

16 QUOTATIONS



John Winthrop

(1588-1649)

John Winthrop led the second group of Puritans to America in 1630, founding the Massachusetts Bay Colony, after the Pilgrims had established the Plymouth Colony in 1620. He was elected Governor before the journey and began his *Journal* with a sense of himself as another Moses chosen to lead his people to a new promised land. Winthrop had been a justice of the peace and is more legalistic and less heartfelt and inclined to literary narrative than Bradford in *Of Plymouth Plantation* (1620-1647). Some of Winthrop's journal entries reveal characteristics that led to the later witchcraft mania in 1692, including collective paranoia in response to strange lights at sea, mysterious disappearances, disembodied voices and—worst of all—a snake that crawled into the meeting house during a sermon.

ORDER OF TOPICS: love, liberty, Democracy, Massachusetts Bay Colony, Anne Hutchinson, acts of God, parallel of Puritans to Israelites, life in the colony, *snake in the meeting house!*

LOVE

Love is the bond of perfection.

To love and live beloved is the soul's paradise.

LIBERTY

Liberty is the proper end and object of authority, and cannot subsist without it; and it is liberty to that which is good, just, and honest.

DEMOCRACY

A democracy is...accounted the meanest and worst of all forms of government.

MASSACHUSETTS BAY COLONY

For we must consider that we shall be 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. [1630]

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 our selves 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...our community as members of the same body....

Most of our people went on shore upon the land of Cape Ann, which lay very near us, and gathered store of fine strawberries. An Indian came aboard us and lay there all night.... The poorer sort of people (who lay long in tents, etc.) were much afflicted with the scurvy, and many died, especially at Boston and Charlestown... [1630]

Factions began to grow among the people, some adhering more to the old governor, Mr. Winthrop, and others to the late governor, Mr. Dudley—the former carrying matters with more lenity, and the latter with more severity...it was his judgment, that in the infancy of plantation, justice should be administered with more lenity than in a settled state, because people were then more apt to transgress, partly of ignorance of new laws and orders... Mr. Winthrop acknowledged that he was convinced, that he had failed in over much lenity and remissness, and would endeavor (by God's assistance) to take a more strict course hereafter... [1636]

ANNE HUTCHINSON EXILED

The Court also sent for Mrs. Hutchinson, and charged her with divers matters, as her keeping two public lectures every week in her house, whereto sixty or eighty persons did usually resort, and for reproaching most of the ministers (*viz.* All except Mr. Cotton) for not preaching a covenant of free grace, and that they had not the seal of the spirit, nor were able ministers of the New Testament; which were clearly proved against her, though she sought to shift it off...she had it revealed to her, that she should come into New England, and should here be persecuted, and that God would ruin us and our posterity, and the whole state, for the same. So the Court proceeded and banished her.... Mr. Cotton pronounced the sentence of admonition with great solemnity, and with much zeal and detestation of her errors and pride of spirit...she made a retraction of near all, but with such explanations and circumstances as gave no satisfaction to the church.... Then she...confessed that what she had spoken against the magistrates at the Court (by way of revelation) was rash and ungrounded...yet she impudently persisted in her [denial that she had been preaching heretical doctrines], to the astonishment of all the assembly... After she was excommunicated, her spirits, which seemed before to be somewhat dejected, revived again, and she gloried in her sufferings, saying that it was the greatest happiness, next to Christ, that ever befell her. [1636]

ACTS OF GOD

Mr. Winthrop the younger, one of the magistrates, having many books in a chamber where there was corn of divers sorts, had among them one wherein the Greek testament, the psalms and the common prayer were bound together. He found the common prayer [of the rejected Anglican Church of England] eaten with mice, every leaf of it, and not any of the two other touched, nor any other of his books, though there were above a thousand. [1639]

A godly woman of the church of Boston...had a Negro maid went into the room very late, and let fall some snuff of the candle upon the linen, so as by morning all the linen was burned to tinder, and the boards underneath... But it pleased God that the loss of this linen did her much good, both in taking off her heart from worldly comforts, and in preparing her for a far greater affliction by the untimely death of her husband, who was slain not long after at Isle of Providence. [1641]

PARALLEL TO ISRAELITES

[Many] fled for fear of want, and many of them fell into it, even to extremity, as if they had hastened into the misery which they feared and fled from, besides the depriving themselves of the ordinances and church fellowship, and those civil liberties which they enjoyed here; whereas, such as stayed in their places, kept their peace and ease, and enjoyed still the blessing of the ordinances, and never tasted of those troubles and miseries, which they heard to have befallen those who departed....if one may go, another may, and so the greater part, and so church and commonwealth may be left destitute in a wilderness, exposed to misery and reproach, and all for thy ease and pleasure; whereas these all, being now thy brethren, as near to thee as the Israelites were to Moses, it were much safer for these, after his example, to choose rather to suffer affliction with thy brethren, than to enlarge thy case and pleasure by furthering the occasion of their ruin. [1642]

LIFE IN THE COLONY

There arose a sudden gust at N.W. so violent for half an hour, as it blew down multitudes of trees. It lifted up their meeting house at Newberry, the people being in it. It darkened the air with dust, yet through God's great mercy it did no hurt, but only killed one Indian with the fall of a tree. [1643]

Mr. Hopkins, the governor of Hartford upon Connecticut, came to Boston, and brought his wife with him (a godly young woman, and of special parts), who was fallen into a sad infirmity, the loss of her understanding and reason, which had been growing upon her divers years, by occasion of her giving herself wholly to reading and writing, and had written many books. Her husband, being very loving and tender of her, was loath to grieve her; but he saw his error, when it was too late. For if she had attended her household affairs, and such things as belong to woman, and not gone out of her way and calling to meddle in such things as are proper for men, whose minds are stronger, etc., she had kept her wits, and might have improved them usefully and honorably in the place God had set her. [1645]

The wars in England kept servants from coming to us, so as those we had could not be hired, when their times were out, but upon unreasonable terms, and we found it very difficult to pay their wages to their content (for money was very scarce).... Divers free schools were erected, as at Roxbury (for maintenance whereof every inhabitant bound some house or land for a yearly allowance forever) and at Boston (where they made an order to allow forever 50 pounds to the master and a house and 30 pounds to an usher, who should also teach to read and write and cipher, and Indians' children were to be taught freely... [1645]

SNAKE IN THE CHURCH

The synod met at Cambridge... Mr. Allen of Dedham preached out of Acts 15, a very godly, learned, and particular handling of near all the doctrines and applications concerning that subject with a clear discovery and refutation of such errors, objections, and scruples as had been raised about it by some young heads in the country. It fell out, about the midst of his sermon, there came a snake into the seat, where many of the elders sat behind the preacher. It came in at the door where people stood thick upon the stairs. Divers of the elders shifted from it, but Mr. Thomson, one of the elders of Braintree (a man of much faith), trod upon the head of it, and so held it with his foot and staff with a small pair of grains, until it was killed. This being so remarkable, and nothing falling out but by divine providence, it is out of doubt, the Lord discovered somewhat of His mind in it. The serpent is the devil; the synod, the representative of the churches of Christ in New England. The devil had formerly and lately attempted their disturbance and dissolution; but their faith in the seed of the woman overcame him and crushed his head. [1648]

