate to Leyden for financial reasons. Bradford was 18 years old.
- ◆ Explored the area for the permanent colony which resulted in the founding of Plymouth, Mass.

Key Event:

- ◆ 1620- Bradford joins 50 Separatists, and about 50 non-separatists on a boat called the Mayflower and lands at "Plymouth" on Cape Cod. This group will be named "the Pilgrims." Since they had no charter and were unable to reach their original destination, Bradford drafted "The Mayflower Compact" which main element included majority rule. John Carver, a non-Separatist, was elected the first governor.

Key Ideas:

- ◆ The Providential hand of God had led them to the new world for a special mission.

Key Works:

- ◆ *Of Plymouth Plantation*- Bradford's recollections and reflections, not an actual journal, that covered 1621-1646 in which much of the time he served as Governor of the colony. In it, he traces the hand of Divine Providence upon the community through so many trials and troubles.