**WEEK 1: Lessons from the American Colonial Era**

**William Bradford (1590-1657)**

* William Bradford was born in northern England into a fairly wealthy land-owning family. At the age of 7 he was orphaned and raised by his uncles who intended for him to work the farm.
* Instead, Bradford developed a lengthy sickness which made him unable to perform much work, but did cause him to study - especially the Scriptures.
* At age 12, Bradford was invited by a friend to hear Rev. Richard Clyfton preach at a nearby church. Clyfton was a Separatist and had a tremendous influence on William, causing him to attend regularly.
* In 1603 King James I increased the restrictions on all who would not conform to the Church of England. In 1607, 50 members of the Scrooby congregation - including Bradford - came under persecution, ultimately being imprisoned after attempting to flee the country.
* In 1608, they fled England in small groups to Leiden in the Dutch Republic. In 1613 Bradford marries Dorothy May. Although no longer persecuted, after 10 years in Leiden they grew concerned their English children were becoming Dutch and therefore determined to set out for their own colony in the Americas. Three years later…
* The term ‘Pilgrims’ comes from Bradford’s own words, alluding to Hebrews 11:13: “With mutual embraces and many tears, they took their leaves of one another, which proved to be the last leave to many of them...but they knew they were pilgrims and looked not much on those things, but lifted their eyes to heaven, their dearest country and quieted their spirits...”
* Their first ship was the Speedwell, but it was declared unseaworthy so all 50 of these Pilgrims boarded another ship…the Mayflower. Ultimately, the Mayflower carried 102 Pilgrims on a 10 week voyage across the Atlantic.
* While offshore, the Pilgrims signed the Mayflower Compact. William Bradford was one of several men who formed a scouting party to locate a proper site for the new colony, finally settling on Plymouth Harbor. While he was gone for a month, his wife Dorothy died.
* Death became rampant the first winter, with nearly half of the group succumbing to disease, illness, and exposure. During February and March of 1621, sometimes two to three people died each day.
* Samoset and his chief Massasoit of the Pokanoket Indian tribe came to the Pilgrim’s assistance and formed a treaty of mutual protection which aided in the Pilgrim’s survival.
* During this first winter, Bradford became terribly ill and narrowly survived. In April of 1621, Governor John Carver was working the fields and collapsed, dying a few days later. The settlers of Plymouth elected William Bradford as the new Governor and he would be re-elected 31 times, serving nearly the rest of his life.
* Bradford remarried in 1623 to Alice Southworth who would bear three children, all of whom survived to adulthood.
* Bradford’s most well-known and important written work was *On Plymouth Plantation*, a journal-form documentation of the Pilgrim’s story and arrival in America by which we have such great detail on the life of Bradford and the Pilgrims.

**Roger Williams (1603-83)**

* Williams was born in London and converted at a young age. He received his BA from Pembroke College, Cambridge in 1627 where he developed Puritan views.
* He married Mary Benard in 1629. They had six children, all born in America. They moved to America in 1630.
* He was offered the pastorate of a separatist Church in Salem, but the offer was withdrawn due to opposition from Massachusetts Bay Colony (MBC) authorities. He took a position in Plymouth in 1631, but controversy forced him out.
* At this time, he wrote a tract criticizing MBC authorities and King James I for their treatment of native Indians.
* He moved back to the Salem church in 1633 and became its pastor in 1635. But he continued to clash with MBC authorities. They banished him from the colony, but he escaped the authorities by traveling south by foot in the winter for 55 miles. He was provided shelter by the Wampanoag Indians near Raynham, MA.
* He and a group of believers from Salem purchased land from native tribes in 1636 and founded the town of Providence in what became the colony of Rhode Island.
* Providence was the first place in modern history where civil and religious spheres were completely separated. Decisions were made by majority rule (democratically). In 1644, Williams purchased a charter from Parliament and called it Providence Plantations.
* In 1638, Williams and 12 others were baptized and helped form the first Baptist church in America. However, he removed himself from the church four months later, unsure of where his Baptist views stood. The church continued without him.
* In 1644 he published *The Bloudy Tenent of Persecution for Cause of Conscience*. This was his most well-known & controversial book.
* In 1647, Williams managed to unite all the individual settlements around Narragansett Bay to officially form the colony of Rhode Island. The colony became a beacon of religious freedom attracting not only Baptists, but other dissenting religious groups.
* In 1651, Obadiah Holmes was fined together with two other Baptists for holding Baptist services in Lynn, MA. The presiding judge was the new governor of the MBC, John Endicott. Instead of paying the fine, Holmes opted for 30 lashes with a three-corded whip.
* The Quakers got worse treatment. In 1658, 2 Quakers had an ear cut off as punishment, then in late 1659-60, 3 Quaker missionaries were executed by hanging. This went too far. By 1662, Quakers were whipped instead of hung.