

JOHN WINTHROP (1588-1649)
A MODEL OF CHRISTIAN CHARITY (1630)

Thus stands the cause between God and us: we are entered into covenant with Him for this work. We have taken out a commission. The Lord has given us leave to draw our own articles; we have professed to enterprise these actions upon these and these ends; we have hereupon besought Him of favor and blessing. Now if the Lord shall please to hear us and bring us in peace to the place we desire, then has He ratified this Covenant and sealed our commission, [and] will expect a strict performance of the articles contained in it. But if we shall neglect the observation of these articles, which are the ends we have propounded, and dissembling with our God shall fall to embrace this present world and prosecute our carnal intentions, seeking great things for ourselves and our posterity, the Lord will surely break out in wrath against us, be revenged of such a perjured people, and make us know the price of the breach of such a covenant.

Now the only way to avoid this shipwreck and to provide for our posterity is to follow the counsel of Micah, “to do justly, to love mercy, to walk humbly with our God.” For this end, we must be knit together in this work as one man. We must entertain each other in brotherly affection. We must be willing to abridge ourselves of our superfluities for the supply of others’ necessities. We must uphold a familiar commerce together in all meekness, gentleness, patience, and liberality. We must delight in each other, make others’ conditions our own; rejoice together, mourn together, labor, and suffer together — always having before our eyes our commission and community in the work, our community as members of the same body. So shall we keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

The Lord will be our God and delight to dwell among us as His own people and will command a blessing upon us in all our ways, so that we shall see much more of His wisdom, power, goodness and truth than formerly we have been acquainted with. We shall find that the God of Israel is among us, when ten of us shall be able to resist a thousand of our enemies, when He shall make us a praise and glory, that men shall say of succeeding plantations, “the Lord make it like that of New England.”

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 made a story and a byword through the world; we shall open the mouths of enemies to speak evil of the ways of God and all professors for God’s sake; we shall shame the faces of many of God’s worthy servants, and cause their prayers to be turned into curses upon us till we be consumed out of the good land whither we are going.

Taken from John Winthrop, “A Model of Christian Charity,” in *The American Intellectual Tradition*, eds. David A. Hollinger and Charles Capper (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 1: 14–15.