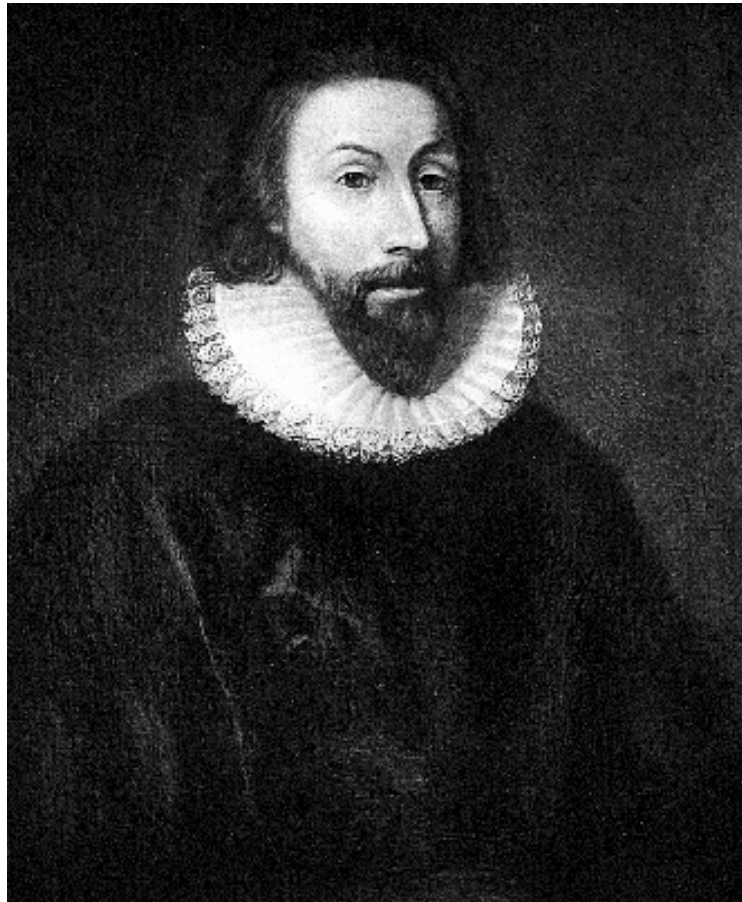


**JOHN WINTHROP:
FIRST GOVERNOR OF
MASSACHUSETTS BAY
COLONY**



*Adapted from the Account by Cotton Mather in
'Magnalia Christi Americana'*

Edited by J. Parnell McCarter

Quicungue venti erunt, Ars nostra certe non aberit. -Cicero.2

"You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden." - Matthew 5:14

*Dedicated to the legacy of John Winthrop, and other such Christian
governors- men who have set a noble example for future generations of
civil leaders to study and to follow.*

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His Background in Old England

LET Greece boast of her patient Lycurgus, the lawgiver, by whom diligence, temperance, fortitude and wit were made the fashions of a therefore long-lasting and renowned commonwealth. And let Rome tell of her devout Numa, the lawgiver, by whom the most famous commonwealth saw peace triumphing over extinguished war and cruel plunders, and murders giving place to the more mollifying exercises of his religion. New-England shall tell and boast of her John Winthrop, a lawgiver as patient as Lycurgus, but not admitting any of his criminal disorders; as devout as Numa, but not liable to any of *his* heathen madness. John Winthrop was a governor in whom the excellencies of Christianity made a most improving addition unto the virtues, wherein even without *those* he would have made a *parallel* for the great men of Greece, or of Rome, which the pen of a Plutarch has eternized.

A stock of *heroes* by right should afford nothing but what is *heroic*; and nothing but an extreme degeneracy would make any thing less to be expected from a stock of Winthrops. Mr. Adam Winthrop, the son of a worthy gentleman having the same name, was himself a worthy, a discreet, and a learned gentleman, particularly eminent for skill in the law. He was also noted by his love to the gospel, under the reign of King Henry VIII. Adam was brother to a memorable favorer of the reformed religion in the days of Queen Mary, into whose hands the famous martyr Philpot committed his papers, which afterwards made no inconsiderable part of our *martyr-books*. This Mr. Adam Winthrop had a son of the same name also, and of the same endowments and employments with his father. It was this third Adam Winthrop that was the father of that renowned John Winthrop, who was the father of New-England, and the founder of *a colony*, which, upon many accounts, like *him* that founded it, may challenge the first place among the English glories of America. Our JOHN WINTHROP, thus born at the mansion-house of his ancestors, at Groton in Suffolk, on June 12, 1587, enjoyed afterwards an agreeable education. But though he would rather have devoted himself unto the study of Mr. John Calvin, than of Sir Edward Cook; nevertheless, the accomplishments of a lawyer were those wherewith Heaven made his chief opportunities to be serviceable.

Being made, at the unusually early age of *eighteen*, a justice of peace, his virtues began to fall under a more general observation. He not only so bound himself to the behavior of a Christian, as to become exemplary for a conformity to the laws of Christianity in his own conversation, but also discovered a more than ordinary measure of those qualities which adorn an officer of humane society. His justice was impartial. It used the balance to weigh not the *cash*, but the *case* of those who were before him. His wisdom did exquisitely temper things according to the *art of governing*, which is a business of more contrivance than the *seven arts* of the schools. Oyer still went before *terminer* in all his administrations. His courage made him *dare to do right*, and fitted him to stand among the lions that have sometimes been the supporters of the throne. All of these virtues he rendered the more illustrious, by emblazoning them with the constant liberality and hospitality of a gentleman. This made him the *terror* of the wicked, and the *delight* of the sober, the *envy* of the many, but the *hope* of those who had any hopeful design in hand for the common good of the nation and the interests of religion.

The Charter for the Massachusetts Bay Colony

God planned to use these gifts of John Winthrop in a most remarkable venture: the Massachusetts Bay Company. In those days, groups of investors would put their money together and establish trading companies. The company would send workers to the New World to obtain furs, spices, and other exotic goods and ship them back to England for a profit. Each company had to be specially chartered by the King to receive authority and land to establish a colony in the New World. The colony would have a governor, but the board of directors and chief executive officer would stay in England, overseeing the operation and collecting the profits. Already other colonies had been founded in the New World by just such trading companies. These included the Virginia Company which settled Virginia under John Smith and the Plymouth Company of the Pilgrims which settled the Plymouth Colony in Massachusetts. By 1629 many Puritans in the established Church of England saw such a trading company as their providential means to plant another colony in the New World, and so the Massachusetts Bay Company was born.

The Massachusetts Bay Company appeared to be just another trading company. But there was a small but important detail that made it different from the other companies: The board of directors was not required to meet in London. In fact, the charter did not mention where the Company would meet. The King of England didn't notice this fact when he signed the Company charter. But the implications of this oversight were enormous. The whole company, including the board of directors and the governor, could move to the New World and effectively set up their own autonomous government. They could establish their own laws and operate without any direct supervision by the King's authorities in London. Most of the members of the Massachusetts Bay Company were Puritan. They had the full legal authority to move to New England and build a society according to the divine blueprint for civil states.

The Puritans recognized their unique opportunity and their divine mandate. The promises for this covenanted, reformed state are well summarized in Exodus 19:5-6: "Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation."

So the Puritans set forth on the course which Providence had laid out for them. John Winthrop explained their reasons for traveling thus to the New World. First, to carry the gospel to the New World, to bring the fullness of the Gentiles into the kingdom of God. Second, to escape God's judgment that was coming upon the corrupt churches of Europe. Third, to help solve the problems of overpopulation and poverty in England, where human life was being devalued and people were regarded as less valuable than horses and sheep. Fourth, to obey the Great Commission and Genesis 1:28, which says, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it."

His Calling to New England as Governor of the New Colony

Accordingly when the noble design of carrying a colony of chosen people into an American wilderness, was by some eminent persons undertaken, *John Winthrop* was, by the consent of all, chosen for the Moses, who must be the leader of so great an undertaking. Indeed, nothing but a *Mosaic spirit* could have carried him through the temptations, to which either his farewell to his own land, or his travel in a strange land, must needs expose a gentleman of his education. Wherefore having sold a fair estate of six or seven hundred a year, he transported himself with the effects of it into New-England in the year 1630, where he spent it upon the service of a famous plantation, founded and formed for the seat of the most *reformed Christianity*.

Winthrop continued there, conflicting with temptations of all sorts, as many years as the *nodes* of the *moon* take to dispatch a revolution. Those persons were never concerned in a new plantation, who know not that the unavoidable difficulties of such a thing will call for all the prudence and patience of a mortal man to encounter therewith. And they must be very insensible of the influence, which the *just wrath* of Heaven has permitted the *devils* to have upon this world, if they do not think that the difficulties of a new plantation, devoted unto the evangelical worship of our Lord Jesus Christ, must be yet more than ordinary. How prudently, how patiently, and with how much resignation to our Lord Jesus Christ, our brave Winthrop waded through these difficulties. Let posterity consider him with deep admiration. And know, that as the picture of this governor was, after his death, hung up with honor in the state-house of his country, so the wisdom, courage, and holy zeal of his life, were an example well-worthy to be copied by all that shall succeed him in government.

Were he now to be considered only as a Christian, we might therein propose him as greatly imitable. He was a very religious man. As he strictly kept his *heart*, so he kept his *house*, under the laws of piety. There he was every day constant in holy duties, both morning and evening, and on the Lord's days, and lectures. Though he wrote not down the preacher had declared in public worship, yet such was his attention, and such his retention in hearing, that he repeated unto his family the sermons which he had heard in the congregation.

But it is chiefly as a governor that he is now to be considered. Being the governor over the most considerable part of New England, he maintained the figure and honor of his place with the spirit of a true gentleman. Yet with such obliging condescension to the circumstances of the colony, that when a certain troublesome and malicious calumniator, well known in those times, printed his libelous nick-names upon the chief persons here, the worst nick-name he could find for the governor, was *John Temper-well*. When the calumnies of that ill man caused the Arch-bishop to summon one Mr. Cleaves before the King, in hopes to get some accusation from him against the country, Mr. Cleaves gave such an account of the governor's laudable carriage in all respects, and the serious devotion wherewith prayers were both publicly and privately made for his Majesty the King, that the King expressed himself most highly *pleased* therewith. He was only *sorry*

that so worthy a person should be no better accommodated than with the hardships of America.

He was, indeed, a governor, who had most exactly studied that book which, pretending to teach politicks, did only contain *three leaves*, and but *one word* in each of those leaves, which word was, MODERATION. Hence, though he were a zealous enemy to all vice, yet his practice was according to his judgment thus expressed: "In the infancy of plantations, justice should be administered with more lenity than in a settled state; because people are more apt then to transgress; partly out of ignorance of new laws and orders, partly out of oppression of business, and other straits...if the strings of a new instrument be wound up to their uttermost, they will quickly crack." But when some leading and learned men took offence at his conduct in this matter, and upon a conference gave it in as their opinion, "that a stricter discipline was to be used in the beginning of a plantation, than after its being with more age established and confirmed," the governor being readier to see *his own errors* than *other men's*, professed his purpose to endeavor their satisfaction with less of *lenity* in his administrations. At that conference there were drawn up several other articles to be observed between the governor and the rest of the magistrates, which were of this import: "That the magistrates, as far as might be, should beforehand ripen their consultations, to produce that unanimity in their public votes, which might make them liker to the voice of God; that if differences fell among them in their public meetings, they should speak only to the case, without any reflection, with all due modesty, and but by way of question; or desire the deferring of the cause to further time; and after sentence imitate privately no dislike; that they should be more familiar, friend and open unto each other, and more frequent in their visitations, and not any way expose each other's infirmities, but seek the honor of each other and all the Court; that one magistrate shall not cross the proceedings of another, without first advising with him; and that they should in all their appearances abroad, be so circumstanced as to prevent all contempt of authority; and that they should support and strengthen all under officers. All of which articles were observed by no man more than by the governor himself.

But while he thus did, as our New-English Nehemiah, the part of a *ruler* in managing the public affairs of our American Jerusalem, when there were Tobiahs and Sanballats enough to vex him, and give him the experiment of Luther's observation, *Omnis qui regit est tanquam signum, in quod omnia jacula, Satan et Mundus dirigunt*; he made himself still an exacter *parallel* unto that governor of Israel, by doing the part of a neighbor among the distressed people of the new plantation. To teach them the frugality necessary for those times, he abridged himself of a thousand comfortable things, which he had allowed himself elsewhere. His *habit* was not that *soft raiment*, which would have been disagreeable to a wilderness, and his table was not covered with the superfluities that would have invited unto sensualities. Water was commonly his only drink, though he gave wine to others. But at the same time his liberality unto the needy was even beyond measure generous; and therein he was continually causing "the blessing of him that was ready to perish to come upon him, and the heart of the widow and the orphan to sing for joy." But none more than those of deceased Ministers, whom he always treated with a very singular compassion; among the instances whereof we still enjoy with us the worthy and now aged son of that reverend Higginson, whose death left his family in a wide

world soon after his arrival here, publicly acknowledging the charitable Winthrop for his *foster-father*. It was oftentimes no small trial unto his faith, to think how a table for the people should be furnished when they first came into the wilderness! and for very many of the people his own good works were needful, and accordingly employed for the answering of his faith. Indeed, for a while the governor was the Joseph, unto whom the whole body of the people repaired when their corn failed them. And he continued relieving of them with his open-handed bounties, as long as he had any stock to do it. His lively *faith* to *see* the return of the "bread after many days," and not starve in the days that were to pass till that return should be seen, carried him cheerfully through those expenses.

Once it was observable that, on February 5, 1630, when he was distributing the last handful of the meal in the barrel unto a poor man distressed by the "wolf at the door," at that instant they spied a ship arrived at the harbor's mouth, laden with provisions for them all. The governor sometimes made his own *private purse* to be the *public's*. Not by *sucking* into it, but by *squeezing* out of it, for when the public treasury had nothing in it, he did himself defray the charges of the public from his own purse. And having learned that lesson of our Lord, "that it is better to give than to receive," he did, at the general court, when he was a third time chosen governor, make a speech unto this purpose: "That he had received gratuities from diverse towns, which he accepted with much comfort and content; and he had likewise received civilities from particular persons, which he could not refuse without incivility in himself: nevertheless, he took them with a trembling heart, in regard of God's word, and the conscience of his own infirmities; and therefore he desired them that they would not hereafter take it ill if he refused such presents for , the time to come." It was his custom also to send some of his family upon errands unto the houses of the poor, about their *meal time*, on purpose to *spy* whether they *wanted*; and if it were found that they wanted, he would make *that* the opportunity of sending supplies unto them. And there was one passage of his charity that was perhaps a little unusual.

In a hard and long winter, when wood was very scarce at Boston, a man gave him private information that a needy person in the neighborhood stole wood sometimes from *his* pile; whereupon the governor in a seeming anger did reply, "Does he so ? I'll take a course with him; go, call that man to me; I'll warrant you I'll cure him of stealing." When the man came, the governor considering that if he had stolen, it was more out of necessity than disposition, said unto him, "Friend, it is a severe winter, and I doubt you are but meanly provided for wood; wherefore I would have you supply your self at my wood-pile till this cold season be over." And he then merrily asked his friends, " Whether he had not effectually cured this man of stealing his wood?"

His Trials in Office

One would have imagined that so good a man could have had no enemies, if we had not had a daily and woeful experience to convince us that goodness itself will make enemies. It is a wonderful speech of Plato, (in one of his books, *De Republica*,) "For the trial of

true vertue, 'tis necessary that a good man (greek) Though he do no unjust thing, should suffer the infamy of the greatest injustice." The governor had by his unspotted integrity procured himself a great reputation among the people; and then the crime of popularity was laid unto his charge by such, who were willing to deliver him from the danger of having *all men speak well of him*. Yea, there were persons eminent both for figure and for number, unto whom it was almost *essential* to *dislike* every thing that came from *him*. Yet *he* always maintained an amicable correspondence with them; as believing that they acted according to their judgment and conscience, or that their eyes were held by some temptation in the worst of all their oppositions. Indeed, his right works were so many, that they exposed him unto the envy of his neighbors; and of such *power* was that *envy*, that sometimes he could not *stand before it*. But it was by *not standing* that he most effectually *withstood* it all. Great attempts were sometimes made among the freemen to get him left out from his place in the government upon little presences, lest by the too frequent choice of one man, the government should cease to be by *choice*. With a particular aim at him, sermons were preached at the anniversary Court of election, to dissuade the freemen from choosing one man twice together. This was the reward of his *extraordinary serviceableness*! But when these attempts *did* succeed, as they sometimes did, his profound humility appeared in that equality of mind, wherewith he applied himself cheerfully to serve the country in whatever station their votes had allotted for him. And one year when the votes came to be numbered, there were found six less for Mr. Winthrop than for another gentleman who then stood in competition. But several other persons regularly tendering their votes before the election was published, were, upon a very frivolous objection, refused by some of the magistrates that were afraid lest the election should at last fall upon Mr. Winthrop. Which, though it was well perceived, yet such was the self-denial of this patriot, that he would not permit any notice to be taken of the injury.

But these trials were nothing in comparison of those harsher and harder treats, which he sometimes had from the frowardness of not a few in the days of their paroxisms; and from the faction of some against him, not much unlike that of the Piazzis in Florence against the family of the Medices. All of which he at last conquered by conforming to the famous Judge's motto, *Prudens qui Patiens*. The oracles of God have said, "Envy is rottenness to the bones;" and Gulielmus Parisiensis applies it unto rulers, who are as it were the *bones* of the societies which they belong unto: "Envy," says he, "is often found among them, and it is rottenness unto them." Our Winthrop encountered this *envy* from others, but conquered it, by being free from it himself.

Were it not for the sake of introducing the exemplary skill of this wise man, at *giving soft answers*, one would not choose to relate those instances of wrath which he had sometimes to encounter with. But he was for his gentleness, his forbearance and magnanimity, a pattern so worthy to be written *after*, that something must here be written *of* it. He seemed indeed never to speak any other language than that of Theodosius: "If any man speak evil of the governor, if it be through lightness, 'tis to be contemned; if it be through madness, 'tis to be pitied; if it be through injury, 'tis to be remitted." Behold, reader, the "meekness of wisdom" notably exemplified! There was a time when he received a very sharp letter from a gentleman who was a member of the Court, but he

delivered back the letter unto the messengers that brought it, with such a Christian speech as this: " I am not willing to keep such a matter of provocation by me! Afterwards the same gentleman was compelled by the scarcity of provisions to send unto him that he would sell him some of his cattle; whereupon the governor prayed him to accept what he had sent for as a token of his good will ; but the gentleman returned him this answer: " Sir, your overcoming of yourself hath overcome me." and afterwards gave demonstration of it. The French have a saying, That *Un honest, homme, est un homme mesle!* a good man is a *mixed* man; and there hardly ever was a more sensible *mixture* of those two things, *resolution* and *condescension*, than in this good man. There was a time when the court of election being, for fear of tumult, held at Cambridge, May 17, 1637, the sectarian part of the country, who had the year before gotten a governor more unto their mind, had a project now to have confounded the election, by demanding that the court would consider a petition then tendered before their proceeding thereunto. Mr. Winthrop saw that this was only a trick to throw all into confusion, by putting off the choice of the governor and assistants until the *day* should be over. Therefore he did, with a strenuous resolution, procure a disappointment unto that mischievous and ruinous contrivance. Nevertheless, Mr. Winthrop himself being by the voice of the freemen in this exigency chosen the governor, and all of the other party left out, that ill-affected party discovered the *dirt* and *mire*, which remained with them, after the *storm* was over; particularly the sergeants, whose office it was to attend the governor, laid down their halberds. But such was the condescension of this governor, as to take no present notice of this anger and contempt, but only order some of his own servants to take the halberds. And when the country manifested their deep resentments of the affront thus offered him, *he* prayed them to overlook it. But it was not long before a compensation was made for these things by the *doubled respects* which were from all parts paid unto him.

Again, there was a time when the suppression of an *antinomian* and *familistical* faction, which extremely threatened the ruin of the country, was generally thought much owing unto this renowned man. Therefore, when the friends of that faction could not wreak their displeasure on him with any *political* vexations, they set themselves to do it by *ecclesiastical* ones. Accordingly when a sentence of banishment was passed on the ringleaders of those disturbances, who

*Maria et Terras, Coelumque profundum, Quippe ferant Rapidi, secum
vertantque per Auras;*⁸

many at the church of Boston, who were then that way too much inclined, most earnestly solicited the elders of that church, whereof the governor was a member, to call him forth as an *offender*, for passing of that sentence. The elders were unwilling to do any such thing. But the governor understanding the ferment among the people took that occasion to make a speech in the congregation to this effect:

"BRETHREN: Understanding that some of you have desired that I should answer for an *offence* lately taken among you; had I been called upon so to do, I would, first, have advised with the ministers of the country, whether

the *church* had power to call in question the *civil* court ; and I would, secondly, have advised with the rest of the *court*, whether I might discover their counsels unto the *church*. But though I know that the reverend elders of this church, and some others, do very well apprehend that the *church* cannot enquire into the proceedings of the *court*; yet, for the satisfaction of the weaker, who do not apprehend it, I will declare my mind concerning it. If the church have any such power, they have it from the Lord Jesus Christ. But the Lord Jesus Christ hath disclaimed it, not only by *practice*, but also by *precept*, which we have in his gospel, Matt. xx. 25, 26. It is true, indeed, that *magistrates*, as they are *church-members*, are accountable unto the *church* for their failings; but that is when they are out of their calling. When Uzziah would go offer incense in the *temple*, the officers of the church called him to an account, and withstood him, but when Asa put the prophet in prison, the officers of the church did not call *him* to an account for *that*. If the *magistrate* shall in a *private* way wrong any man, the church may call him to an account for it; but if he be in pursuance of a course of *justice*, though the thing that he does be *unjust*, yet he is not accountable for it before the church. As for myself, I did nothing in the causes of any of the brethren but by the advice of the elders of the church. Moreover, in the *oath* which I have taken there is this clause: "In all cases wherein you are to give your vote, you shall do as in your judgment and conscience you shall see to be just, and for the public good." And I am satisfied, it is most for the glory of God, and the public good, that there has been such a sentence passed ; yea, those brethren are so divided from the rest of the country in their opinions and practices, that it cannot stand with the *public peace* for them to continue with us ; Abraham saw that Hagar and Ishmael must be sent away."

By such a speech he marvelously convinced, satisfied and mollified the uneasy brethren of the church. And after a little patient waiting, the *differences* all so wore away, that the church, merely as a token of respect unto the governor when he had newly met with some *losses* in his estate, sent him a present of several hundred pounds. Once more there was a time when some active spirits among the deputies of the colony, by their endeavors not only to make themselves a Court of Judicature, but also to take away the *negative* by which the magistrates might check their votes, had like by over-driving to have run the whole government into something too *democratic*. And if there were a town in Spain undermined by *coney*s, another town in Thrace destroyed by *moles*, a third in Greece ruined by *frogs*, a fourth in Germany subverted by *rats*; I must on this occasion add, that there was a country in America almost confounded by a *swine*. A certain stray sow being found, was claimed by two several persons with a claim so equally maintained on both sides, that after six or seven years' *hunting* the business from one court unto another, it was brought at last into the General Court, where the final determination was, "that it was impossible to proceed unto any judgment in the case." However, in the debate of this matter, the negative of the *upper-house* upon the *lower* in that Court was brought upon the stage ; and agitated with so hot a zeal, that a *little more, and all had been in the fire*. In these agitations, the governor was informed that an offence had been taken by some

eminent persons at certain passages in a discourse by him written thereabout. With his usual *condescension*, when he next came into the General Court, he made a speech of this import:

"I understand that some have taken offence at something that I have lately written; which offence I desire to remove now, and begin this year in a reconciled state with you all. As for the *matter* of my writing, I kind the concurrence of my brethren; it is a point of judgment which is not at my own disposing. I have examined it over and over again by such light as God has given me, from the rules of religion, reason and custom; and I see no cause to retract any thing of it: wherefore I must enjoy my liberty in that, as you do your selves. But for the *manner*, this, and all that was blame-worthy in it, was wholly my own; and whatsoever I might allege for my own justification therein before men, I wave it, as now setting myself before another Judgment seat. However, what I wrote was upon great provocation, and to vindicate my self and others from great aspersion; yet that was no sufficient warrant for me to allow any distemper of spirit in myself; and I doubt I have been too prodigal of my brethren's reputation; I might have maintained my cause without casting any blemish upon others, when I made that my conclusion, 'And now let religion and sound reason give judgment in the ease;' it looked as if I arrogated too much unto myself, and too little to others. And when I made that profession, 'That I would maintain what I wrote before all the world,' though such words might modestly be spoken, yet I perceive an unbecoming *pride* of my own heart breathing in them. For these failings, I ask pardon of God and man."

Sic ait, et dicto citius Tumida Aequora placat, Collectasque fugat Nubes, Solemque reducit.

This acknowledging disposition in the governor made them all acknowledge, that he was truly "a man of an excellent spirit." In fine, the victories of an Alexander, a Hannibal, or a Caesar over *other men*, were not so glorious as the victories of this great man over *himself*; which also at last proved victories over other men.

But the stormiest of all the *trials* that ever befell this gentleman, was in the year 1645, when he was, in *title*, no more than Deputy-governor of the colony. If the famous Cato were forty-four times called into judgment, but as often acquitted; let it not be wondered, and if our famous Winthrop were one time so. There happening certain seditious and mutinous practices in the town of Elingham, the Deputy-governor, as legally as prudently, interposed his authority for the checking of them. There followed such an *enchantment* upon the minds of the deputies in the General Court, that upon a scandalous petition of the delinquents unto them, wherein a pretended invasion made upon the liberties of the people was complained of, the Deputy-governor was most irregularly called forth unto an ignominious *hearing* before them in a vast assembly. With a *sagacious humility* he consented, although he showed them how he might have refused it. The result of that hearing was, that notwithstanding the touchy jealousy of the people

about their liberties lay at the bottom of all this prosecution, yet Mr. Winthrop was publicly acquitted, and the offenders were severally fined and censured. But Mr. Winthrop then resuming the place of Deputy-governor on the bench, saw cause to speak unto the *root of the matter* after this manner:

"I shall not now speak any thing about the past proceedings of this Court, or the person therein concerned. Only I bless God that I see an issue of this troublesome affair. I am well satisfied that I was publicly *accused*, and that I am now publicly *acquitted*. But though I am justified before men, yet it may be the Lord hath seen so much amiss in my administrations, as calls me to be humbled; and indeed for me to have been thus charged by men, is it self a matter of humiliation, whereof I desire to make a right use before the Lord. If Miriam's father spit in her face, she is to be ashamed. But give me leave, before you go, to say something that may rectify the *opinions* of many people, from whence the distempers have risen that have lately prevailed upon the body of this people. The questions that have troubled the country have been about the *authority of the magistracy*, and the *liberty of the people*. It is *you* who have called us unto this office; but being thus called we have our authority from God; it is the ordinance of God, and it hath the image of God stamped upon it ; and the contempt of it has been vindicated by God with terrible examples of his vengeance. I entreat you to consider, that when you choose magistrates, you take them from among your selves, 'men subject unto like passions with yourselves.' If you see *our* infirmities, reflect on *your own*, and you will not be so severe censurers of *ours*. We count him a good servant who breaks not his covenant: the covenant between us and you, is the oath you have taken of us, which is to this purpose, 'that we shall govern you, and judge your causes, according to God's laws, and our own, according to our best skill.' As for our skill, you must run the hazard of it; and if there be an error, not in the will, but only in skill, it becomes you to bear it. Nor would I have you to mistake in the point of your own *liberty*. There is a liberty of corrupt nature, which is affected both by men and beasts to do what they list ; and this liberty is inconsistent with authority, impatient of all restraint; by this liberty, *Sumus Omnes Deteriores*; 11 'tis the grand enemy of *truth* and *peace*, and all the ordinances of God are bent against it. But there is a civil, a moral, a federal liberty which is the proper end and object of authority; it is a liberty for that only which is *just* and *good*; for this liberty you are to stand with the hazard of your very lives; and what ever crosses it is not authority, but a distemper thereof. This liberty is maintained in way of subjection to authority; and the authority set over you will in all administration for your good be quietly submitted unto, by all but such as have a disposition to shake off the yoke, and lose their true liberty, by their murmuring at the honor and power of authority."

The spell that was upon the eyes of the people being thus dissolved, their distorted and enraged notions of things all vanished; and the people would not afterwards entrust the helm of the weather-beaten bark in any other hands but Mr. Winthrop's until he died.

Indeed, such was the *mixture* of distant qualities in him, as to make a most admirable temper. And his having a certain greatness of soul, which rendered him grave, generous, courageous, resolved, well-applied, and every way a *gentleman* in his demeanor, did not hinder him from taking sometimes the old Roman's way to avoid confusions, namely *Cedendo*;¹² or from discouraging some things which are agreeable enough to most that wear the name of *gentlemen*. Hereof I will give no instances, but only *oppose* two passages of his life.

His Experience with the Plymouth Colony

In the year 1632, the governor, with his pastor, Mr. Wilson, and some other gentlemen, to settle a good understanding between the two colonies traveled as far as Plymouth, more than forty miles, through a howling wilderness, no better accommodated in those early days than the princes that in Solomon's time saw "servants on horseback," or than *genus* and *species* in the old epigram, "going on foot." The difficulty of the *walk*, was abundantly compensated by the honorable, *first* reception, and *then* dismissal, which they found from the rulers of Plymouth. By the good correspondence thus established between the new colonies, who were like the floating bottles wearing this motto: *Si Collidimur Frangimur*.

But there were at this time in Plymouth two ministers, leavened so far with the humors of the rigid separation, that they insisted vehemently upon the unlawfulness of calling any unregenerate man by the name of "good-man such an one," until by their indiscreet urging of this whimsy, the place began to be disquieted. The wiser people being troubled at these trifles, they took the opportunity of Governor Winthrop's being there, to have the thing publicly propounded in the congregation. In answer "hereunto, he distinguished between a *theological* and a *moral* goodness; adding, that when Juries were first used in England, it was usual for the crier, after the names of persons fit for that service were called over, to bid them all, "Attend, good men and true; whence it grew to be a *civil custom* in the English nation, for neighbors living by one another, to call one another "good man such an one ;" and it was pity now to make a stir about a civil custom, so innocently introduced. And that speech of Mr. Winthrop's put a lasting stop to the little, idle, whimsical conceits, then beginning to grow obstreperous.

Nevertheless, there was one civil custom used *in* (and in few *but*) the English nation, which this gentleman did endeavor to abolish in this country; and that was, the *usage of drinking to one another*. For although by drinking to one another, no more is meant than an act of courtesy, when one going to drink, does invite another to do so too, for the same ends with himself; nevertheless the governor (not altogether unlike to Cleomenes, of whom it is reported by Plutarch, (greek) *Nolenti poculum nunquam proebuit*.) considered

the *impertinency* and *insignificance* of this usage, as to any of *those ends* that are usually pretended for it; and that indeed it ordinarily served for no ends at all, but only to provoke persons unto, *unseasonable* and perhaps *unreasonable* drinking, and at last produce that abominable *health-drinking*, which the fathers of old so severely rebuked in the Pagans, and which the Papists themselves do condemn, when their casuists pronounce it, *Peccatum mortale, provocare ad aequales calices, et Nefas Respondere*.¹⁵ Wherefore in his own most hospitable house he left it off, not out of any silly or stingy fancy, but merely that by his *example* a greater temperance, with liberty of drinking, might be recommended, and sundry inconveniences in drinking avoided. His example accordingly began to be much followed by the sober people in this country, as it now also begins among persons of the highest rank in the English nation itself. At last an order of court came to be made against that ceremony in drinking, and then, the *old wont* violently returned, with a *Nititur in Vetitum*.¹⁶

Personal and Family Estate

Many were the afflictions of this righteous man! He lost much of his estate in a ship, and in an house, quickly after his coming to New England, besides the prodigious expense of it in the difficulties of his first coming hither. Afterwards his assiduous application unto the public affairs, made him so much to neglect his own private interests, that an unjust steward ran him in debt before he was aware of it. For the payment of it he was forced, many years before his decease, to sell the most of what he had left unto him in the country. Nevertheless, by the observable blessings of God upon the posterity of this liberal man, his children all of them came to fair estates, and lived in good fashion and credit.

Moreover, he successively buried three wives. His first wife was Mary Worth, the daughter of a distinguished Essex nobleman. Three weeks later John was married at the age of seventeen. Ten months later, just after his eighteenth birthday, he became a father. John and his wife Mary worked hard and had six children in ten years. Then Mary suddenly died.

The second wife was the daughter of Mr. William Clopton, of London, who died with her child, on his first wedding anniversary.

His third wife, Margaret, was the daughter of the truly worshipful Sir John Tyndal. She made it her whole care to please, first God, and then her husband. By all accounts, Margaret was one of the most appealing women in all of American history. She was beautiful and gracious. She was also a woman of faith. John Winthrop treasured her as his greatest possession. When he traveled away from home, he never failed to send her love letters. Here is one of his letters:

I am still detayned from thee, but it is by the Lord, who hath a greater interest in me than thy selfe, when his work is donne he will restore me to thee againe to or mutuall comfort:

Amen...I hope to be with thee to morrowe...So I kisse my sweet wife & rest. Thine, Jo: Winthrop.

By Margaret he had four sons, which survived and honored their father. And unto all these, the addition of the *distempers*, ever now and then raised in the country, procured unto him a very singular share of trouble.

Yea, so hard was the measure which he found even among pious men, in the temptations of a wilderness, that when the thunder and lightning had smitten a wind-mill whereof he was owner, some had such things in their heads as publicly to reproach this most charitable of men as if the voice of the Almighty had rebuked, I know not what oppression, which they judged him guilty of. These things I would not have mentioned, but that the instances may fortify the expectations of my best readers for such afflictions.

His Last Days on Earth

He that had been for his attainments, as they said of the blessed Macarius, a (greek) (*an old man, while a young one,*) and that had in his young days met with many of those *ill* days, whereof he could say, he had "little pleasure in them;" now found *old age* in its infirmities advancing *earlier* upon him, than it came upon his much longer-lived progenitors. While he was yet seven years off of that which we call "the grand climacterical," he felt the approaches of his dissolution ; and finding he could say,

Non Ilabitus, non ipse Color, non Gressus Euntis, Non species Eadem, quoe fuit ante, manet;

He then wrote this account of himself: "Age now comes upon me, and infirmities therewithal, which makes me apprehend, that the time of my departure out of this world is not far off. However, our times are all in the Lord's hand, so as we need not trouble our thoughts how long or short they may be, but how we may be found faithful when we are called for." But at last when *that year* came, he took a cold which turned into a fever, whereof he lay sick about a month, and in that sickness, as it hath been observed, that there was allowed unto the serpent the "bruising of the heel;" and accordingly at the *heel* or the *close* of our lives the *old serpent* will be nibbling more than ever in our lives before; and when the devil sees that we shall shortly be "where the wicked cease from troubling," that *wicked one* will trouble us more than ever. So this eminent saint now underwent sharp conflicts with the tempter, whose *wrath* grew *great*, as the time to exert it grew *short*; and he was buffeted with the disconsolate thoughts of black and sore *desertions*, wherein he could use that sad representation of his own condition:

*Nuper eram Judex; Jam Judicor; Ante Tribunal Subsistens paveo; Judicor ipse modo.*¹⁹

But it was not long before those clouds were dispelled, and he enjoyed in his holy soul the great consolations of God! While he thus lay ripening for heaven, he did out of obedience unto the *ordinance* of our Lord, send for the elders of the church to pray with him. They and the whole church *fasted* as well as *prayed* for him; and in that *fast* the venerable Cotton preached on Psal. xxxv. 13,14: "When they were sick, I humbled my self with fasting; I behaved my self as though he had been my friend or brother; I bowed down heavily as one that mourned for his mother:" from whence I find him raising that observation, "The sickness of one that is to us as a friend, a brother, a mother, is a just occasion of deep humbling our souls with fasting and prayer;" and making this application.

"Upon this occasion we are now to attend this duty for a governor, who has been to us as a friend in his *counsel* for all things, and help for our bodies by *physick*, for our estates by *law*, and of whom there was no fear of his becoming an *enemy*, like the friends of David: a governor who has been unto us as a brother; not usurping authority over the church; often speaking his advice, and often contradicted, even by young men, and some of low degree; yet not replying, but offering satisfaction also when any supposed offences have arisen; a governor who has been unto us as a mother, parent like distributing his goods to brethren and neighbors at his first coming; and *gently* bearing our infirmities without taking notice of them."

Such a governor, after he had been more than ten several times by the people chosen their governor, was New-England now to lose. Some twenty thousand settlers had poured into Massachusetts during his life of devotion to the colony. Winthrop governed them as if they were his own children. He required that they treat the Indians with dignity and respect, so that they might be won over to Christ. A few settlers resented his power and influence. But no one could deny that the very existence of Massachusetts was due to the courage, faith, and sacrifice of their governor.

Having, like Jacob, first left his council and blessing with his children gathered about his bed-side; and, like David, "served his generation by the will of God," he "gave up the ghost," and fell asleep on March 26, 1649. Having, like the dying Emperor Valentinian, this above all his other *victories* for his triumphs, *His overcoming of himself*.

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