A Model of Christian Charity

INTRODUCTION

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF JOHN WINTHROP

Born to landowning merchant parents in Suffolk, England, John Winthrop spent much of his life torn between his deep spiritual interests and his calling as a lawyer and Lord of the family home in Groton. Trained at Trinity College, Cambridge, where his father was an administrator, Winthrop showed a precocious understanding of theology. But he never pursued a life in the established church, instead preferring rather rebellious Puritanical views. He married the first of his three wives at age 18, with children soon to follow. Like all Christians who were hostile to Catholicism, Winthrop was deeply skeptical of Charles I's (r. 1625) anti-Reformation attitudes. In 1628, Winthrop was elected by the newly formed Massachusetts Bay Company to take a group of colonists to Massachusetts, and in 1630, he led over 700 colonists in a convoy. Aboard the *Arabella*, as a lay (i.e., unlicensed) preacher, he may have delivered his famous sermon, "A Model of Christian Charity." He was so popular a leader that he was elected Governor of that colony 18 times before his death in 1649. As a writer, though, he was famous only after his death. He kept an extremely detailed journal of his years in Massachusetts, which was later published as a valuable glimpse into colonial America. His "A Model of Christian Charity" came out posthumously, over 200 years later, and has since become one of the founding documents in the history of America, quoted by presidents from Kennedy to Reagan to Obama.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The colonial land-grab in New England is the dominant historical setting for Winthrop's sermon. Winthrop, leading over 700 colonists to Massachusetts, wrote at the onset of a boom in England's colonial expansion. Sponsored by King James, explorers like John Smith had published influential and tantalizing accounts of the opportunities afforded by the new world. In the wake of such encouragement (some would call it propaganda), the Crown chartered a company to populate the Massachusetts Bay (of which Winthrop would serve as governor many terms until his death), a colony encompassing much of present-day Massachusetts. Any colony at this time would have been a mutually beneficial arrangement both for England and for the expatriates who volunteered to populate it, the former being supplied with goods, taxes, and land, and the latter with freedoms unavailable under home rule—namely, religious freedoms. To this end, another important context for "A Model of Christian Charity" was England's religious climate. Charles I had recently succeeded his father, James I and VI. Though the established Church of England was Protestant in name, Charles married a Roman Catholic and upheld Catholic-leaning religious policies that limited the rights of non-conformists such as Winthrop's Puritan sect. Dissenters, despising what they saw as outlandish excess in the Catholic Church, felt Charles's reign to be oppressive. Consequently, the chance to start afresh in a new land, far from the religious hold of the monarch, was especially appealing to dissenting groups like Winthrop's. In the decades since Henry VIII's Protestant reforms, the Church had nudged its way back into Catholic policies and, under Mary Stuart, even Protestant persecution. So the English were no strangers to wavering in the Protestant-Catholic struggle. (Indeed, Charles would soon be deposed by the fiercely Puritanical Oliver Cromwell.) But it was only now, with the new promise of colonial expansion, that staunch non-Catholics had a blank-slate chance to shape their lives entirely by the contours of their religious doctrine. This was the chance Winthrop's group seized upon in leaving England for a strange new land.

RELATED LITERARY WORKS

As a work of utopian idealism, Winthrop's sermon may have been influenced by Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516), a work that laid the groundwork for an ideal society in reaction to the religious turmoil of More's era. But unlike Winthrop, More was a staunch Catholic; closer to Winthrop's views (though far more didactic in tone) was the Swiss reformer John Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (1536), the seminal (and severe) Protestant guidebook for all things spiritual and civic. Winthrop's optimism about the promise of a geographical blank slate recalls the explorer John Smith's *Description of New England* (1616), which argued that the new world promised unprecedented levels of self-realization. Winthrop's belief in the unity and interdependence of human beings bears a striking resemblance to the English churchman John Donne's poem "No Man is an Island" (1624); the American poet Walt Whitman echoes similar thoughts in his celebratory "Song of Myself" (1855). Winthrop and Whitman's fixation on connectedness, bridging some 130 years, suggests it as a fundamental theme in American literature. Conventionally for the time, Winthrop's main literary fodder is the Bible—especially Christ's Sermon on the Mount in the Book of Matthew—but only recently had the King James Version (1611) become the standard edition for clergy and lay readers alike. Winthrop's sermon comes from the first generation of writings to make use of this important translation. Winthrop's sermon, though still unpublished by the Founding Fathers' time, must also be seen as a foundational American text alongside not only *The Declaration of Independence* (1776) but

also contemporary works such as the Mayflower colonist William Bradford's *Of Plymouth Plantation* and Winthrop's own magnum opus, *The History of New England*—both important narrative documentaries of early Massachusetts from 1630 to 1650.

KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** "A Model of Christian Charity"
- **When Written:** 1630
- **Where Written:** Either in Southampton—just before departing for the Massachusetts Bay—or aboard the *Arabella*, en route to that colony.
- **When Published:** 1838
- **Literary Period:** Colonial American
- **Genre:** Sermon
- **Setting:** England in the 1630s, on the eve of Winthrop's departure for New England.
- **Climax:** Though the sermon is not narrative-based, Winthrop's motivational rhetoric reaches a crescendo in its final paragraphs, especially in the oft-quoted "citty on a hill" passage.
- **Antagonist:** Though there are no real characters in the sermon—and thus no traditional antagonists—Winthrop shows a Puritan's skepticism of all things Catholic and a strong distaste for human selfishness.
- **Point of View:** First-Person Plural

EXTRA CREDIT

Obscurity. Winthrop's "Model of Christian Charity" is very important to American history today, but in his own time almost nobody knew about it—only his group of colonists in Massachusetts. Almost no record survives of the sermon's delivery, and the printed transcription comes from a copy written in a hand that isn't Winthrop's—the only surviving copy.

Sermon of the Millennium. In an often quoted pronouncement, the late Peter J. Gomes, Harvard's former university preacher, called Winthrop's "Model of Christian Charity" the greatest sermon of the millennium.

PLOT SUMMARY

Winthrop begins his sermon with an observation about inequality in the world: God has willed "the condicion of mankinde" to be disparate, with "some high and eminent in power and dignitie; others meane and in subjeccion." Placed at the beginning, this basic social problem—why some people are rich and others are poor—is the topic of the sermon. In the roughly five sections that follow, Winthrop explains why God has allowed this disparity and offers ways in which people can alleviate the pain it causes.

Winthrop begins with several reasons for this inequality. First, God put people in different stations of life to reflect the great variety of his divine powers. Second, social inequality allows God's "spirit" to be manifest in many different ways; the rich, for instance, can be humbled while the poor can receive fortitude. Third, because everyone is different, this should allow people to discover a mutual dependence on one another, whereby "they might all be **knit** more nearly together in the bond of brotherly affection." More than simply needing each other, says Winthrop, people ought to realize that talent, material wealth, and high station are not things actually possessed by the people who enjoy them; rather, these things are "guifts" from God. He notes the two springs of moral action—justice and mercy—which correspond roughly to the commands of the Bible and the private urgings of one's conscience.

Outlining the need for "liberallity" (charitable giving), Winthrop describes the "duty of mercy" between people in a community. One should always give what one can, he says, and sometimes even more than one can afford. He admonishes "layeing up" (hoarding or stockpiling one's wealth and resources), reminding his audience that possessions can't be said truly to belong to us, as they're gifts from God.

Winthrop then examines the motives behind such a merciful and charitable life. Just as a **clock**, strikes on its own when wound, so too do people act charitably when warmed by brotherly love. The idea of the **human body** also expresses the "bond of perfection" that love represents among men, whereby disparate body parts act in harmony, just like individual people in one community. He further emphasizes the unity of humanity, and the selfsameness of men among each other, all the while connecting this idea of unity to the binding power of social love.

From here Winthrop delves into the subtleties behind this feeling of love. He describes the innate attraction humans have toward each other, citing a popular Latin adage and stories from the Bible. This attraction, Winthrop explains, has the power to overcome any innate selfishness. Feelings like "sympathy" and "sensibileness" "knitt" humans together, allowing them to feel each other's pains and pleasures. This is an imaginative and self-affirming connection, whereby one sees "his owne image and resemblance in another." Before moving on to his last section, Winthrop touches obliquely on romantic love, suggesting that even marriage cannot equal "the exercise of mutuall love."

The final section brings this examination of love into the specific context of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. Winthrop reminds his colonists that they are "knit together by this bond of love" to their Puritan fellows in England, despite an ocean's distance. While they must follow civic laws in addition to the

inner moral conscience he has just illustrated, Winthrop suggests that selfless and Christlike behavior must be felt internally, rather than followed as a mere rule. He describes the new colony as an exemplar of Puritan utopia—distinct from any community in England—and warns his colonists of the moral pressures that accompany this status, not least the "wrathe" of God. The colony shall be "knitt together in this work as one man." Echoing Christ's Sermon on the Mount, he ends the sermon by calling the colony a "**citty** upon the hill," meaning that they will be setting moral example for the whole world.

CHARACTERS

John Winthrop – The speaker of "A Model of Christian Charity," John Winthrop was a lay preacher and the governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. In his liberal use of the plural pronoun "we," Winthrop includes himself in the group of colonists to whom he addresses his moral concerns and civic hopes. But even as their elected leader (and soon to be responsible for making and enforcing their laws), he is reluctant to interject himself into the sermon with the pointed and singular "I." He usually reserves this interjection for rhetorical reasons, for instance asking "I would know of [misers] […] whether they hold that to be Gospell." By avoiding too central a presence in the sermon, Winthrop absorbs himself into the masses, giving the impression that his colonists should be devoid of hierarchy and truly "of one body." This aligns with his message that the colonists need to be rooted in brotherly love, interdependence, and a firm sense of community for their colonial project to work.

Colonists – As a treatise on society and universal morals, "A Model of Christian Charity" does not contain characters, per se. But it is important to note the addressees of Winthrop's sermon: a group of over 700 colonists about to uproot in England and start new lives in the Massachusetts Bay Colony. Most sermons of this period adopt a universal human "we"—unpacking the Bible and making moral prescriptions with all of humanity in mind—but Winthrop addresses only his colonists. He never intended to publish this sermon, as many writers of his era would have done. Winthrop wrote the sermon to motivate his group on the eve of their momentous departure, so his prescriptions about brotherly love, communal living, and interdependence—while universal—are intended solely for them. It is worth keeping this in mind with respect to Winthrop's first-person pronouns. The first half of the sermon shows him making many universal claims about the way humans depend on each other through a bond of love ("There are two rules whereby wee are to walke one towards another: Justice and Mercy"), while in the last section, the "applicacion of this discourse," Winthrop directs his foregoing arguments solely to the colonists in whom he hopes to instill a spirit of communal optimism: "wee must love brotherly without dissimulation, wee must love one another with a pure hearte fervently wee must beare one anothers burthens […]." In this transition from an abstract, universal "we" to a personal "we," Winthrop weaves his group of colonists into the sermon itself and makes his urgings about love all the more urgent.

TERMS

Mercy – A crucial concept to **Winthrop**'s political philosophy, mercy is the attitude of human compassion that moves all acts of charity. Without it, humans are selfish and society barbaric. Winthrop defines this term at the outset and uses it throughout the sermon. It is important not only as a motive of compassion but also as a symptom of brotherly love: when imbued with love for one's neighbor, mercy naturally kicks in when this neighbor is need, thereby prompting one's help. This is the ideal chain of response in the society Winthrop envisions.

Liberallity – "Liberallity" is **Winthrop**'s term for charitable giving, the happy material consequence of the feeling of mercy. He introduces this term in his discussion of mercy. He does not define it exactly—instead leaving it open to a wide range of material interpretations, like giving to the poor, healing the sick, or supporting the weak.

Justice – Supplementing mercy, the internal impulse all humans have to act charitably, justice refers to the external law. **Winthrop** uses the word interchangeably to indicate both civic and scriptural law, though he particularly focuses on the latter. Although the emphasis of his sermon is on cultivating an inner sense of love and mercy, Winthrop admits that any good society needs laws and that any good Christian needs moral guidance from the Bible.

Regeneracy – **Winthrop** uses this word—literally meaning "born again"—to indicate a state of godliness in people, a sort of chapter break in one's life after the acceptance of Christ. Throughout the sermon, Winthrop refers to Christians as "the regenerate," in contrast to "the wicked." God inspires the "regenerate," for instance, in order to set an example of "love mercy, gentlenes, temperance etc."

To lay upp – This is **Winthrop**'s slang for "to hoard." The language would have been well known to readers of the Book of Matthew: "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth […]" (6:19). Though Winthrop admits that saving has its virtues, this term is often a derogatory one for him. Misers, those who worry about "layeing up for time to come," inadvertently keep their neighbors in need, which is a social crime in Winthrop's philosophy of brotherly love.

THEMES

In LitCharts literature guides, each theme gets its own color-coded icon. These icons make it easy to track where the themes

occur most prominently throughout the work. If you don't have a color printer, you can still use the icons to track themes in black and white.

INEQUALITY AND LOVE

Inequality is everywhere. But for John Winthrop, lay preacher and governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, this unhappy fact is something to be embraced, not fixed. Rallying his group of early colonists to New England in the inspirational sermon "A Model of Christian Charity," Winthrop argues that the infinite differences among people should be seen as evidence of God's multifaceted power. These differences mean that people must depend upon each other rather than solely on themselves: rich depend upon poor, weak upon strong, and vice versa. Seen this way, rampant disparities in things like material wealth, physical ability, social rank, and opportunity—harsh realities for which Winthrop's colonists were about to swap the comforts of England—are in fact part of God's plan. In his sermon, Winthrop ultimately argues that this God-given disparity, and the interdependence it fosters among people, provides a platform for people to show one another brotherly love, which Winthrop suggests is the antidote to the hardships of life.

Winthrop sets out to comfort his auditors, who are on their way to an inhospitable new continent, by explaining that inequality is part of God's plan and, thus, must be lived with in harmony. Winthrop lays out three reasons for inequality. First, inequality reflects the variety of God's creation. If everyone were the same, that would not do justice to God's power to create an infinite array of strengths and weaknesses. And because everyone is so different from one another, this allows God to "have many stewards" through which to share the Gospel and spread God's gifts. Second, God has placed people in different stations of life so that the Gospel might reach them in different ways. Again, this calculated variation is a testament to God's power. Winthrop expands at length on the third reason: God has imbued humans with differences of power and ability so that they may discover a happy dependence on each other, rather than a cloistered reliance on themselves alone. The communal bent of this conclusion prepares his audience for his thoughts on how a community ought to use mutual dependence to coexist peacefully.

Winthrop calls the ideal form of this dependence "brotherly affection," and he explores it as an antidote to the inequalities of colonial life. Inequality, Winthrop explains, is what allows people to "have need of [each] other," and this interdependence is what "**knitt**[s] [people] more nearly together in the bond of brotherly affection." In other words, inequality forces individual people to depend on one another for support, binding people together like disparate strands of yarn knit together to form something bigger and stronger. Winthrop highlights how if they fail to treat one another with brotherly love, their colonial project will be a "shipwrake." For God-given inequality to be fruitful, they must be "knitt together in this worke as one man," like different body parts joining together to form one human being. Referencing the Book of Micah, Winthrop urges his listeners "to doe justly, to love mercy, [and] to walk humbly," setting up his argument for how they can actually achieve a culture of brotherly love in practice. In these metaphors of yarn and the **human body**, Winthrop asserts that love will allow seemingly unjust levels of disparity to be used for good, rather than a source of conflict.

Winthrop discusses "mercy" (kindness) "liberallity" (generosity) and "justice" (civic laws) as practical forms of this mutual dependence. These terms essentially boil down to charity—a word he strangely does not use, given its placement in the title. Giving money to the less fortunate, helping one's neighbors, not hoarding (or "lay[ing] upp") wealth for oneself: these are material forms of brotherly love and are essential to a functioning society. Just as Winthrop has argued that social inequality is part of the natural order, he now argues that the compulsion toward mercy and liberality also naturally occurs. This compulsion must simply be understood in order to produce the society of brotherly love he so advocates.

The emotions that naturally give rise to mercy and liberality are "sympathy" and "sensibleness": generally, a basic human sensitivity to the plight of others. Winthrop uses several tactics to show the way humans naturally work together. He translates a common Latin aphorism as "like will to like," meaning that humans are instinctively sympathetic toward one another. And he uses symbols such as **clockwork** and the human body to illustrate the motives of love behind mercy and liberality. In the former image, the clock is able to strike the hour only when wound by the "first mover" of kinetic energy. In the latter, different organs and bones "mutually participate" as one seamless body when united by "a bond, or ligament." Throughout the sermon, the clock's "first mover" and the body's "ligaments" represent the innate psychological connection from which all charitable action spring. Winthrop uses these images to advocate the basic psychological disposition for humans to congregate and help one another. By stressing the natural occurrence of these two poles of life—hardship and love—Winthrop argues that they are inseparable and that mankind's naturally occurring fund of love must be used as a defense against the unavoidable miseries of life.

It is important to remember the circumstances behind Winthrop's urging of brotherly love. His urging might have less to do with mere friendship than it seems, and more to do with ensuring the smooth "cohabitation and consorteshipp under a due forme of government both civill and ecclesiastical." His group of colonists is about to abandon their lives in England, make an arduous voyage, and brave hostile conditions in a new land to set the first example of Puritan utopia. Winthrop

reminds them that "we shall be as a **citty upon a hill**," suggesting that the whole world will take note of its trial. So the stakes are high for this group: not just because of the world's social pressures on them to succeed, but also, as Winthrop later details, because God's displeasure hangs in the balance.

POSSESSION AND SELFLESSNESS

In his sermon "A Model of Christian Charity," John Winthrop sketches a rough utopian communism based on love and mutual dependence, one free from private property, devoid of personal investment, and abundant in public charity. To achieve this communism would require a selflessness most readers likely find impossible. In order to convince his original audience as they enter a trying new life in the Massachusetts Bay Colony, Winthrop, a firm Puritan, models his arguments on Protestant conceptions of the self. These Protestant conceptions assume that humans are nothing without God and that everything on Earth is on loan from him. From these considerations, Winthrop argues that charitable selflessness—much like God's charity in bestowing gifts and plenty—is the godliest life.

Winthrop admits that it is a very natural human impulse to claim ownership, count oneself special, and feel worthy of one's lot in life. At the beginning of his sermon, Winthrop makes it clear that certain unavoidable factors position people to feel greater than others. One person has money, for instance, while another is poor; one has talents while another does not. These are basic facts of life. He goes on to describe man's selfish instinct: "every man is borne with this principle in him, to love and seek himself onely." This selfishness, suggests Winthrop, is a widespread, innate, and natural feeling. He spends several pages addressing commonly held desires to "lay upp"—that is, to stockpile—one's earnings for one's own use. Again, in devoting so much space to selfish urges, he acknowledges their frequency.

All the while, Winthrop has been carefully sketching his view of material existence as a temporary loan from God, a view that will soon help him refute the instinct toward selfishness. Winthrop describes all material wealth as a "guift" (gift). This is a very telling word choice, as a gift is something given voluntarily, not at all something earned or deserved. He might well have used the word "earning" or "prize"—words that can reasonably retain the Protestant value of hard work. Instead, he uses the word "gift" in order to express God's temporary attitude toward the material world and toward excessive wealth especially. He states that "God still reserves the propperty of these guifts to himself," quoting several lines of scripture from Ezekiel and Proverbs in defense of this view. Winthrop suggests that men (or people more generally—Winthrop's male-centric perspective is a product of his time and place) ought not to "say that that which he possessed was his owne." His language here goes even further than the gift metaphor, since a gift, once accepted, might be said to belong to the recipient. Instead, people have no right to claim such belongings; in suggesting this total lack of ownership, Winthrop asks his audience to think of the entire material world as a loan.

Even though Winthrop acknowledges that the human impulse towards selfishness is common and perhaps even expected, he demands that humans overcome it. To do this, he draws on his account of God's temporary attitude toward the material world. Continuing the rhetoric of ownership and possession, Winthrop turns to the topic of lending, emphasizing that the Massachusetts Bay colonists ought to lend to each other whenever possible. What's more, one's duty to lend is even greater if "there be a danger of looseing it," if reimbursement is unlikely, since this indicates the desperation of the borrower. With references to Christ's sermon on the mount—thus positioning himself alongside Jesus' irrefutable word—the metaphor here, of lending and community, suggests that the colonists ought to view personal wealth the way God does, as temporary, dispensable, and useful insofar as it can help others. Winthrop makes further comparisons to the possession-less ethos of "the primitive churche." This reference to the "primitive" is not derogatory; instead it draws on the popular Protestant conception that the very first followers of Christ had the purest understanding of his teachings, untainted by the Catholic Church's later reforms. He also cites the Waldenses, a group of early church reformers, in urging that "the care of the publique must oversway all private respects." Scripture, continues Winthrop, not only advocates selflessness; it punishes the opposite. As the Book of Corinthians states, "He that soweth spareingly shall reape spareingly." This argument demands a renunciation of the private self as distinct from the rest of humanity.

Winthrop deepens his argument for selflessness by suggesting that all humans—deriving from the same ancestors in Adam and Eve, and before that originating in the same godly act of creation—are most logically viewed as one collective **body**. It follows, then, that the pain of one person ought to be felt by all. As he closes his sermon, Winthrop urges his listeners to let go of their human impulses towards selfishness, ownership, and possession, for if their colonial project is to work—and if they are to live as God commands—"we must be **knit** together in this worke as one man."

INSTINCT, LAW, AND SCRIPTURE

John Winthrop's "Model of Christian Charity" is remarkably free from the fear-mongering and moral injunctions typically associated with early American Puritanism. Though a short passage on God's "wrath" comes near the end, Winthrop's pressing insistence throughout the sermon is on "brotherly love," "affection," and "sympathy." He does not define laws in the vein of the Ten Commandments,

nor does he define the exact rules of a model Protestant community. Winthrop's love and affection are abstract psychological concepts, and his arguments about them—that people ought to listen to their innate impulses to charity—rely above all on human intuition. Winthrop implicitly suggests that though Scripture, laws, and rules certainly have their place in Christianity, Christians should also let their natural inclinations to be loving and charitable guide their behavior.

Much of what Winthrop urges is a sensitivity to innate human feelings—an urging that will develop into his insistence that Christians can derive instruction from their own feelings, not just from scripture. Brotherly love, argues Winthrop, is something all humans are born with. To overcome selfishness and hardship is just a matter of listening to one's instincts. Winthrop spends a good deal of time exploring subtle psychological instincts that constitute this "bond of love," like "sympathy," "sensibleness," and "mercy"—all instincts that rely on human connections and experience. He infers from these instincts certain important moral attitudes, namely that humans want innately to be together and to cooperate. For instance, he states that "Nothing yields more pleasure and content to the soule then when it findes that which it may love fervently." From here, he concludes that in the happiness occasioned by the company of others, people can allow love to rule them. After "these affeccions of love in the heart" are discovered, they "natively bring forth" charity, "liberallity," and mercy—essential components of communal life. This exploration of human psychology is quite radical for a sermon of the time, when most Puritans would not have ventured beyond the Bible to back up their claims. Winthrop does quote the Bible a lot, but he also makes important observations from common sense and life experience to convince his company that love forms the basis of a good society. Much of Winthrop's sermon describes the way humans can operate if they so choose, rather than prescribing the exact ways in which humans must behave. Rather than laying ground rules for their new community, Winthrop hopes to instill in his colonists a sensitivity that will let them coexist peacefully on their own.

The opening of Winthrop's sermon helps communicate this moral intuition. Rather than a traditional sermon opening, with a biblical quote, Winthrop merely observes a state of affairs in the world: the social inequality inherent to social life. From the beginning, then, he asks his auditors to rely on their own experience in corroborating his claims. To open on a note of human experience and observation sets the tone for the type of moral life he will describe, and the ways in which he will describe it. The public nature of this observation—a general truth about social life—also fits the communal tenor of a sermon written to inaugurate the founding of a new society.

Once Winthrop has launched into his arguments about love and human connection, the types of evidence he uses reflect his stress on moral intuition, suggesting that Christians ought to cultivate and follow their innate moral compasses rather than solely obey law and scripture. Though, like any sermon of the time, Winthrop uses many quotes from the Bible, he relies heavily on the four Gospels, a series of books that center on the exemplary life of one man, Christ. He mines this biographical material for "patterns," much in the way one would draw from literature to support an argument. Winthrop also makes many appeals to symbols, metaphors, and common sense, most notably in his citation of the Latin adage *simile simili gaudet* (literally, "like rejoices in like"). The use of classical literature as morally exemplary was not as widespread as it is today, especially not in Puritanical circles. And by calling this quote a "maxime of philosophy," Winthrop was making a very clear distinction as to what kind of evidence he deemed worthy of moral use. His most likely source for this quote was Erasmus' anthology of classical quotes, one of the foundational works of humanist scholarship—that is, scholarship that drew explicitly from Roman and Greek writers, rather than the Bible. That he alludes to a famous humanist scholar in his argument about humans' psychological disposition towards one another suggests that he found the broader world of history, classics, and literature valuable to the Christian moral life.

Winthrop's appeals to human experience, common sense, personal emotional life, and the classical world all emphasize a very clear moral stance: that the personal quest for moral knowledge does not take place entirely in the Bible. One can find moral knowledge in the broader range of human experience. This message, reflected by the types of evidence Winthrop uses, helps him to communicate his message that brotherly love and communal peace are well within the grasp of his nervous colonists on the eve of their departure.

SYMBOLS

Symbols appear in **teal text** throughout the Summary and Analysis sections of this LitChart.

THE HUMAN BODY

For Winthrop, the human body is a convenient way to think about the unity and interdependence of humanity. Just as the body's disparate organs and tissues are joined by "ligaments" into one organism, so too are disparate persons joined together by "the bond of brotherly affeccion," or "the bond of love," into a functioning and compassionate society. Winthrop uses this metaphor several times throughout his sermon to emphasize the organic ease with which love unifies people, encouraging the colonists to work together in their new society and not to attempt an opportunistic self-reliance. The body image becomes doubly significant when Winthrop mentions the body of Christ, the original symbolic embodiment of all mankind.

KNITTING

The action of knitting is another one of Winthrop's preferred symbols for the bonds of social life. Throughout his sermon, Winthrop uses the image of fabric—a strong material composed of disparate weak elements, or threads—to illustrate the interdependence of humanity. For a double rhetorical effect, he often couples his knitting language with the image of the **human body**: "There is noe body but consistes of partes and that which knitts these partes together gives the body its perfection […]." As with the body imagery, Winthrop's central message is that the invisible power of love is essential to communal life. In this crafty play on words, Winthrop suggests not only that every "body" of people (i.e., every society) consists of its individual members, but also that every human "body" (i.e., every singular human being) is never entirely alone—everyone "consistes of partes" and is dependent on others. He ties together this body analogy with the crucial verb "to knit." This mixed metaphor suggests a strong, organic fabric of many different living fibers—one durable piece and yet disparately composed. This is a perfect image for the society he envisions in the intimidating and geographically isolated Massachusetts Bay Colony which his audience was about to inhabit.

CLOCKS

Just as the **human body** helps Winthrop convey a sense of social connectedness, the image of a clock helps him convey the invisible yet omnipotent power of love. Winthrop uses this symbol in his section on mercy, the attitude that moves people into necessary acts of charity. To act mercifully is indeed "gods lawe," but people cannot produce such a deep-set compassion by mere "force of argument"; rather, people must discover this sense of mercy through their own experience of social love as "a habit in the soule." Once activated by "love in the heart," people come by mercy naturally. To illustrate this causal relation of love to mercy, Winthrop draws on the image of a clock activated by kinetic energy. Once wound, and imbued with this energy, the clock will strike its own bell repeatedly; so too do humans act charitably when spurred by an innate sense of love.

CITY ON A HILL

Winthrop's most famous quote—"for wee must consider that wee shall be as a citty upon a hill"—uses a topographical symbol, the city on a hill, to illustrate the enormous historical pressures his colonists face in their experiment of Puritan utopia. A high point on a hill is visible from miles around; the image suggests that "the eies of all people are upon us." One misstep in their godly agenda, and everyone will know. Winthrop is notoriously scarce on practical details in his sermon. He doesn't mention what life will look like when his group arrives in New England—only that this life will be hard. So it's telling that his only physical description of the place is metaphorical and not literally accurate. Taking extra gravitas from its origin in Christ's Sermon on the Mount—"A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid" (Matthew 5:14)—Winthrop's symbol serves to heighten the drama of their mission.

QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Dover Thrift Editions edition of *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God and Other Puritan Sermons* published in 2005.

A Model of Christian Charity Quotes

God almightie in his most holy and wise providence hath soe disposed of the condicion of mankinde, as in all times some must be rich some poore, some highe and eminent in power and dignitie; others meane and in subjeccion.

Related Characters: John Winthrop (speaker), Colonists

Related Themes:

Page Number: 53

Explanation and Analysis

Winthrop's introduction is noteworthy in that it does not take a passage from the Bible; instead, he opens his sermon with an observation from everyday life: some people have a lot, some have a little, whether that's in terms of money, power, or strength. These opening lines reveal the sermon's key theme; having been to many sermons in their lives, the colonists in his audience would have known that the sermon to come would explain this topic and unpack it. In beginning with this keen observation about life's inequality, Winthrop acknowledges to his colonists that the life ahead of them in a strange wilderness will be very difficult, and that the social life they are about to share will not be without its inequality and pain. Knowing this already, his audience would have sat up and listened to such an introduction, and would have been primed for the rest.

It's also important that Winthrop immediately establishes that disparity is sanctioned by God—it's not a mistake that "some [people are] highe and eminent in power and dignitie" while others are essentially powerless. With this claim—and the ensuing arguments he lays out for why God "hath soe disposed of the condicion of mankinde"—Winthrop encourages the colonists to *lean into* inequality and see it as

fruitful and necessary rather than a point of pain.

> *Thirdly*, That every man might have need of other, and from hence they might be all knitt more nearly together in the bond of brotherly affeccion [...].

Related Characters: John Winthrop (speaker), Colonists

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 54

Explanation and Analysis

This sentence introduces Winthrop's third reason for why God has allowed social life to be plagued by inequality: if humans are all different, they can then realize that they need each other, rather than trying to live isolated lives apart from the herd. This is Winthrop's sermon in a nutshell: a strong community is an interdependent one, rooted in compassion and love. He will spend the next 11 pages trying to convince his colonists that although life is painful and unfair, they must learn to need each other and to live in harmony. He introduces "knitting" as a symbol for this social harmony—the weaving together of individual parts into a durable whole, like different strands of yarn knit together to form a scarf. He also introduces "brotherly affeccion," a feeling he will later dub "love," which he will argue is the driving force of an ideal society.

> There are two rules whereby wee are to walke one towards another: JUSTICE and MERCY.

Related Characters: John Winthrop (speaker), Colonists

Related Themes:

Page Number: 54

Explanation and Analysis

Winthrop is here explaining how social extremes—rich and poor, strong and weak, healthy and sick—can live together in one community. Justice and mercy, he says, are the two ways that social extremes can coexist harmoniously. These two terms are central to Winthrop's sermon. Justice is the law: God's law as well as civic law. And mercy is one's conscience to help others; it comes from within and must be cultivated personally. In the sermon to follow, Winthrop urges his colonists to combine the two, to pay attention to the Bible but, perhaps more importantly, to internalize the teachings of Christ so that one's habits resemble his selfless behavior. Mercy, Winthrop goes on to say, is the feeling responsible for all charitable giving.

> [...] but, if his meanes of repayeing thee be onely probably or possible then is hee an object of thy mercy though must lend him, though there be danger of looseing it [...].

Related Characters: John Winthrop (speaker), Colonists

Related Themes:

Page Number: 57

Explanation and Analysis

This is one example of the extremes to which Winthrop urges his colonists: not only does he expect them to lend to each other; he expects them to lend even when repayment isn't likely. Such a drastic need of a loan, for Winthrop, signifies extreme desperation in one's neighbor, and it must be heeded as a moral imperative. This command comes from Winthrop's Protestant view of humanity as not literally in possession of its wealth; if humans exist only by the grace of God, then surely everything enjoyed on Earth is merely a gift from God, and is therefore not at all a personal belonging. For Winthrop, this is the way people ought to think about money and things: almost solely with regard to the needs of others.

> [...] as when wee bid one make the clocke strike he doth not lay hand on the hammer which is the immediate instrument of the sound but setts on worke the first mover or maine wheele, knoweing that will certainely produce the sound which hee intends; soe the way to drawe men to the works of mercy is not by force of argument from the goodness or necessity of the worke [...].

Related Characters: John Winthrop (speaker), Colonists

Related Themes:

Page Number: 58

Explanation and Analysis

One of Winthrop's more memorable symbols, the clock appears throughout the sermon to symbolize the invisible force of love in all humanity. Just as one winds kinetic energy into the gears of a clock, love prompts people to act mercifully and charitably. Instead of being told again and again to be kind to one another—instead of the "force of argument"—humans cultivate an inner sense of camaraderie and affection for each other, and this impels them to coexist peacefully. The "sound" produced by the hammer on the bell corresponds to the charitable act; the "first mover" of the clock's kinetic system corresponds to brotherly love. The clock metaphor, in this way, is essential to Winthrop's message about internalizing moral behavior, rather than simply obeying external laws from society or the Bible.

❝ […] love is the bond of perfection. First it is a bond, or ligament. […] it makes the worke perfect. There is noe body but consists of partes and that which knitts these partes together gives the body its perfeccion, because it makes eache parte soe contiguous to other as thereby they doe mutually participate with eache other, both in strength and infirmity in pleasure and paine, to instance in the most perfect of all bodies, Christ and his church make one body […].

Related Characters: John Winthrop (speaker), Colonists

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 58-59

Explanation and Analysis

Following Winthrop's clock metaphor, the image of the human body and the action of knitting illustrate the unity Winthrop hopes to instill in his audience before they start a new society in Massachusetts. As a "bond," love unites things. As a bond "of perfection," it makes imperfect things (i.e., incomplete things) perfect, complete, or entire. This is what ligaments do: they unite individual organs with bones and tissues into one complete body. Likewise, fabric, a complete and durable material, is "knitt" or woven from weak, individual threads. Bodies act autonomously and harmoniously; fabric, an assemblage of threads, behaves like a solid material. This is the type of thinking Winthrop hopes his colonists will adopt as they start their new colony: strength in numbers and seamless collaboration enabled by the mutual bond of love.

It is important that Winthrop's central symbols—fabric and the body, as well as the clock—are composed of individual smaller elements. These elements—threads, organs, and cogs—are useless on their own. Only in concert do they serve a purpose; so it is, for Winthrop, with humans in a godly community.

❝ […] simile simili gaudet […].

Related Characters: John Winthrop (speaker), Colonists

Related Themes:

Page Number: 60

Explanation and Analysis

This Latin phrase translates as "similar things rejoice in one another." The colloquial equivalent in English is "Birds of a feather flock together." Winthrop uses it in his argument that community, brotherly love, and social life come naturally to the human disposition. He argues that people are naturally attracted to one another—that they naturally "rejoice" in each other—because they are alike. As creatures, humans like things that resemble themselves, so they turn to one another.

It may seem like a stale saying, but the fact that Winthrop uses it in a Christian sermon is significant. The adage originates in classical Roman literature and in Winthrop's time was most recently discussed in a non-Christian context, by the classical scholar Erasmus of Rotterdam. As a sermon, Winthrop's script would have been expected to stick to the Bible; instead, he pulls in a non-biblical source from antiquity to develop his argument about love. This move, though subtle, suggests a radical moral stance; his colonists can find moral truths not just in the Bible but also in their life experience, their leisure reading, and their self-observation. This would have encouraged them to rely on their own inner moral compasses, rather than reverting to the Bible for their lives' every moral choice.

❝ Now when the soule which is of a sociable nature findes any thing like to it selfe. It is like Adam when Eve was brought to him, shee must have it one with herselfe this is fleshe of my fleshe (saith shee) and bone of my bone shee conceives a greate delighte in it, therefore shee desires nearness and familiarity with it […].

Related Characters: John Winthrop (speaker), Colonists

Related Themes:

Page Number: 61

Explanation and Analysis

To supplement his adage from Erasmus, Winthrop connects his argument about humans' natural affinity for one another to the Bible. Adam and Eve, the first humans, appear in the Book of Genesis; the creation of Eve from Adam's rib (Genesis 2:21-25) is a monumental event, and the first moment of human bonding in the Christian creation story. (Also, the primal creation of one human from the "bone" of another fits nicely with Winthrop's view of humanity as united by the same spiritual body.)

Eve takes "delighte in" Adam, says Winthrop, because he resembles her. But his interpretation is a creative one, as Eve never actually voices her opinion of Adam in Genesis. Adam, not Eve, is in fact the speaker of "bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh"; the only sight about which Eve expresses pleasure is the apple on the Tree of Knowledge. Winthrop is retelling the story not for accuracy but to serve as an allegory for human sympathy and recognition. He would not be the last to do so. Later in the 1600s, Milton would retell Eve's story in *Paradise Lost*, Book IV; when Milton's Eve is brought into the world, she catches her reflection in a pool and, like Narcissus in Greek mythology, falls in love first with herself. Only after a great effort can she convert this self-love into an interpersonal one for her husband, Adam. The similarity in Winthrop's and Milton's glimpses of the original human sympathy illuminates for the modern reader the Puritan account of love as well as the ways in which historical writers adapted the Bible to support their own arguments.

> In such cases as this the care of the publique must oversway all private respects, by which not onely conscience but meare civill pollicy doth binde us; for it is a true rule that perticuler estates cannott subsist in the ruine of the publique.

Related Characters: John Winthrop (speaker), Colonists

Related Themes:

Page Number: 63

Explanation and Analysis

In this last section of the sermon, Winthrop draws himself into the first-person plural "we," applying his foregoing arguments about love and community to the community they will all soon inhabit. Here he restates the necessary subjection of the individual ("private" and "perticuler") to the communal ("publique"). Echoing his introduction about "justice" and "mercy," public or collective concerns flourish, he says, in two ways: via "conscience" and "meare civill pollicy." Conscience, again, encompasses each individual's internal motives of love, sympathy, and mercy; it must be cultivated personally, with life experience and self-observation as well as with the Bible. "Civill pollicy"—or laws—are also important, he says, but his adjective "meare" (mere) is pejorative. Recalling the uselessness of the "force of argument" in making a clock strike the hour, this adjective belittles the power of laws. Infinitely stronger, for Winthrop, is the internal moral compass each human cultivates in life. Without this element of brotherly love, to which he has devoted his sermon, a society cannot function.

> [...] in this duty of love wee must love brotherly without dissimulation, wee must love one another with a pure hearte fervently wee must beare one anothers burthens, wee must not looke onley on our owne things, but allsoe on the things of our brethren [...] wee must entertain each other in brotherly affeccion, wee must be willing to abridge our selves of our superfluities, commerce together in all meekenes, gentleness, patience and liberallity, wee must delight in eache other, make others condicions and our owne rejoyce together, mourne together, labour, and suffer together [...].

Related Characters: John Winthrop (speaker), Colonists

Related Themes:

Page Number: 63-64

Explanation and Analysis

In the final pages of his sermon, Winthrop is in full rhetorical force. He uses anaphora (the repeated beginning of successive clauses) to heighten the sense of unity among himself and his audience. Again and again, the pronoun "we" drills the repeated sense that his colonists (Winthrop included) belong together, not separately. This repetition also linguistically reflects his argument about unity, that no human is alone in the metaphorical body of a community (of Massachusetts Bay) or the spiritual body of Christ (which unites England with its faraway satellite colonies).

This theme of unity and collective embodiment is also the substance—as well as the structure—of this long list of

urgings: to "beare one anothers burthens" and to "make others condicions and our owne rejoyce together." He chooses his language to echo his previous words; "delight" recalls his interpretation of Eve and Adam, while "rejoice" might bring to mind the typical translation of "*gaudet*," a word he earlier borrowed from Erasmus to describe sympathy. Close readers of the Bible would also have drawn comparisons to one of the most famous anaphors ever composed, Ecclesiastes 3: "To every thing there is a season." That chapter uses the verbs "to mourn," "to rejoice," "to labour," and "to love" in powerful repetitions about life's changes. Throughout, Winthrop has repurposed sections of the Bible to give his words a certain godly dignity; this passage is no exception.

❝ […] for wee must consider that wee shall be as a citty upon a hill, the eies of all people are upon us; soe that if wee shall deale falsely with our god in this worke wee have undertaken and soe cause him to withdrawe his present help from us, wee shall be made a story and a by-word thought the world […].

Related Characters: John Winthrop (speaker), Colonists

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 64

Explanation and Analysis

Winthrop ends on the sermon on these words, which became his most famous by far. The "citty upon a hill" line has been invoked by several American presidents to celebrate the uniqueness of the American experiment and, in some cases, to justify American exceptionalism, a political view that suggests America ought to be the world's political example. The quote's context, however, is less political and far more religious; Winthrop's primary motive is a fear of God's wrath. Should his Puritan utopia collapse, the uniqueness of their colony will have ensured the attention of the whole world. God's workers—which is how Winthrop views his group—will have failed God in the public spotlight. The punishment for this is far greater than for an obscure private failure in the English countryside. So Winthrop crafts a dramatic metaphorical image to illustrate the moral stakes. It is not entirely his, however; in Matthew 5:14, Christ tells his followers, "Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid." So once again, Winthrop has repurposed the familiar language of the Bible. In doing so, he aligns his sermon with that of Christ himself and allows a figurative metaphor—an imaginary mountaintop—to represent the colonists' very serious geopolitical mission: to set an example to the world of Puritanical belief.

SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

The color-coded icons under each analysis entry make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. Each icon corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section of this LitChart.

A MODEL OF CHRISTIAN CHARITY

An epigraph at the top of the page notes that Winthrop penned this sermon while he and his fellow colonists were aboard the *Arabella* en route to New England from Great Britain in the year 1630.

Much of Winthrop's sermon centers around life's difficulty and inequality, which would have resonated with his audience of Puritan colonists on the eve of a very difficult relocation to a fledgling society. Their beliefs had been maligned by the established government, and their only way out—a relocation across the Atlantic—was going to be extremely difficult.

Winthrop then introduces his sermon with an observation: God has created a world in which some people are rich while others are poor, and some are powerful while others are lowly and weak.

Almost all sermons open on a section of the Bible—Jonathan Edwards's "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God" is a good example. Bucking this tradition, Winthrop opens with a simple observation: life is unfair and inequality is everywhere. This is a strongly Protestant way of preaching; it suggests that anyone can arrive at moral truths not just by reading the official sacred text (the Bible) but also by simply observing the world around them.

Winthrop does not demarcate sections in his sermon, but his argument naturally unfolds in five parts. In the first of these, Winthrop unpacks his observation about social inequality, addressing the question of how a loving God could allow pain in the world. Winthrop offers three reasons why God has created inequality. One is that the variety inherent in disparity (that people are rich or poor, strong or weak, etc.) accurately reflects the breadth of his creation.

For Winthrop, inequality is part of God's plan—it's something to be embraced, not overcome. In theological terms, the attempt to explain how a loving God can allow evil in the world is called "theodicy." Many great works of literature are also works of theodicy; some 40 years after Winthrop, John Milton's Paradise Lost would also "justify the ways of God to man." Winthrop's first justification suggests that the many different stations of humanity prove God's infinite power.

Another reason is that, since everyone is so different, God can enter their lives in equally different ways, which is further proof of his variety and greatness. The third—and most important—reason that God has placed people in such different fortunes is so that they might discover a need for one another. This need, says Winthrop, is the unifying "bond of brotherly affeccion."

Winthrop suggests that inequality proves God's love, since it allows God to change one life differently from another. By establishing God's power and love, Winthrop reasons that inequality is an unavoidable and essential element of life. So if it can't be avoided, it must be embraced. This factual foundation clears the way for Winthrop's third reason: that inequality exists so people can rely on each other. This marriage of inequality and "brotherly affeccion"—which he later calls love—provides the main thesis for his sermon. Eager for the Massachusetts Bay Colony to run like a well-oiled machine, he has calculated this message to inspire his audience into a happy coexistence.

Expanding on his third reason, Winthrop outlines two necessary means by which the "poor" and the "rich" uphold lasting "brotherly affeccion": justice and mercy. These terms, says Winthrop, represent the laws of "nature" and of "grace," respectively, "the morrall lawe or the lawe of the gospel." The law of nature, says Winthrop, applies to humans "in the estate of innocency," while the law of grace to humans "in the estate of regeneracy." He twice quotes Christ's Sermon on the Mount to illustrate the social compassion represented by mercy: namely, "Whatsoever ye would that men should doe to you."

Here, Winthrop explains how love unites humans in a society. He introduces the concept of mercy. which is the impulse that moves humans to act compassionately towards one another, to give, and to help their neighbors. Coupled with mercy is justice, which loosely corresponds to the laws dictated by the Bible and by society. Winthrop's distinction here—between people's intrinsic ability to act morally (mercy), and the extrinsic laws enforced upon them (justice)—suggests the heavy emphasis he places on human's inner decision making. What kind of Christian acts moral only when scared of getting in trouble? Instead, people must absorb Christian teachings into their private habits. He stresses this inner motivation throughout the sermon, urging his colonists to cultivate their own moral compasses while living in Massachusetts, rather than relying entirely on the laws of the Bible.

In his second section, Winthrop describes the kind of behavior mercy inspires in those who feel it. It asks people to give, to lend, and to forgive. Winthrop gives his audience six important practical considerations for a merciful life in society. These have to do with "liberallity" (giving money or goods) or lending. The first consideration is that people ought to give charitably whenever possible. However, as Winthrop adds in his second consideration, the needs of one's family come first. Third, citing Christ's Sermon again ("Lay not upp for yourselves treasures upon earth"), Winthrop advises against "layeing upp," or stockpiling wealth, because such hoarding neglects the present needs of others.

Winthrop keeps his definition of mercy vague to enable the broadest possible moral interpretation. But it's clear from his discussion of lending that he has financial charity in mind—giving money to those in need. Probably this financial element is in part a reaction against his job as middle-class landlord in rural England (despite the sermon, Winthrop was never a churchman); throughout the early 1600s, the countryside was changing, capitalism was growing, and Winthrop would have seen new pressures on landlords like himself to hike rent and evict rural tenants in favor of grazing fields, a lucrative but ruthless agricultural transformation called "enclosure."

Winthrop's fourth consideration is that giving is particularly necessary when the borrower cannot repay the debt, as this signifies great need. Fifth, with reference to Christ's Golden Rule ("Whatsoever ye would that men should doe to you doe ye the same to them allsoe"), Winthrop urges regular forgiveness of debts incurred even through business.

Winthrop's pseudo-communistic urging to give "liberally" with no worry of repayment is profoundly uncapitalistic; it stands in stark contrast to the prevailing economic attitudes of the time, and it speaks volumes to the selflessness of the society he envisions in Massachusetts.

Winthrop's last consideration for the merciful life explains why he urges his audience to give so much "with more enlargement towards others and lesse respect for our selves." He claims no one truly owns "that which he possessed," reminding his audience that the ancient "primitive churche" adopted a communistic view of worldly possessions without ownership.

Here, Winthrop explains that his reasoning for such selfless liberality is a Protestant conception of humans as nothing before God, as unworthy of possessions, and therefore as unentitled to regard the material world as truly their own. In order to emphasize the purity of his colonists' religious views, he makes reference to early Christians who followed Christ's teachings before the Catholic Church introduced its many rituals and scriptural interpretations.

Winthrop's third section probes the feeling behind mercy: brotherly affection, or love. Just as a **clock**, once wound, strikes the hour on its own, humans act mercifully to each other when "love [is] in the heart." Love, says Winthrop, must be felt intuitively (i.e., "not by force of argument," law, or scripture) in order to inspire action. But once truly felt, love will "natively bring forthe" mercy and liberality, "as any cause doth produce the effect."

"Love"—the essential theme of the sermon—is front and center here. In this passage and the one to follow, Winthrop uses three distinct images to illustrate humanity's unity and the love with which the colonists ought to treat one another, starting here with the image of clockwork and then moving into the image of the human body and the knitting of fabric. It is not these items themselves that are important to Winthrop, but rather the unifying forces that make them useful. A clock's kinetic energy, the body's ligaments, and a fabric's interlocking weave all represent harmonious combinations of disparate elements. Individual parts (gears, organs, and thread) only work in tandem.

The result is a happy social unification. Just as the **human body** unites disparate body parts into one entity, love, "the bond of perfection," "**knitts**" humans together. Winthrop invokes "the most perfect of all bodies[,] Christ and his church," as an example of this ideal unity. Winthrop concludes that all humans are symbolically "of one body" and must therefore "partake of each others strength and infirmity, joy, and sorrowe, weale and woe."

While a grammarian might say that Winthrop is mixing his metaphors (that is, confusing different types of figurative language), the fact that Winthrop crams these images together into such a dense verbal patchwork shows the urgency of his thoughts on love and his desire to communicate poetically. He extends his body metaphor especially far here, turning from the individual human body to the abstract image of Christ's body and the "body" of the Christian Church; all of these extensions reinforce the godliness of the type of love he advocates.

The image of one continuous, sympathetic **body** bound by the "ligamentes" of love leads Winthrop into his fourth section, a psychological account of how love works on the human mind. Activated by feelings like "sensibleness" and "Sympathy," people naturally group together because the human mind is attracted to things like itself.

Eager to explain that brotherly love is a naturally occurring feeling—and thus a worthy social principle—Winthrop delves into a psychological account of the emotion. Although it's easy to be selfish, he says that humans' desire to be around others like themselves is a stronger feeling. Humans naturally group together because they are born liking things that resemble them—so why not embrace this in civic life, and form a mutually dependent society?

Although every man (and woman, despite Winthrop's male-centric language) "is borne with this principle in him, to love and seeke himself only," this fondness for the self can in fact, with Christ, turn outwards to embrace other people. He quotes a Latin saying as evidence: *simile simili gaudet*, meaning "like will to like." Just as "the Lord loves the creature" he fashioned in his godly image, so too man (or any human) "cannot but love him as he loves himself." Winthrop cites biblical stories—Eve's love for Adam, and Jonathan's "hearte **knitt**[ing]" to David's—for further evidence.

Winthrop pulls in three kinds of evidence to convince his audience that people need each other: Biblical stories that show figures bound emotionally to one another, psychological descriptions of familiar feelings like "sympathy" (above), and classical wisdom from the Roman era. These last two types of evidence are out of place in a Christian sermon, meant to argue only from Biblical evidence. Radically, Winthrop's psychologizing and classical learning suggest that humans can arrive at moral truths (i.e., truths about how humans ought to live pious social lives) from their own life experience, their own self-observation, and their wider reading. The Bible, for Winthrop, is not the only place where one can find truth. This is a very "humanist" rather than Christian approach, one more associated with Renaissance writers like Shakespeare. The ancient Latin saying he quotes (Simile simili gaudet) *means literally that "similar things rejoice in each other"; it had most famously appeared in a book that had nothing to do with Christianity, the* Adages *of Erasmus of Rotterdam, a great humanist scholar of Greek and Latin. It had been reprinted in London as recently as 1621, eight years before Winthrop was writing. It might have been familiar with the more well-read of his colonists, who would have recognized the extremely broad reach of Winthrop's moral argument.*

Love, says Winthrop, is the best feeling on earth, says Winthrop; "nothing yeildes more pleasure and content […] for to love and live beloved is the soules paradise, both heare and in heaven." After an aside on romantic love—in which he suggests that social love among neighbors is more durable—Winthrop concludes that "love among Christians is a reall thing not imaginarie." Further, love is essential to the Christian life; in fact, it brings people closer to the level of God, who has infinite love.

Winthrop punctuates his arguments about love with two main points: that love is the greatest feeling on earth, and that this feeling, though an invisible emotion, is a very real thing (much like the invisible kinetic energy that moves the cogs of a **clock**). *He emphasizes these things to convince his audience that something as intangible as an emotion can in fact become the foundation of a successful society. And in a putdown where readers discover Winthrop's cheeky side, he drives his message home by suggesting that while spouses may tire of each other, neighbors can uphold this love and channel it into a functioning society.*

Winthrop's final section makes an "applicacion" of his arguments about love to his colonists' future in Massachusetts, since "wee ought to account our selves **knit** together by this bond of love." This invisible spiritual unity connects them all not only to each other in the colony but also to their "farre distant" mother church in England. In the colony, "civill pollicy"—"not onely conscience"—must defend "publique" against "perticuler" needs.

Winthrop refers back to the Church of England—the entity from which his colonists are about to split off—not with animosity at its degradations into King Charles I's overt Catholicism, but with more love. He asks his colonists to regard their Puritan utopia as a satellite church to "farre distant" England, not as a divorced refugee from it. This emphasis on the mother church says a lot about Winthrop's motives in starting a Puritan colonial outpost. He wants the English church to reform itself based on their example, not to sink further into sin. The body metaphor extends across the Atlantic, not just within his Massachusetts Bay Colony; he hopes one vigorous appendage will heal the rest of the body. To further celebrate "publique" over "perticuler" needs, he finds yet another example: the Waldenses, a sect of 12th-century rebellious Christians in Lyon who rejected the Catholic Church centuries before reformers like Martin Luther. Winthrop invokes their tight-knit society to tempt his colonists into godly communism.

Winthrop reminds his fellow colonists that they will be serving God and must guard against "the common corruptions of this evill world." Their mission is "extraordinary, therefore wee must not content our selves with usuall ordinary meanes." They must "love brotherly without dissimulation," love "fervently," "beare one anothers burthens," regard "the things of our brethren."

Winthrop heightens the drama of their colony by discussing its "extraordinary" status. Nothing like it has ever existed before, so it is doubly important that his colonists love each other "fervently" and "without dissimulation" (meaning openly, without concealing one's thoughts). Further, his colonists must "beare one anothers burthens" (an old spelling of "burdens") and watch out for each other's "things" (not material things, but, rather, each other's affairs). This passages shows the importance of transparency and fellowship to Winthrop's ideal society.


Because of their colony is "extraordinary," Winthrop warns that the moral weight to his colonists' Puritan project is greater than ever before. God's punishment of their moral failings, he says, will be more severe in Massachusetts than it was in England. This is because their new bond with God will be "more neare," and thus more subject to God's "jealous[y]." This nearness is partly because Puritans like himself and his audience have rejected the "strange fire and strange sacrifices" of the Catholic Church. Lastly, their Puritan society in Massachusetts constitutes a promise to God, punishable by God's "wrathe" and "prosecut[ion]" if broken.

The stereotype about Puritan sermons is that they are scary, threatening, and always about damnation. Winthrop has delivered a full sermon on the topic of love, but he now briefly introduces the threat of God's wrath. He does so in order to stress two things: the gravity of his colonists' project in New England, and that the "love" he has been discussing is not an airy romantic feeling but rather a very real social bond upon which a community might be built. He also alludes to "strange fire and strange sacrifices"—an oblique reference to the incense-burning and ritual-heavy Catholic Church which he and his Puritans don't like. They see their stripped-down, Scripture-based approach as more "pure," and more "neare" to God himself; because they are so near God, Winthrop says, they are in even more danger of incurring his wrath should they fail.

Winthrop ends these thoughts on his colonists' severe moral pressures, by sketching an image of their destination as a "**citty** upon a hill," visible to all globally and in "posterity." Since they are "professours for Gods sake," examples to the world of the Puritanical life, it is imperative that they succeed as a functioning colony, "**knitt** together in this worke as one man."

Winthrop ends his sermon with another point about the moral pressure his colonists are under. In his most quoted passage (which borrows from the Book of Matthew), Winthrop calls his Massachusetts Bay a "citty upon a hill" in order to stress its visibility. Their project is so unique that everyone is paying attention. Should their community fall into strife, or otherwise fail, everyone in the world will take note and discount Puritanism as a viable type of Christianity; in doing so, they will have failed God, whose only hope for an anti-Catholic resurgence lay with them.

HOW TO CITE

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