A Model of Christian Charity Study Guide

A Model of Christian Charity by John Winthrop

Contents

Introduction

John Winthrop's "A Model of Christian Charity," also known as "A City on a Hill," is often cited to illustrate America's status as the leading nation of the world. It has been quoted by numerous politicians, most notably Ronald Reagan in his 1981 inaugural address, to signify America as a beacon of civilization responsible for guiding the rest of the world into the future. A thorough reading of Winthrop's speech, along with an understanding of the circumstances in which Winthrop wrote it, yields a much deeper understanding of the message he meant to convey.

John Winthrop was selected as governor of the Massachusetts Bay Company in 1629, and he was given the task of leading a fleet of Puritan settlers to establish a community of their own in New England the following year. The speech was given to his fellow travelers on board the *Arbella*, the flagship of this fleet, as they prepared to sail from their native England. Winthrop's words laid out specific guidelines for living together in a Christian community—an important message because many of the settlers came from different regions and did not know each other before the journey. Winthrop also cautioned that the world would be watching them, and that failure to fulfill their duty to God would not only ruin their chances of prosperity, but would also disgrace like-minded Christians across the globe.

Though Puritans are often depicted in popular American culture as cold and unemotional, "A Model of Christian Charity" provides insight into the warmth and depth with which Winthrop and other Puritans sought to form bonds of community among themselves. Winthrop states to the gathered congregation that "we must love one another with a pure heart fervently," and details the ways in which each member should exhibit charity and mercy to all other members of the community. He emphasizes communal living, with the wealthiest and most prosperous members of society freely giving to the poorest members, as well as charitable lending principles that would require a lender to simply forgive a debt if the borrower had no means of repayment.

It is the final section of "A Model of Christian Charity," however, that has received the most attention. In it, Winthrop compares their new Massachusetts Bay colony to "a city upon a hill": Like a city rising above the surrounding land, it is visible to all, and surely will be subjected to careful scrutiny. Winthrop suggests that if he and his fellow Puritans succeed, they will serve as a shining example for others to follow. However, if they fail, their failure will bring disgrace to all Christians everywhere.

This "city upon a hill" passage is often cited by those who support the notion of American exceptionalism. In the most general sense, exceptionalism is the belief that a certain thing is not bound by established rules or patterns. American exceptionalism is the idea that the United States, with its unique formation and development, is fundamentally different from any other country in the world. The notion of American exceptionalism has been used to hold the United States to higher standards than other countries; it has also been used to justify actions that might otherwise be viewed negatively, such as the appropriation of land from Native American tribes. Supporters of

American exceptionalism have used Winthrop's "city upon a hill" passage to suggest that the United States—much like the original Massachusetts Bay colony—serves as a leading example for the rest of the world.

Author Biography

John Winthrop

John Winthrop was born to Adam Winthrop and Anne Brown on January 12, 1588, in Suffolk, England. Educated by a private tutor as a boy, Winthrop attended Cambridge and later studied law at Gray's Inn, where he developed a strong Puritan belief that the Church of England should be cleansed of its Roman Catholic characteristics. Joining with other like-minded men of wealth and influence, Winthrop became a part of the Massachusetts Bay Company, the goal of which was to establish a Puritan community in New England. Before embarking on the trip, Winthrop was selected as governor for this new venture.

Winthrop went on to serve as governor for nearly twenty years, though he was voted out of office and re-elected numerous times during that period. He oversaw the establishment of a democratic governing body that served in conjunction with community church leaders. Though he is most famous for his 1630 speech known as "A Model of Christian Charity," he also wrote extensive journals that chronicled the Massachusetts Bay settlement's first two decades. These journals have proven to be an invaluable record of early American life. He died on March 26, 1649.

Although the final section of "A Model of Christian Charity" is frequently quoted as a celebration of American uniqueness and idealism, John Winthrop himself remains relatively unknown and unrecognized as one of the earliest architects of the American way of life. In some respects, "A Model of Christian Charity" can be viewed as a precursor to the ideals and notions later voiced by American icons such as Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson. As scholar Rick Kennedy writes in his essay "Building a City on a Hill":

Using the language of later founding fathers, Winthrop wanted to create a "more perfect" society. As he said in the sermon, he wanted to take what was done or what ought to have been done in England and make it better. He wanted to take the politics, religion, and economics of village-life in England and make it better. The end product would be a model to the world.

Plot Summary

"A Model of Christian Charity" begins with the following proclamation regarding inequality in human society:

God Almighty in His most holy and wise providence, hath so disposed of the condition of mankind, as in all times some must be rich, some poor, some high and eminent in power and dignity; others mean and in submission.

He then enumerates the reasons why God would want such inequality to exist. First, Winthrop suggests that this is "to hold conformity" with the differences found in the rest of the natural world. Winthrop also contends that God would prefer to see his work carried out by his followers than by Himself. For that reason, God does not perform miracles to feed the hungry or shelter the homeless; instead, He allows the wealthy to demonstrate charity to those less fortunate, and therefore demonstrate the work of God through themselves. Second, Winthrop argues that by allowing inequality to exist, both the wealthy and the needy are given an opportunity to exhibit some of God's graces. The wealthy may exhibit "love, mercy, gentleness, temperance etc."; the needy can show their grace through "faith, patience, obedience etc." Third, Winthrop asserts that because of this inequality, "every man might have need of others, and from hence they might be all knit more nearly together in the bonds of brotherly affection."

This leads to the general rule of behavior that every man should help any fellow man who appears to need help. The amount of help given should be regulated only by one's own most basic needs: "There is a time when a Christian must sell all and give to the poor, as they did in the Apostles' times." Though giving up all of one's wealth may not always be required, Winthrop encourages Christians to help "beyond our ability rather than tempt God in putting him upon help by miraculous or extraordinary means." Winthrop refers to this as a "duty of mercy" that can be fulfilled through giving, lending, and forgiving debts.

With regard to giving, Winthrop states that under normal circumstances a man should give away whatever he does not reasonably need for himself and his family. He then addresses the argument that a man should save any extra wealth of resources to be prepared for disaster or tragedy. Winthrop argues that a man who gives will be taken care of by God, and that all those he helps will stand as witnesses of his generosity and mercy when his day of judgment arrives. In addition, Winthrop notes that physical objects of wealth "are subject to the moth, the rust, the thief," and that they can cause a person's heart to lose sight of the true treasure of serving God. Finally, Winthrop points out that the interests of God must come before any person's interests, and God's instructions are clear: "If thy brother be in want and thou canst help him, thou needst not make doubt of what thou shouldst do; if thou lovest God thou must help him."

Winthrop delineates specific rules to follow when it comes to lending money or resources to other people. When approached by someone without any possible means of repaying the loan, an upstanding Christian should simply give the person whatever

he can afford instead of lending it. If the person has no immediate ability to repay the loan but might be able to repay it in the future, a worthy Christian should lend whatever he can afford—even though he knows the loan may not be repaid. In cases in which a person does have the means to repay, the transaction should be treated purely as a business venture; in other words, the lender should not view his own actions as an exhibition of God's graces, because he has not done anything truly charitable. The rule for forgiving a debt is simple: If the borrower has no means to repay the loan—regardless of the fact that the loan was meant to be repaid—the lender must forgive the debt.

Winthrop also sets forth specific rules for living together as a community. He describes the structure of some older church communities similar to the Puritans where "they sold all, had all things in common, neither did any man say that which he possessed was his own." He compares the Christian community to a single body, with each individual part serving the whole. In such a system, the parts "mutually participate with each other, both in strength and infirmity, in pleasure and pain." The members of the community are united toward a common goal—serving God—and therefore should work to support and protect each other against whatever difficulties they might face. Winthrop provides numerous quotes and examples from the Bible to illustrate the bonds that connect Christians, even those who may not know each other directly.

Winthrop compares the bond between Christians to the love a mother has for her child, noting that "each discerns, by the work of the Spirit, his own Image and resemblance in another, and therefore cannot but love him as he loves himself." Just as a mother gives love without any expectation of receiving something in return, so must a Christian freely dispense love and mercy to other Christians in need. This kindness is sure to be reciprocated, resulting in what Winthrop calls "a most equal and sweet kind of commerce." Similarly, returning to the metaphor of the Christian community as a single body, he observes that the mouth performs most of the work required to nourish the entire body; however, the mouth does not object to this arrangement, because it not only receives pleasure from the work it does, but it also receives a share of the body's nourishment.

Winthrop, speaking to the assembled Christians, notes that even though they have gathered from different places and backgrounds, they are all a part of a single Christian community united by a "bond of love." He then provides some information about what the group should expect in the new community they seek to form. First, the needs of the community must necessarily override the needs of the individual; he notes that "it is a true rule that particular estates cannot subsist in the ruin of the public." In other words, individual households might prosper more than others, but ultimately no one will prosper if the community as a whole fails to thrive.

Winthrop cautions that life in their new American colony will be harder than it was in England, their former home. What serve simply as words of belief for many Christians in England will become the Puritans' daily way of life:

We must love brotherly without dissimulation, we must love one another with a pure heart fervently. We must bear one another's burdens. We must not look only on our own things, but also on the things of our brethren.

Winthrop also asserts that the Lord will hold their community to higher standards than other Christians due to "the more near bond of marriage between Him and us." For this reason, they must strictly follow their own established laws or risk punishment directly from God. Theirs is a special commission from God, he argues, like the biblical tale of Saul's commission to destroy Amaleck. Saul failed in a small detail of his duties, and therefore did not receive his reward. According to Winthrop, in exchange for the fulfillment of their dream to start a new community in a new land, they must serve God according to the doctrines of their religion; if they fail, then "the Lord will surely break out in wrath against us, and be revenged of such a people, and make us know the price of the breach of such a covenant."

In addition, Winthrop points out that God is not the only one who will keep a close watch on the community they seek to establish. He states that they will stand out like "a city upon a hill," adding, "The eyes of all people are upon us." He warns his fellow Puritans that failure on their part will cast shame on not only their colony, but also all those who share their beliefs. Winthrop concludes his speech by again noting their special relationship with God, and by repeating his warning:

But if our hearts shall turn away, so that we will not obey, but shall be seduced, and worship other Gods, our pleasure and profits, and serve them; it is propounded unto us this day, we shall surely perish out of the good land whither we pass over this vast sea to possess it.

Themes

American Exceptionalism

Winthrop's "A Model of Christian Charity" is often quoted as an early example of American exceptionalism. American exceptionalism is the idea that the United States is fundamentally different from other countries, and therefore defies easy comparison of policies or statistics between itself and the rest of the world. In his speech, Winthrop asserts that he and his fellow colonists have been chosen by God to fulfill a special commission, and that their actions will be watched by the rest of the world. This notion of the elevated importance of Americans and their behaviors is consistent with the idea of American exceptionalism.

A belief in the unique status of the United States was embraced by many supporters of the American Revolution, including author Thomas Paine. In his pamphlet *Common Sense*, Paine asserts that America is blessed with a situation unheard of in the world at the time: "Should an independency be brought about … we have every opportunity and every encouragement before us, to form the noblest, purest constitution on the face of the earth." The popularity of Paine's pamphlet helped to garner public support for the notion that America—at the time, still officially considered a territory of England—should fight for the right to govern itself.

Observers from other nations also attested to the uniqueness of America. In his essay "American Exceptionalism as National History?" Hans Guggisberg describes how European visitors played an important part in the development of America's unique identity:

It must also be noted that since the colonial period of American history a very great number of European visitors were deeply impressed with the otherness and uniqueness of mentalities, social structures, and political institutions they had encountered in the New World. In describing what they had seen, many of them became defenders of American exceptionalism.

As Guggisberg points out, French historian Alexis de Tocqueville is credited with inventing the term "American exceptionalism" in his landmark 1835 work *Democracy in America*. In the book, which analyzes American institutions, customs and beliefs from an outsider's point of view, de Tocqueville writes, "The position of the Americans is … quite exceptional, and it may be believed that no democratic people will ever be placed in a similar one."

Over the centuries, American exceptionalism has been used to support or defend certain actions that ran contrary to what other nations would consider acceptable. In *American Exceptionalism and Human Rights*, Michael Ignatieff asserts that "Slavery and segregation made America exceptional among liberal democratic states, and southern politicians led the opposition to American adoption of international rights regimes from

the late 1940s to the 1960s." Before the Civil War, some southern plantation owners argued that the plantation agriculture system was not feasible without slave labor, and therefore should be seen as an exception to the human rights principles accepted by modern nations around the world.

Manifest destiny is another example of American exceptionalism being used as a justification for actions that might otherwise be viewed negatively. Manifest destiny, popularized throughout the middle of the nineteenth century, is the idea that the United States and its citizens had a duty to claim and populate as much of the North American continent as possible. Those who argued in support of manifest destiny believed that God had chosen the American people to spread and multiply from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific Ocean, and that this special mission superceded previous territorial agreements and treaties.

In the twentieth century, the idea of American exceptionalism often appeared in arguments supporting United States involvement in foreign wars. According to Anders Stephanson, author of *Manifest Destiny: American Expansionism and the Empire of Right*, the notion was also used to strengthen public opinion against the Soviet Union during the Cold War: "To refrain from doing one's utmost to extinguish this evil (the Soviet Union) was tantamount to sin and would end in self-destruction. The choice was plain. Only the United States could perform the given task."

In recent decades, a growing number of historians and political scientists have cast criticism on the notion of American exceptionalism. Some, such as Charles Lockhart, point out that America is often exceptional in ways that are not at all praiseworthy; on the first page of his book *The Roots of American Exceptionalism*, Lockhart writes, "The United States is the only advanced industrial society which lacks a public program assuring financial access to a broad range of medical care for the vast majority of its citizens." Historian Howard Zinn, in his essay "The Power and the Glory: Myths of American Exceptionalism," offers these words of caution: "One of the consequences of American exceptionalism is that the U.S. government considers itself exempt from legal and moral standards accepted by other nations in the world."

However, Zinn also notes that the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, "gave a new impetus to the idea that the United States was uniquely responsible for the security of the world, defending us all against terrorism as it once did against communism."

Charity

As the title of the speech suggests, "A Model of Christian Charity" deals primarily with the idea of giving to others in need. According to Winthrop, this is a cornerstone of the new community he and the other Puritans hope to build. For the wealthy colonists, charity is also a measure of their service to God.

At the beginning of the speech, Winthrop asserts that it is God's will that some people are wealthy while others are poor. This imbalance in prosperity is necessary for God to

test one's charity; if everyone had the same amount of wealth, then there would be little reason for one person to give to another. In Winthrop's view, God has done this as a two-fold test to ensure "that the rich and mighty should not eat up the poor, nor the poor and despised rise up against and shake off their yoke."

Charity is also shown to be an important part of human interaction. Winthrop argues that although God could simply provide charity Himself, He must be like a king who is "more honored in dispensing his gifts to man by man, than if he did it by his own immediate hands." The act of charity is also depicted as a way of drawing people together into a more tightly knit community, because it requires the formation of meaningful relationships between the giver and the receiver.

Throughout "A Model of Christian Charity," Winthrop indicates the many ways in which a Christian may exhibit charity. First, charity can consist of providing money and material goods to others who need them. As Winthrop points out, such material things "are subject to the moth, the rust, the thief," and therefore should not be held in excess of what one needs for one's own self and family. Second, charity can be exhibited by forgiving a debt that is owed. Winthrop makes a clear distinction between giving freely and lending, and notes that lending should never be viewed as an act of charity in itself. Third, charity can be shown by offering love to others without expecting anything in return. This is a core component of Winthrop's Christian worldview, and he notes that "to love and live beloved is the soul's paradise both here and in heaven."

Communalism

Communalism is defined as a type of societal organization where the interests of the community as a whole are placed above individual interests. The term also suggests a community in which all resources and duties are shared equally among all members. The principles Winthrop sets forth in "A Model of Christian Charity" reflect these ideas of communalism.

First, although he believes that inequality of wealth exists as a certainty in society because it is God's will, he also believes that it is the responsibility of Christians to correct that inequality as much as they are able to. As he puts it, "If thy brother be in want and thou canst help him, thou needst not make doubt of what thou shouldst do; if thou lovest God thou must help him." Such an exhibition of charity is certainly meant to benefit the individual who serves God as well as the receiver of charity, but it is also meant "for the preservation and good of the whole."

Winthrop states this even more clearly in later portions of the speech. "Hence it was that in the primitive Church they sold all, had all things in common, neither did any man say that which he possessed was his own," he states, comparing their new society to communes of ancient religious tradition. Winthrop suggests that in times of peril, they should strive for "more enlargement towards others and less respect towards ourselves and our own right." This seems to suggest that the interests of the community outweigh the interests of the individual. Similarly, he writes, "We must be willing to abridge

ourselves of our superfluities, for the supply of others' necessities." This same message is reflected in the statement, "For it is a true rule that particular estates cannot subsist in the ruin of the public."

The basic principle of communalism, that the success of the whole depends on the success of all involved, is a common thread in the American dream and in American policies. Franklin Delano Roosevelt's New Deal was designed to ensure the success of the country by helping citizens in need. While the Marshall Plan (after World War II) and the Peace Corps (during the Cold War) were global strategies to protect democracy, they rest on the same principle.

Winthrop approaches the notion of communalism not from fairness or equality, but from love. "We must bear one another's burdens," he asserts. "We must not look only on our own things, but also on the things of our brethren." For Winthrop, the principles of communalism reflect the Puritan ideals of love, unity, and charity.

From Many, One

That the United States is a country of peoples whose common ideals outweigh their individual differences is part and parcel of the American dream. The Latin phrase *E Pluribus Unum*, which means "From many, one," was one of the country's first mottos, appearing on the Great Seal of the United States in 1782. It also appears on all coins produced by the U.S. Mint.

The notion of unity is central to "A Model of Christian Charity." The Puritans who gathered to join Winthrop in the journey to the Massachusetts Bay Colony represented a diverse group united mainly by their opposition to the Church of England. It is through this common link that Winthrop symbolically draws them together in his speech. He points out that although in England they "were absent from each other many miles, and had our employments as far distant," they share a common bond of love through their devotion to God.

Winthrop uses the analogy of a living body and its parts to describe the members of this newly formed Puritan congregation. Although they all represent different parts of the body, they function together as a larger creation, and "the ligaments of this body which knit together are love." If one person is in poverty or pain, the entire group suffers—just as an injury to one part of the body can affect the health of every part:

All the parts of this body being thus united are made so contiguous in a special relation as they must needs partake of each other's strength and infirmity; joy and sorrow, weal and woe. If one member suffers, all suffer with it, if one be in honor, all rejoice with it.

He continues this analogy with Biblical references to Adam, who refers to Eve as "flesh of my flesh," and to Jonathan and David, whom he describes as being connected by a "ligament of love."

Winthrop views unity not just as a fundamental part of their belief system, but as a necessity for their success and survival. To fulfill their dream of creating a community devoted to serving God, Winthrop's strategy is simple: "For this end, we must be knit together, in this work, as one man."

Historical Context

Puritanism

"Puritan" is a term most commonly applied to English Christians who became dissatisfied with the state of the Church of England during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Rather than being a single defined movement, it was composed of many groups of individuals who had differing opinions on what in particular was wrong with the established national church. In general, however, those who were termed Puritans believed that the Church of England had become corrupted by its entanglement with politics, particularly the English monarchy, as well as its adoption of Roman Catholic traditions; they believed it was necessary to "purify" the Church's practices and ceremonies to return to a less elaborate form of worship endorsed in the Bible. The term "Puritan" was originally applied by supporters of the Church of England as an insult, with the label "Dissenter" more commonly being used by members of this religious minority to refer to themselves.

Puritans were largely unsuccessful in effecting religious change within their home country, and they were often openly persecuted and denied jobs in certain professions. This led some Puritans to pursue the notion of forming a new community of like-minded individuals in the New World, where they would be free to worship as they wished. Beginning in the 1620s, Puritan settlers made their way to various settlements along the east coast of North America. The most notable Puritan settlements were established in present-day Massachusetts, where their relative success at maintaining a devout worship-based society lasted well into the eighteenth century.

In England, Puritan dissension was a key factor in the English Civil War, which lasted from 1642 until 1651. During this time, Puritan military leader Oliver Cromwell led the overthrow of the English monarchy that resulted in the execution of King Charles I and the establishment of a permanent parliament. Although Puritanism is often viewed as a reaction to the Church of England as opposed to a specific religious movement, the influence of Puritan ideals was felt throughout Protestant churches across Europe as well as in New England, where it helped shape many modern denominations of Christian worship.

The Massachusetts Bay Colony

In April 1630, John Winthrop led some seven hundred English settlers on a fleet of eleven ships across the Atlantic Ocean. Winthrop had already been elected governor of the Massachusetts Bay Company, the organization behind the emigration. The settlers were headed to their new home, a colony in present-day Massachusetts. The trip, which took three months, was not the first made by English settlers to the New World, but at the time it was the largest single fleet of settlers ever to depart England. The journey itself was difficult, and more than one-fourth of the settlers died before reaching

America. Those who survived the journey still faced the daunting task of forming a new community in an alien environment. A small group of colonists had already set up a post at Salem, but the arrival of this new flood of settlers firmly established Salem, the new settlement of Boston, and the surrounding area as an independent Puritan society in the New World.

Although the motivation for the emigration was primarily religious, many of the settlers came from different backgrounds with slightly different religious traditions and customs, and some made the journey not for religious but for economic reasons. As Francis Bremer points out in *John Winthrop: America's Forgotten Founding Father*, "Even with the most godly men and women other factors influenced the decision to migrate." These different interpretations of Puritanism resulted in conflicts over how to govern the new territory; Winthrop and other community leaders relied on their strict Puritan interpretation of the Bible to guide them in all matters, believing that civic laws should descend directly from Biblical teachings. Those who disagreed, such as Anne Hutchinson and Roger Williams—who believed that this new society should allow freedom to worship in whatever manner one wished, and that civic laws should be independent of religious laws—were often driven out of the community and forced to establish their own settlements elsewhere. Such strict punishment for perceived moral transgressions later fueled the Salem witch trials, a brief period of religious hysteria that led to the deaths of twenty Salem residents.

Still, as the settlement grew in size and success, the governing body adopted more democratic processes that some Puritans, including Winthrop, felt were in conflict with the religious teachings on which the original colony was based. The colony became one of the most successful English settlements in the New World and a cornerstone of New England commerce—a mark of distinction the region continues to enjoy to this day.

Critical Overview

Winthrop's "A Model of Christian Charity" was not intended as a timeless piece of literature. Perhaps more than simply a speech he gave to inspire his fellow Puritan settlers to fully commit to their new settlement, and to caution them about the true cost of failing at their commission, its purpose may have been to address a larger audience. As Hugh Dawson suggests in his article "'Christian Charitie' As Colonial Discourse":

The occasion gave its themes of dependence and reassurance urgency, but beyond seeking to inspire those leaving, Winthrop insisted that all those who had committed themselves to the Colony—those about to sail, the others of the sect now settled …, and those remaining at home—be faithful to their promises…. Beneath his confident exhortation to those about to sail, it finds another, perhaps more important text directed to the larger community of all those in England and America who had pledged themselves to the project of Massachusetts.

The speech appeared to have little impact at the time it was delivered. In fact, as Francis Bremer notes in *John Winthrop: America's Forgotten Founding Father*, "Despite the relative abundance of source material dealing with the settlement of Massachusetts, not a single individual recorded in letter, diary or other source having heard Winthrop deliver the sermon." The only account survives in Winthrop's own journal.

In the centuries that followed, however, "A Model of Christian Charity" became one of the most well-known Puritan works ever printed. In "Building a City on a Hill," Rick Kennedy asserts, "In the nineteenth century, the world really was watching America, and Winthrop's speech came to be thought of as prophesy." Ronald Reagan quoted the "city upon a hill" passage as part of his Presidential inaugural speech in 1981, and many other politicians have followed suit. In 1999, Peter Gomes, minister of the Memorial Church at Harvard, selected "A Model of Christian Charity" as the greatest sermon of the previous millennium.

Criticism

- Critical Essay #1

Critical Essay #1

In the following excerpt, Kennedy explores the broad and lasting resonance of Winthrop's "A Model of Christian Charity" speech.

In the spring of 1630, John Winthrop composed and delivered one of the most famous speeches in American history, "A Model of Christian Charity." Winthrop was the head of the Massachusetts Bay Company, a corporation that organized a crossing of the Atlantic to establish an English colony. His goal, at its core, was simple. He wanted to create a society out of towns that were economically, politically, and religiously prosperous; thereby, being a model to the world. Adopting an image used by Jesus, his colony was to be a "City upon a Hill" where "the eyes of all people are upon us." Although initially delivered as a speech, "A Model of Christian Charity" was subsequently printed as an essay and widely distributed.

The idea of a watching world may seem a bit egomaniacal; however, a bigger world than Winthrop ever imagined has continued to watch for 370 years. Popular histories of Winthrop's company began to be written within a half century. Within another century, English Whigs and American revolutionaries were regularly referring to the motives and actions of the Puritan migration as they questioned the relationship between England and her colonies. In the nineteenth century, the world really was watching America, and Winthrop's speech came to be thought of as prophecy. In the early twentieth century, Puritan studies became a major cottage industry at American universities, and interest in Puritan society and culture has continued throughout the century. Ronald Reagan, in his first inaugural address as president, quoted Winthrop's famous sentence: "For we must consider that we shall be as a City upon a Hill, the eyes of all people are upon us."

The Puritans of Massachusetts Bay, next to our national Founding Fathers, are probably the most highly studied and talked about group of people in American history. If we consider this, Winthrop and his Puritans are more a city on a hill now than they were then. In this light, it behooves us to look at the "Model of Christian Charity" and see what is in it and in the Massachusetts Bay Company's implementation of it that has such lasting power.

In 1629, Winthrop sold his village and joined with a network of Puritan friends, many of them connected through Cambridge University, in purchasing stock in the Massachusetts Bay Company. Winthrop set sail aboard the *Arbella* and reached Salem in June 1630. As the stockholders of a company to set up a community in America, Winthrop and his friends regained an extensive amount of economic, political, and religious independence.

The stockholders elected the forty-one-year-old Winthrop their governor. Hundreds of farmers and trades people joined the expedition as workers—many of them people who had previously rented from or worked for the stockholders. At this time Winthrop composed his "Model of Christian Charity." Although much would later be said about the motivation for religious freedom that spurred the Puritans to this moment, the essay

itself is just as much about politics, economics, and specifically the need to reclaim local autonomy and responsibility against the centralizing tendency of the king.

The greatness of Winthrop's essay, and the Puritan migration in general, is that, though Winthrop and the Puritans sought to regain lost freedom, they succeeded in doing so much more with the freedom they gained than they ever would have been able to do in England even if they had never lost their Elizabethan freedom. The call of Winthrop's words and the actions he led in Massachusetts far exceeded any selfish attempt of a threatened owner of a village to gain control of a new village.

The conclusion of "A Model of Christian Charity" is the most important part of Winthrop's essay. "It rests now to make some application," he declared. First, those who claim to be Christians should be "knit together" in a "bond of Love." Second, church and town governments must work together and the public good must "oversway all private respects." Third, the goal is "to improve our lives, to do more service to the Lord." Fourth, and most significantly, "Whatsoever we did or ought to have done when we lived in England, the same must we do and more also where we go."

Winthrop declared a contract between the Puritans and God. God has "ratified" the contract and further commissioned the Puritans to get to work. God, Winthrop threatened, "will expect strict performance." Given this threat, there is only one way to success: "to do justly, to love mercy, to walk humbly with our God."

It is in this context that Winthrop then closes with the "city upon a hill" line. But note that the line is in the context of failure not success:

For we must consider that we shall be as a City upon a Hill, the eyes of all people are upon us; so that if we shall deal falsely with our God in this work we have undertaken, and so cause Him to withdraw His present help from us, we shall be a by-word through the world.

With such a speech about such a contract and such a commission, how could anyone expect Winthrop and the Puritans to succeed? In fact, they did not succeed—in the long run. In his own diary, Winthrop reported the frustrations and failures. "As the people increased," he wrote twelve years after arriving in New England, "so sin abounded."

But early on, Winthrop and his company made an heroic effort to succeed. The story of the initial implementation of Winthrop's speech makes it amazing that he did succeed. Winthrop turned his directorship into an annually elected position. Voting was extended more widely among the people than ever before in England. Renters became landowners. Rich people took less than what they could have demanded. Local government was given autonomy. Ministers restrained their political power. Public education was ensured to all children. Virtuous economics was encouraged and price-gouging punished. Surely anyone watching had to admit that the Puritans used their increased freedom to do more political, economic, and religious good in America than was ever possible in England.

We must understand that Winthrop and the Puritans were not egalitarian, but they did believe in community responsibility. Winthrop's "Model of Christian Charity" begins with the simple distinction that there are two ranks of people: the rich and the poor. When giving out land, the Puritans tended to give the people who had been richer in England a little more than the formerly landless. The Puritans did not want to undermine social distinctions. Responsibility was what they were after, not equality. In his speech, Winthrop offered several biblical precedents for "enlargement towards others, and less respect towards our selves and our own right."

Here again, we must see the reality behind the rhetoric of Winthrop's call to do "whatsoever we did or ought to have done when we lived in England, the same must we do and more also where we go." Only this way could the Puritans "improve our lives, to do more service to the Lord." Winthrop wanted everyone in Massachusetts to start "rich" and not "poor." Being "rich" he defined not by estate and servants, rather by the ability "to live comfortably by their own means." The Puritan contract with God needed everyone to have such basic comfort so that they could be "knit together" and spend their days improving Massachusetts instead of worrying about subsistence.

The city on a hill as preached in "A Model of Christian Charity" was not a utopia. Utopias usually depend on the behalf that human nature is good and that a bad environment is what keeps most societies from attaining purity. The Puritan city on a hill was a republic of Christian voters gathered in towns and churches where individual sinfulness could be inhibited by peer pressure. Puritans believed in the inherent sinful-ness of individuals and had no illusions about their colony attaining purity.

Using the language of later founding fathers, Winthrop wanted to create a "more perfect" society. As he said in the speech, he wanted to take the politics, religion, and economics of village life in England and make it better. The end product would be a model to the world.

An often-stated irony about the Puritans is that they wanted religious toleration for themselves but refused to extend it to others. While this is superficially true, we should recognize that Winthrop's speech never said anything about religious liberty or toleration. Winthrop's speech was about knitting together people into a web of politics, religion, and economics with underlying assumptions about education. The Puritan creation of a loose republic rooted in independent towns and churches established the web. Those who refused to fully participate in the web were punished in much the same way English towns punished those unwilling to abide by the social contract.

In 1680, more than a half-century after the founding of the colony, England imposed religious toleration on Massachusetts and demanded that voting no longer be restricted to church members. But the loose town and church structure of the commonwealth was becoming too loose anyway. Success was killing them. As Winthrop noted early: "As people increased, so sin abounded." Too many people wanted to come to the city upon a hill, thus turning it into nothing more than a dynamic English colony. When English imperial policy demanded a break between church membership and the right to vote,

the key innovation of the city upon a hill was destroyed. What was left was just the shell of Winthop's model.

But even the shell of the plan has long been influential. By the time of Samuel and John Adams in the 1770s, towns remained the most powerful force in Massachusetts politics. Calling a "town meeting" is still a catch-phrase of participatory democracy. A good case could be made today that it is not Winthrop's speech that is important in American history; rather, it is simply the line about being a city upon a hill. That our town-based, participatory democracy should be exported to the rest of the world.

On the other hand, the deep ideas contained in the "Model of Christian Charity" and their implementation in colonial Massachusetts are inspiring. John Winthrop and his fellow stockholders led one of the greatest events in American history. A small band of rich Protestant men voluntarily diminished their own power in order to launch a social experiment they hoped would inspire the world.

Source: Rick Kennedy, "Building a City on a Hill," in *Events that Changed America Through the Seventeenth Century*, edited by John Findling and Frank Thackeray, Greenwood Press, 2000, pp. 59-69.

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Introduction

Purpose of the Book

The purpose of Novels for Students (NfS) is to provide readers with a guide to understanding, enjoying, and studying novels by giving them easy access to information about the work. Part of Gale's"For Students" Literature line, NfS is specifically designed to meet the curricular needs of high school and undergraduate college students and their teachers, as well as the interests of general readers and researchers considering specific novels. While each volume contains entries on "classic" novels frequently

studied in classrooms, there are also entries containing hard-to-find information on contemporary novels, including works by multicultural, international, and women novelists.

The information covered in each entry includes an introduction to the novel and the novel's author; a plot summary, to help readers unravel and understand the events in a novel; descriptions of important characters, including explanation of a given character's role in the novel as well as discussion about that character's relationship to other characters in the novel; analysis of important themes in the novel; and an explanation of important literary techniques and movements as they are demonstrated in the novel.

In addition to this material, which helps the readers analyze the novel itself, students are also provided with important information on the literary and historical background informing each work. This includes a historical context essay, a box comparing the time or place the novel was written to modern Western culture, a critical overview essay, and excerpts from critical essays on the novel. A unique feature of NfS is a specially commissioned critical essay on each novel, targeted toward the student reader.

To further aid the student in studying and enjoying each novel, information on media adaptations is provided, as well as reading suggestions for works of fiction and nonfiction on similar themes and topics. Classroom aids include ideas for research papers and lists of critical sources that provide additional material on the novel.

Selection Criteria

The titles for each volume of NfS were selected by surveying numerous sources on teaching literature and analyzing course curricula for various school districts. Some of the sources surveyed included: literature anthologies; Reading Lists for College-Bound Students: The Books Most Recommended by America's Top Colleges; textbooks on teaching the novel; a College Board survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; a National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; the NCTE's Teaching Literature in High School: The Novel;and the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) list of best books for young adults of the past twenty-five years. Input was also solicited from our advisory board, as well as educators from various areas. From these discussions, it was determined that each volume should have a mix of "classic" novels (those works commonly taught in literature classes) and contemporary novels for which information is often hard to find. Because of the interest in expanding the canon of literature, an emphasis was also placed on including works by international, multicultural, and women authors. Our advisory board members—educational professionals— helped pare down the list for each volume. If a work was not selected for the present volume, it was often noted as a possibility for a future volume. As always, the editor welcomes suggestions for titles to be included in future volumes.

How Each Entry Is Organized

Each entry, or chapter, in NfS focuses on one novel. Each entry heading lists the full name of the novel, the author's name, and the date of the novel's publication. The following elements are contained in each entry:

- Introduction: a brief overview of the novel which provides information about its first appearance, its literary standing, any controversies surrounding the work, and major conflicts or themes within the work.
- Author Biography: this section includes basic facts about the author's life, and focuses on events and times in the author's life that inspired the novel in question.
- Plot Summary: a factual description of the major events in the novel. Lengthy summaries are broken down with subheads.
- Characters: an alphabetical listing of major characters in the novel. Each character name is followed by a brief to an extensive description of the character's role in the novel, as well as discussion of the character's actions, relationships, and possible motivation. Characters are listed alphabetically by last name. If a character is unnamed—for instance, the narrator in Invisible Man–the character is listed as "The Narrator" and alphabetized as "Narrator." If a character's first name is the only one given, the name will appear alphabetically by that name. • Variant names are also included for each character. Thus, the full name "Jean Louise Finch" would head the listing for the narrator of To Kill a Mockingbird, but listed in a separate cross-reference would be the nickname "Scout Finch."
- Themes: a thorough overview of how the major topics, themes, and issues are addressed within the novel. Each theme discussed appears in a separate subhead, and is easily accessed through the boldface entries in the Subject/Theme Index.
- Style: this section addresses important style elements of the novel, such as setting, point of view, and narration; important literary devices used, such as imagery, foreshadowing, symbolism; and, if applicable, genres to which the work might have belonged, such as Gothicism or Romanticism. Literary terms are explained within the entry, but can also be found in the Glossary.
- Historical Context: This section outlines the social, political, and cultural climate in which the author lived and the novel was created. This section may include descriptions of related historical events, pertinent aspects of daily life in the culture, and the artistic and literary sensibilities of the time in which the work was written. If the novel is a historical work, information regarding the time in which the novel is set is also included. Each section is broken down with helpful subheads.
- Critical Overview: this section provides background on the critical reputation of the novel, including bannings or any other public controversies surrounding the work. For older works, this section includes a history of how the novel was first received and how perceptions of it may have changed over the years; for more recent novels, direct quotes from early reviews may also be included.
- Criticism: an essay commissioned by NfS which specifically deals with the novel and is written specifically for the student audience, as well as excerpts from previously published criticism on the work (if available).

- Sources: an alphabetical list of critical material quoted in the entry, with full bibliographical information.
- Further Reading: an alphabetical list of other critical sources which may prove useful for the student. Includes full bibliographical information and a brief annotation.

In addition, each entry contains the following highlighted sections, set apart from the main text as sidebars:

- Media Adaptations: a list of important film and television adaptations of the novel, including source information. The list also includes stage adaptations, audio recordings, musical adaptations, etc.
- Topics for Further Study: a list of potential study questions or research topics dealing with the novel. This section includes questions related to other disciplines the student may be studying, such as American history, world history, science, math, government, business, geography, economics, psychology, etc.
- Compare and Contrast Box: an “at-a-glance” comparison of the cultural and historical differences between the author’s time and culture and late twentieth century/early twenty-first century Western culture. This box includes pertinent parallels between the major scientific, political, and cultural movements of the time or place the novel was written, the time or place the novel was set (if a historical work), and modern Western culture. Works written after 1990 may not have this box.
- What Do I Read Next?: a list of works that might complement the featured novel or serve as a contrast to it. This includes works by the same author and others, works of fiction and nonfiction, and works from various genres, cultures, and eras.

Other Features

NfS includes “The Informed Dialogue: Interacting with Literature,” a foreword by Anne Devereaux Jordan, Senior Editor for Teaching and Learning Literature (TALL), and a founder of the Children’s Literature Association. This essay provides an enlightening look at how readers interact with literature and how Novels for Students can help teachers show students how to enrich their own reading experiences.

A Cumulative Author/Title Index lists the authors and titles covered in each volume of the NfS series.

A Cumulative Nationality/Ethnicity Index breaks down the authors and titles covered in each volume of the NfS series by nationality and ethnicity.

A Subject/Theme Index, specific to each volume, provides easy reference for users who may be studying a particular subject or theme rather than a single work. Significant subjects from events to broad themes are included, and the entries pointing to the specific theme discussions in each entry are indicated in boldface.

Each entry has several illustrations, including photos of the author, stills from film adaptations (if available), maps, and/or photos of key historical events.

Citing Novels for Students

When writing papers, students who quote directly from any volume of Novels for Students may use the following general forms. These examples are based on MLA style; teachers may request that students adhere to a different style, so the following examples may be adapted as needed. When citing text from NfS that is not attributed to a particular author (i.e., the Themes, Style, Historical Context sections, etc.), the following format should be used in the bibliography section:

"Night." Novels for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 234–35.

When quoting the specially commissioned essay from NfS (usually the first piece under the "Criticism" subhead), the following format should be used:

Miller, Tyrus. Critical Essay on "Winesburg, Ohio." Novels for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 335–39.

When quoting a journal or newspaper essay that is reprinted in a volume of NfS, the following form may be used:

Malak, Amin. "Margaret Atwood's "The Handmaid's Tale and the Dystopian Tradition," Canadian Literature No. 112 (Spring, 1987), 9–16; excerpted and reprinted in Novels for Students, Vol. 4, ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski (Detroit: Gale, 1998), pp. 133–36.

When quoting material reprinted from a book that appears in a volume of NfS, the following form may be used:

Adams, Timothy Dow. "Richard Wright: "Wearing the Mask," in Telling Lies in Modern American Autobiography (University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 69–83; excerpted and reprinted in Novels for Students, Vol. 1, ed. Diane Telgen (Detroit: Gale, 1997), pp. 59–61.

We Welcome Your Suggestions

The editor of Novels for Students welcomes your comments and ideas. Readers who wish to suggest novels to appear in future volumes, or who have other suggestions, are cordially invited to contact the editor. You may contact the editor via email at: ForStudentsEditors@gale.com. Or write to the editor at:

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