

# A Modell of Christian Charity

written by John Winthrop for the Massachusetts Bay Colony, 1630

## A MODELL HEREOF

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

## THE REASON HEREOF

1. Reason: First, to hold conformity with the rest of his workes being delighted to shewe forthe the glory of his wisdom in the variety and differance of the Creatures and the glory of his power in ordering all these differences for the preservacion and good of the whole; and the glory of his greatnes that as it is the glory of princes to have many officers, soe this great King will have many Stewards, counting himselfe more honoured in dispencheing his gifts to man by man, than if tree did it by his owne immediate hand.

2. Reason: Secondly, That he might have the more occasion to manifest the worke of his Spirit: first, upon the wicked in moderate ing and restraineing them: soe that the riche and mighty should not eate upp the poore, nor the poore and dispised rise upp against their superiours and shake off thiere yoake; secondly in the regenerate in exerciseing his graces in them, as in the greate ones, their love, mercy, gentlenes, temperance, etc., in the poore and inferiour sorte, thiere faithe, patience, obedience, etc.

3. Reason: Thirdly, That every man might have need of other, and from hence they might be all knit more nearly together in the Bond of brotherly affeccion: from hence it appeares plainly that noe man is made more honourable than another or more wealthy etc., out of any perticuler and singuler respect to himselfe but for the glory of his Creator and the Common good of the Creature, Man, Therefore God still reserves the propperty of these gifts to himselfe as Ezek: 16.17. he there calls wealthe his gold and his silver, etc. Prov: 3.9 he claimes thiere service as his due, honour the Lord with thy riches, etc. All men being thus (by divine providence) ranked into two sortes, riche and poore; under the first, are comprehended all such as are able to live comfortably by thiere owne meanes duely improved; and all others are poore according to the former distribution. There are two rules whereby wee are to walke one towards another: JUSTICE and MERCY. These are allwayes distinguished in thiere Act and in thiere object, yet may they both concurre in the same Subject in eache respect; as sometimes there may be an occasion of shewing mercy to a rich man, in some sudden danger of distresse, and allsoe doeing of meere Justice to a poor man in regard of some perticuler contract, etc. There is likewise a double Lawe by which wee are regulated in our conversacion one towards another: in both the former respects, the lawe of nature and the lawe of grace, or the morrall lawe or the lawe of the gospel!, to omit the rule of Justice as not properly belonging to this purpose otherwise than it may fall into consideracion in some perticuler Cases: By the first of these lawes man as he was enabled soe withall [is] commanded to love his neighbour as himselfe. Upon this ground stands all the precepts of the morrall lawe, which concernes our dealings with men. To apply this to the

works of mercy this law requires two things: first, that every man afford his help to another in every want or distress. Secondly, That hee performe this out of the same affection which makes him careful! of his owne good according to that of our Saviour, Math: [7.12] Whatsoever ye would that men should doe to you. This was practiced by Abraham and Lott in entertaineing the Angells and the old man of Gibeon.

The Lawe of Grace or the Gospell hath some difference from the former as in these respects: first, the lawe of nature was given to man in the estate of innocency; this of the gospell in the estate of regeneracy. Secondly, the former propounds one man to another, as the same fleshe and Image of god; this as a brother in Christ allsoe, and in the Communion of the same spirit and soe teacheth us to put a difference betweene Christians and others. Doe good to all, especially to the household of faith; upon this ground the Israelites were to putt a difference betweene the brethren of such as were strangers though not of the Canaanites. Thirdly, the Lawe of nature could give noe rules for dealing with enemies, for all are to be considered as friends in the estate of innocency, but the Gospell commands love to an enemy. Proove: If thine Enemy hunger feede him; Love your Enemies, doe good to them that hate you Math: 5.44.

This Lawe of the Gospell propoundes likewise a difference of seasons and occasions. There is a tyme when a Christian must sell all and give to the poore, as they did in the Apostles times. There is a tyme allsoe when a Christian (though they give not all yet) must give beyond their ability, as they of Macedonia. Cor: 2.6. Likewise community of perills calls for extraordinary liberallity and soe cloth Community in some special! service for the Church. Lastly, when there is noe other meanes whereby our Christian brother may be relieved in this distresse, wee must help him beyond our ability, rather than tempt God, in putting him upon help by miraculous or extraordinary meanes.

It rests now to make some application of this discourse by the present designe which gave the occasion of writing of in Herein are four things to be propounded: first, the persons; secondly, the worke; thirdly, the end; fourthly, the meanes

1. For the persons, wee are a Company professing our selves fellow members of Christ, in which respect onely though wee were absent from eache other many miles, and had our employments as farre distant, yet wee ought to account our selves knits together by this bond of love, and live in the exercise of it, if wee would have comforte of our being in Christ. This was notorious in the practice of the Christians in former times, as is testified of the Waldenses from the mouth of one of the adversaries Aeneas Sylvius, mutuo [solent amare] pene antequam norint. They use to love any of their own religion even before they were acquainted with them.

2. For the worke wee have in hand, it is by a mutuall consent through a special overruling providence, and a more than an ordinary approbation of the Churches of Christ to seeke out a place of Cohabitation and Consorteshipp under a due forme of Government both civill and ecclesiastical!. In such cases as this the care of the publique must oversway all private respects, by which not onely conscience, but meare Civill pollicy cloth binde us; for it is a true rule that perticuler estates cannott subsist in the ruine of the publique.

3. The end is to improve our lives, to doe more service to the Lord, the comferte and encrease of the body of Christ whereof wee are members, that our selves and posterity may be the better preserved from the Common corrupcions of this evill world, to serve the Lord and worke out our Salvacion under the power and purity of his holy Ordinances.

4. For the meanes whereby this must bee effected, they are twofold, a Conformity with the worke and end wee aime at; these wee see are extraordinary, therefore wee must not content our selves with usuall ordinary meanest Whatsoever wee did or ought to have done when wee lived in England, the same must wee doe and more allsoe where wee goe: That which the most in their Churches mainteine as a truthe in profession onely, wee must bring into familiar and constant practice, as in this duty of love wee must love brotherly without dissimulation, wee must love one another with a pure hearse fervently, wee must beare one anothers burthens, wee must not looke onely on our owne things but allsoe on the things of our brethren, neither must wee think that the lord will beare with such faileings at our hands as tree clothe from those among whome wee have lived.

Thus stands the cause betweene God and us. Wee are entered into Covenant with him for this worke, wee have taken out a Commission the Lord hath given us leave to draw our owne Articles, wee have professed to enterprise these Accions upon these and these ends, wee have hereupon besought him of favour and blessing: Now if the Lord shall please to heare us, and bring us in peace to the place wee desire. then hath tree ratified this Covenant and sealed our Commission [and] will expect a strickt performance of the Articles contained in it, but if wee shall neglect the observacion of these Articles which are the ends wee have propounded, and dissembling with our God, shall fall to embrace this present world and prosecute our carnall intencions seekeing grease things for our selves and our posterity, the Lord will surely breake out in wrathe against us, be revenged of such a perjured people and make us knowe the price of the breache of such a Covenant.

Now the onely way to avoyde this shipwracke and to provide for our posterity is to followe the Counsell of Micah, to doe Justly, to love mercy, to walke humbly with our God. For this end, wee must be knit together in this worke as one man, wee must entertaine each other in brotherly Affeccion, wee must be willing to abridge our selves of our superfiuties, for the supply of others necessities, wee must uphold a familiar Commerce together in all meeknes, gentlenes, patience and liberallity, wee must delight in each other, make others Condictions our owne, rejoyce together, mourne together, labour and suffer together, allwayes haveing before our eyes our Commission and Community in the worke, our Community as members of the same body, soe shall wee keepe the unitie of the spirit in the bond of peace, the Lord will be our God and delight to dwell among us as his owne people and will command a blessing upon us in all our wayes, soe that wee shall see much more of his wisdome, power, goodnes and truthe than formerly wee have beene acquainted with. Wee shall finde that the God of Israell is among us, when ten of us shall be able to resist a thousand of our enemies, when hee shall make us a prayse and glory, that men shall say of succeeding plantacions: the lord make it like that of New England: for wee must Consider that wee shall be as a Citty upon a Hill, the eies of all people are uppon us; soe that if wee shall deale falsely with our god in this worke wee have undertaken and soe cause him to withdrawe his present help from us, wee shall shame the faces of many of gods worthy servants, and cause their prayers to be turned into Cursses upon us till wee be consumed out of the good

land whither wee are goeing: And to shut upp this discourse with that exhortacion of Moses, that faithful! servant of the Lord in his last farewell to Israell, Deut. 30. Beloved there is now sett before us life, and good, deathe and evill in that wee are Commaunded this day to love the Lord our God, and to love one another, to walke in his wayes and to keepe his Commaundements and his Ordinance, and his lawes, and the Articles of our Covenant with him that wee may live and be multiplied, and that the Lord our God may blesse us in the land whither we goe to possesse it: But if our hearses shall turne away soe that wee will not obey, but shall be seduced and worship . . . other Gods, our pleasures, and proffitts, and serve them; it is propounded unto us this day, wee shall surely perishe out of the good Land whither wee passe over this vast Sea to possesse it;

Therefore lett us choose life,  
that wee, and our Seede,  
may live; by obeyeing his  
voyce, and cleaveing to him,  
for hee is our life, and  
our prosperity.

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