

“Christian Charity”, A Sacred American Text

Fact, Truth, Method

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ABSTRACT

The ideological status of “A Modell of Christian Charity” as a foundational American document began in 1838 when its existence was first made public. For the subsequent 150 years its character and in particular its authorship was a settled matter. But some 25 years ago Hugh Dawson began to raise questions about the work when he undertook an examination of the original document, a focus that previous scholars had neglected. It turns out that more searching documentary inquiries expose a whole set of anomalous features of the MS itself as well as its historical transmission. Because the status of this famous work is now quite unsettled, its case highlights why archival and philological method are the source and end and test of interpretation.

The hardest thing of all is to see what is really there.

— J. A. Baker, *The Peregrine*

I.

AS WE BEGIN TO APPROACH THE TWO-HUNDRED-YEAR ANNIVERSARY of the discovery of this famous document, it is time to face up to its legend. This is important because the work occupies such a fundamental place in American Memory. Perhaps even more urgent is what we have to learn, or re-learn yet again, about the relation between cultural truth and the ways we seek for it, and about the responsibility that scholars owe the community at large to preserve a clear view of and commitment to both.

“A Modell of Christian Charity” gave a local habitation — the Bay Colony settlement of New England — and a name — John Winthrop — to one of the foundational statements of the American ethos. Its argument climaxes in a bravura expression that remains resonant to this day: “Wee

shall be as a Citty upon a Hill, the eies of all people are upon us”¹ The Virginia and the Plymouth plantations were founded well before Winthrop brought his fleet of ships and some 1000 settlers to what would become the Massachusetts Bay colony, and both earlier colonies produced founding documents of great importance. But since George Folsom and James Savage introduced it to the public in 1838,² no colonial text has been more influential than this work which, by its own account, was

Written / On Boarde the Arrabella! / On the Attlantick ! Ocean! By the Honrble John Winthrop. Esqr. / In His passage. (wth the great / Company of Religious people of wch Xtian Tribes / he was th. Brave Leader & famous Gov.r!) from the Island of Great Brittain, / to New-England in the North America. / Anno 1630.

The headnote describes the objective status of the document, naming its author, its date, its occasion, and its genre. In addition, the headnote offers an implicit interpretation that the event it records was a glorious one. Two of the interlinear insertions — “Xtian Tribes” and “Brave Leader & famous” — underscore the headnote’s interpretive view. That view is re-emphasized, surely if also sparely, by its exclamation points, which to date have gone unnoticed in any editorial or critical commentary, and which are publicly recorded only in the New York Historical Society’s online facsimile. But as we shall see, the entire headnote has to date not been examined with the care it requires. The number “22” at the top, as we shall see, is important.³

1. The sermon has been a regular focus of readers and scholars since its first appearance in 1838, most recently in RODGERS 2018. Given the textual problems that continue to bedevil readings of this work, my point of reference and citation is the online facsimile made available by the New York Historical Society: <http://cdm16694.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/ref/collection/p16124coll1/id/1952>.
2. For the first 1838 printing of the New York Historical Society’s MS edited by Folsom and Savage, see the *Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, Third Series, 7, 31–48. The volume is available online through the Hathi Trust: <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=njp.32101076467495;page=root;seq=7;view=image;size=100;orient=0>. The Society’s improved and annotated (1929) edition of the *Winthrop Papers*, also available online (2019), corrects all but one of the text’s errors: <http://www.masshist.org/publications/winthrop/index.php/view/PWF02d270>.
3. A parenthetical note at the foot of the page was added in 1838 or soon afterwards by an archival agent of the New York Historical Society.

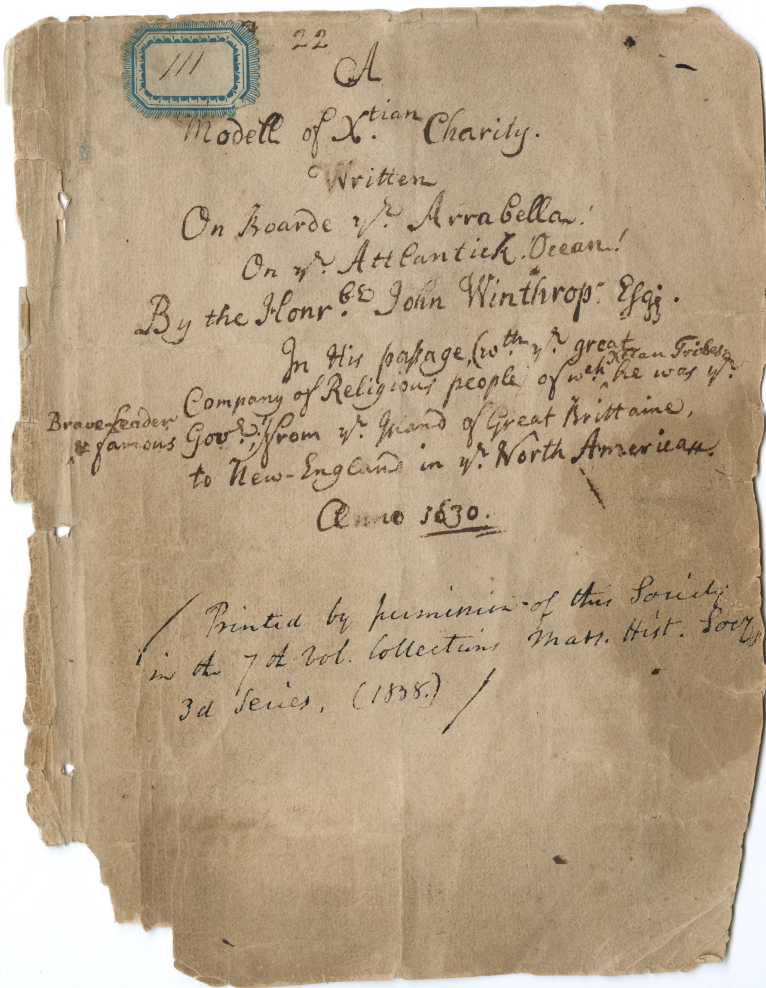


Figure 1. "A modell of Christian charity", Cover page, New York Historical Society MS; reproduced with the Society's permission.

Since 1838 that headnote account and the facts it alleges have passed as settled truth largely because no one before 1991 thought to reflect on the problematic character of the document. And so a rich set of critical commentary arose — it persists still — that gets reified through numerous school and scholarly editions. Yet none of this scholarship accurately reflects the truth of the document, which is at once very simple and very

difficult. Crucially, that truth is a function not only of what we know or think we know about the document, but of what we know (or don't know) that we don't know about it.⁴

Those inconvenient truths began to be seriously addressed only in 1991 when Hugh J. Dawson pointed out that the headnote was not written by the scrivener who copied the body of the text.⁵ Before Dawson, scholars judged that the entire document was “apparently contemporary” with the founding years of Massachusetts Bay.⁶ Inquiring more closely, Dawson called on the expertise of paleographers familiar with early colonial text production. The watermarks and other textual evidence place the body of the scrivener's text in the seventeenth century, probably but not certainly early. As for the headnote, it clearly postdates the scrivener's text and the lifetime of John Winthrop. Because it casts such a retrospective glory around the enterprise of 1630, it reads like a third-generation Puritan text and might well be even later. Its antiquated orthography was conventional well into the eighteenth century.⁷ One correction in the body of the text is definitely late — the change from the original word “Massachusetts” to “New England” on MS page 39.⁸ The correction may reflect the 1686 Crown move to undo the Massachusetts Bay Colony by incorporating it in the newly created “Dominion of New England”.

4. Daniel Rodgers has the most recent study of the *Arbella* sermon; see RODGERS 2018, chapter 1, especially 18–20, 22–23, 29. Based on verbal similarities between one passage in the sermon and John Winthrop's “Address . . . to the Company of Massachusetts Bay”, and a short list of biblical citations in an appended page in Winthrop's *Journal*, Rodgers speculates that the work was written in four sections at different times. He develops his theory in order to avoid certain contradictions that arise from the bibliographical and historical evidence. See also *Winthrop Papers* II. 174–7 and Winthrop 1996, 726.
5. See DAWSON 1991.
6. “Apparently contemporary” is the judgment made in the Introductory editorial note to the 1929 text of the *Winthrop Papers*: see the online edition, *op. cit.* n. 2 above.
7. See DAWSON 1991, 228–9, n. 6. Those 1991 judgments about the paper have been recently corroborated for me by Heather Wolfe, Curator of Manuscripts, Folger Library. In addition, Fenella France, Acting Director of Preservation, and her staff at Library of Congress have completed a thorough analysis of the inks used in the MS. Except for the 1838 notation at the bottom of the title/headnote page, all the ink is iron gall, which was in common use throughout the West, even into the twentieth-century; see FRANCE ET AL. 2018, 1–30.
8. See a discussion of the revision in a New York Historical Society blog posting: <http://blog.nyhistory.org/21991-2/>.

Dawson's inquiry produced a further significant revelation about the document. He showed that if Winthrop delivered a "Christian Charity" sermon, the "famous Governor" must have done it, as the MS text declares, "heere in England".⁹ Unfortunately, that crucial phrase in the MS did not make it into the 1838 *Massachusetts Historical Society* printing.¹⁰ Although, as Dawson pointed out, the mistake was corrected in some later reprintings, the error is to this day disseminated in most of the widely available reprintings.¹¹ Noting it, Dawson argued that the sermon must have been written before the *Arbella* and the rest of the fleet sailed.

The plain textual evidence ("heere in England") is corroborated by all of the pertinent contextual evidence. As Dawson wrote, the Winthrop *Journal's* meticulous account of the emigration "makes no mention of the discourse" (1991, 223), nor do Winthrop's other autograph papers and associated documents from the time, which are extensive. The surviving MS copy was kept among Winthrop's papers until it was donated to the New York Historical Society in 1809. We know that Winthrop had a copy, perhaps the autograph, from the founding years of the colony: in 1642 or soon thereafter, Henry Jacie asked the governor's son John to send it to him. Besides, delivering a lay sermon would have been unusual for the governor. In his lifetime we know for certain that he delivered one lay sermon, at Ipswich in 1634, an event he mentions in his *Journal*. Non-separating Congregationalists, which is what Winthrop was, delivered lay sermons only under special conditions — typically, if a minister were unavailable, which was not the case on the *Arbella* but which was the case at Ipswich.¹²

9. In 1991 Dawson accepted Winthrop's authorship. Seven years later he was less certain: see DAWSON 1998.
10. Dawson (1991, 229n) notes that this transcription error was corrected in some later reprintings, but it has nonetheless been perpetuated in much of the literature, not least in the standard online and often cited Massachusetts Historical Society version. Even the most distinguished Puritan scholars continue to insist that the sermon was delivered at sea (e.g., COLACURCHIO 2006, 151).
11. See DAWSON 1991, 229n. The persistence of the error is largely the result of its presence in the important *Winthrop Papers*, where a variant of the mistaken 1838 text is reprinted. Of the available school texts — in print or online — that print the document, the only anthology with the correct reading is JEHLEN and WARNER 1996. All the other general American or specialized Puritan anthologies either do not print the relevant section or, when they do, misprint it.
12. See DUNN, SAVAGE and YEANDLE 1996, 114 and LOVEJOY 1985, 57. For Winthrop as lay sermonist, see BREMER 2015, 76–83.

Neither is such a sermon noticed by any of the other emigrants, whether they sailed on the *Arbella* or on one of the other ships. Was it perhaps delivered before the fleet sailed? The distinguished Winthrop scholar Francis Bremer believes it was, but no such event is mentioned by anyone who participated in the momentous undertaking.¹³ By sharp contrast, John Cotton's farewell sermon *Gods Promise to His Plantation* (1630), delivered at Southampton, was printed, commented on, and broadcast widely.

As Dawson remarks, the secretary copy might indicate that it was intended for MS circulation rather than print. But no MS copies are extant, and the work seems to have been mentioned only twice in the seventeenth century, once by Henry Jacie and then later by Roger Williams, though Dawson regarded the Williams reference as dubious.¹⁴ From that point until 1809, when the MS was donated to the New York Historical Society, the work was invisible, and of course it only came to public notice in 1838. What is most remarkable here is the fact that Winthrop's papers were made available to, and were used by, two of the most consequential seventeenth-century Puritan historians, William Hubbard and Cotton Mather. If either they or, later, Ezra Stiles, who also worked with the Winthrop Papers, were aware of the MS, they would certainly have used it.¹⁵ It could have escaped their notice because of the secretarial hand, but not if it had that arresting headnote.

Dawson's examination of the MS showed that a third hand, "perhaps [. . .] a scrivener's assistant" (1991, 222), went back over the transcript to correct various errors. Twenty-two years later Abram Van Engen, keying off Dawson's work, made two further important discoveries about the sec-

13. See BREMER 2003, 174–5; he discusses the work at length 173–84.

14. Jacie mentions "Christian Charity" in his letter to John Winthrop Jr. printed in the online archive *Winthrop Papers* III, 188–9, where it is dated, incorrectly, ca. 1634–1635. See below for further discussion. Roger Williams, writing to John Winthrop Jr. on 28 May 1864, refers to "the Winthrops and their Modells of Love" in drawing an invidious contrast between the first- and second-generation puritans; see LAFANTASIE 1988, II, 527–8.

15. See FREIBERG 1968, 80: 55–70. Edward O'Reilly of the New York Historical Society pointed out to me that in a letter to Nathaniel Green (18 March 1780) John Adams wrote that "America is the City, set upon a Hill". He must have been thinking of the source text in Matthew 5:14, for it is unimaginable that he would have seen or read the Winthrop MS. It is nonetheless striking that he would have made the same connection the sermon makes of America to the city on a hill.

retarial document.¹⁶ First, he showed that the reference text for its biblical citations was the Geneva bible, not — as might be expected — the English KJV (2013, 549–50).¹⁷ Second, while the document shows various interesting lacunae and errors, it “has suffered a much more significant corruption: it has lost its beginning”.¹⁸ Because “A Modell of Christian Charity” “does not match the usual form of a Puritan sermon” (2013, 557), Van Engen

argues that we should see it as a truncated sermon. That reasonable suggestion seems to mean, however, that the MS we have is a copy made from another now lost and similarly imperfect copy.¹⁹

So then the question arises: why (and when) would someone want such a fragment copied, and who would that be? Van Engen does not question Winthrop’s authorship — indeed, he asserts it — but he doesn’t try to explain what it might have been that Winthrop thought he was writing, if in fact he was the author of the copy from which our extant MS was made. These questions become even more provoking when we remember a crucial further fact that Van Engen brought to attention but then forgot to consider: that when Winthrop quoted scripture, his reference point was not the Geneva bible but, as we would expect, KJV.²⁰ If Winthrop wrote the discourse on Christian Charity, why was he quoting from the Geneva bible?

16. See VAN ENGEN 2013.

17. Van Engen (2013) observes, “It matters which Bible — which particular physical object — Winthrop held and read when he composed his sermon, and it is no accident that the Geneva, not the KJV, stands behind his text. His was ‘an adversarial Bible,’ the Bible of both resistance and renewal” (555–6). Van Engen’s work here revised the received view that “Christian Charity” quotes from both Geneva and KJV; see also STOUT 1982, 19–38 and, in particular, 29.

18. Van Engen (2013) notes, “Puritan sermons were typically composed of six elements — scripture, elucidation of the verse, doctrine, reasons, application, and exhortation. The last four are elaborated in ‘Christian Charity,’ but the first two parts — the opening verse and its initial elucidation — are lacking” (557).

19. Others who have noted the truncated character of the MS have decided to think of the document not as a sermon but as a “discourse” — the term used in the MS itself; see GAMBLE 2012. As Professor Van Engen notes in personal correspondence (4 May 2018), “the reason Gamble and others want it to be a ‘discourse’ is in part because they want a governor, not a minister, to be the author of it.”

20. See WILSON 2011: http://scholarworks.wmich.edu/religion_pubs/2; see also BREMER 2016, 1–17.

Before considering these key questions further, let me close this part of the inquiry by clearing up some related factual matters that have a significant bearing on the disappearance of “Christian Charity” from public notice. The only certain reference to the work that we have before 1838 comes in an early letter from Henry Jacie (1603–1663) to John Winthrop Jr.²¹ Jacie was a dissenting minister who became leader of the semi-separatist Jacobites in 1637. He was close with the Winthrops and, staying in England after the 1630 emigration, he worked on their behalf and kept them abreast of the ongoing religious and political struggles in England and Europe. Here is the pertinent section of his letter:

Now Sir since your going to york, I have found H. Kingsburies letter (which I could not light on) the bookes he desired me to procure him were these 3. 1 A Treatise of Faith. (I suppose The Doctrine of Faith by Mr. Jo. Rogers would be as useful for him, and about the same price.) 2 Perkins Principles. 3. The sweet Posie for Gods Saints (2d a peece, the 1 about 18d.) He writ he would pay for them. We shal be further indebted to you if you can procure the Map, the Pattents Copie, the Model of Charity, (also what Oath is taken) Mr. Higgisons letter, and the Petition to our Ministers for praying for them, made at their going, which is in print. Which of these you can best, with your letter, give to Mr. Overton Stationer in Popes head Alley, my good friend, and receive money of him for them. (*Winthrop Papers* III, 188–9)

In printing Jacie’s letter, the *Winthrop Papers* do not annotate its references. If they had, the date they assign to the letter, ca. 1834–1835, would have been pushed forward.²² It cannot be earlier than 1642, when *A sweet*

21. Most records now spell his name “Jessey”. I have retained the spelling he used when he signed his letters.
22. H. Kingsburie is either Henry Kingsbury, from Groton, Suffolk, who emigrated in 1630 with his wife and son, or his father (see *Winthrop Papers* II, 188). *A Treatise of Faith* could be any one of four possible works, all bearing this title: John Ball’s (1631), Ezekiel Culverwell’s (1625), George Throgmorton’s (1624), or John Fisher’s (1605); Ball, Culverwell, and Fisher were multiply reprinted, as was John Rogers, *The Doctrine of Faith* (1629). The other books mentioned are William Perkins, *The foundation of Christian religion: gathered into sixe principles* [. . .] (1591) and *A sweet Posie for God’s Saints* [. . .] *gathered out of* [. . .] *the Holy Scriptures* (1642), by J. O. As for the materials specifically related to Winthrop, Mr Higginson’s letter is Rev Francis Higginson’s *True Relacion of the Last Voyage to New England* (1629) (or perhaps his *New England’s Plantation* [1630]). The

Posie for God's Saints was published. The significance of the change is difficult at this point to assess with certainty, but it is not at all difficult to recognize. By 1642 the Long Parliament had been convened, Bishop Laud impeached and imprisoned, Strafford tried and beheaded, and the King and Parliament were in open conflict. Second, the reference to "Mr. Overton Stationer in Popes head Alley" and the request to give those key emigration documents to Overton suggests an intention to get them printed (or in the case of the last, reprinted). Overton was either the fiery Puritan pamphleteer Richard Overton (fl. 1640–1664) or, more likely, his son John (d. 1713), who had recently set up a stationer's shop that went on to specialize in maps and operated well into the eighteenth century.²³ But in the 1640s it was publishing semi-separatist works.

The most provocative fact revealed through this letter, however, is the connection between *A sweet Posie* and the Overtons and what it suggests about Jacie's request for the emigration documents. The title page of *A sweet Posie* identifies its author simply as J. O. and then gives this imprint information: "printed by R. Cotes, for Benjamin Allen dwelling in Popes-head-Alley, 1642". Is the author of the book John Overton, do the Overtons have anything to do with Cotes and Allen who are operating in the closest proximity — a tiny street, still extant, just south of the Royal Exchange? And is Jacie asking for those colony documents because he has some plan in mind to have them printed? Was the plan aborted because of the tumultuous events unfolding in England?

As Jacie's letter indicates, one of those documents — *The Humble Request of His Majesties Loyall Subjects* (1630) — was prepared at Southampton just before the fleet sailed to the new world. It was left behind and printed in London shortly thereafter. The intention of *The Humble Request* was to make an open declaration that the emigrants were not Separatists but loyal subjects who recognized Crown authority. In 1630 such a semi-separatist position was for many of the emigrants problematic — Plymouth was already a Separatist colony — but by 1642 the dissenters still in England were openly seeking far greater power at the very center of English

"Petition" requested is *The Humble Request of His Majesties Loyall Subjects, the Governour and the Company Late Gone for New England; to the Rest of Their Brethren, in and of the Church of England* (1630) (in the *Winthrop Papers* II, 231–3). The "Map" is probably Winthrop's "Chart of the Coast from Gloucester to Marblehead", reproduced at *Winthrop Papers* II, after page 280, 281. Finally, Jacie mentions the "sermon".

23. See the records of the British National Archives; online citation: http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/results/r?_q=Overton+stationer.

power. Printing “Christian Charity” and reprinting *The Humble Request* in 1642 or later would have been vigorously opposed by many, perhaps even most, Puritans in both new and old England. And by 1660, when the documents might have been made public, their political significance for second generation Puritans was long past. By 1838, however, the communitarian message of “Christian Charity” would have had real importance in Congregationalism’s ideological struggles with Unitarianism and, even more, its Emersonian overflow.

II.

Let’s be candid here. What I’ve just proposed is a rationale for explaining why “Christian Charity” remained virtually unknown between 1630 and 1838. It’s an interpretation extruded from certain facts, some of them not previously recognized. The rationale does not solve the problems raised by the “Christian Charity” MS, but it can help us see more clearly the shape and conditions of our ignorance. So it is a provocation to try for greater understanding. As such, I also think it puts us in a position to appreciate and go further with the provocation that Dawson initiated in 1991 and that he expanded with his essay of 1998.

The 1998 essay proceeds from a recognition of the importance of a particular passage in “Christian Charity”: the reference to “the *Church of England*, from whence wee rise, our deare Mother”. That is a notable remark for a dissenting work, and it is a view with which some — perhaps most, certainly many — in Winthrop’s company would have had serious difficulties. It is not a view that Winthrop himself expressed before he set the embarkation plans going, as Dawson argued in 1998. But for Dawson, “Christian Charity” reflects how the colonial undertaking itself changed Winthrop’s mind.²⁴ The work is directed at two audiences, the emigrants as well as those “who had committed themselves to Massachusetts but who were staying on in England” (DAWSON 1998, 122). Looking “to England as much as to America”, “Christian Charity” enlarges its argument by making a “conservative reaffirmation of established ways. Rather than being an environment hospitable to the release of new initiatives, the ‘Citty vpon

24. “Within a few months of sailing [i.e., late 1629], he had employed in private correspondence the same maternal figure later favored by [John] Cotton and [John] White in telling of his trust that, by their migration, the ‘members of that Church [in America] may be of better vse to their mother Church heere” (*Winthrop Papers* II, 132).

a Hill' would be an extension of the metropolis" (DAWSON 1998, 135). "Christian Charity" was not calling in question the "legitimacy" of the established church.

In laying out that view of the matter, Dawson rightly points to John Cotton (1585–1652) and John White (1575–1648) and especially to the semi-separatist Henry Jacob (1563–1624), who in 1616 had founded (in Southwark) what is regarded as the first Congregational Church in England. These "Jacobites", as they were called, organized around a group of ordained Anglicans who had fallen out with the established church because of its corruptions. They were firmly Calvinist in theology and hence worked out of the Geneva bible, but they were unusual — "semi-separatist" — in holding that the established church was legitimate despite its grievous lapses from sanctity. Jacob and his sect are relevant here because, after Jacob's death, direction of the group was assumed by John Lathropp (1584/8–1653), and when Lathropp was imprisoned by Bishop Laud and eventually expelled from England, leadership of the group passed in 1637 to another important semi-separatist, Henry Jacie.²⁵

A basic pair of very specific questions need to be pressed for this famous work: who wrote the headnote and who commissioned the scrivener copy? We still do not have answers to those questions. Their critical pertinence for understanding "A Modell of Christian Charity" is scarcely appreciated even today, and until Dawson's and Van Engen's work, they were hardly raised. Dawson in particular comes close to asking them directly. But he stops short even in 1998 when his doubts about the document's authorship had intensified.²⁶

Let's look again at the work's documentary problems, starting with the contradiction between what is asserted by the headnote's "Written / On Boarde the Arrabella! / On the Attlantick ! Ocean!" and what is declared by the scrivener's "heere in England". Dawson reads "heere in England" as evidence about an historical event that happened in 1630. Assuming, reasonably, that the scrivener's text is telling the truth about itself ("heere in England"), Dawson argues that the headnote is mistaken, that the sermon wasn't "written on board the *Arbella* on the Atlantic Ocean". But the tex-

25. For a good account of the Jacobite Church, semi-separatism, and its relation to the colonial Congregational movement, see TOLMEI 1977, Chapter 1 ("The Jacob Church"), especially 12–19 ("The Jacob-Lathrop-Jessey church"). For an earlier look at the English and the colonial scene, see MILLER 1933, especially chapters III–V.

26. See DAWSON 1998, 141 n. 1. But here Dawson still writes as if Winthrop were the author of "Christian Charity".

tual situation here reveals something far more disturbing about the headnote. Assuming, again reasonably, that the headnote isn't simply lying, we have to wonder how it arrived at that judgment, and, more pertinently, *who* made the judgment. The headnote presents itself as a factual account of the scrivener's text, but it happens that its facts are wrong. When we realize that truth, that fact, about the headnote, we want to know what it means. If we knew who wrote the headnote or even when it was penned, that would help.

So before worrying about if, when, or where a sermon was delivered in 1630, and by whom, we have to know much more than we now know about the New York Historical Society manuscript. The problematic headnote is a good place to start. Its author's interpretive designs, as we've seen, are clearly marked by the exclamation points and the interlinear insertions "Xtian Tribes" and "Brave Leader & famous". But let's look further.

We begin by trying for a clearer picture of the provenance of the MS, which was donated to the New York Historical Society in 1809 by Francis Bayard Winthrop (1740–1817) along with a collection of early colonial printed documents. "A Modell" was the only MS in the donation and was listed last — and numbered "22" — in the donation list (see Figure 2).²⁷

Note the title given here to the document: "A Modell of Christian Charity written on Board the Ship Arrabella by John Winthrop . . .". The congruences with the MS headnote — the first ten words, the spelling "Arrabella", and the final ellipsis — show that Winthrop's donation list echoes the MS text. But equally remarkable are the divergences between the two: the extra word "Ship" and the absence of the headnote line "On the Atlantick! Ocean!".

Because the final ellipsis shows that Winthrop wanted to indicate missing text at the end, one wonders why he didn't give a medial ellipsis for the dropped line. The answer seems to be that the line wasn't there when he copied the title into the donation list. Indeed, if one examines the headnote MS closely one can see what its design and orthography discloses. First of all, the headnote was consciously scripted to imitate the typical layout of title pages of colonial pamphlets and sermons — sermons, for instance, like John Cotton's 1630 farewell *Gods Providence for His Plantation*:

27. It is numbered "22", which is the number written at the top of the MS page bearing the document's title/headnote. But Bayard Winthrop's final note on the donation list referring to "61 Sermons dating from 1561 to 1724", does not specify whether they are MS or print documents.

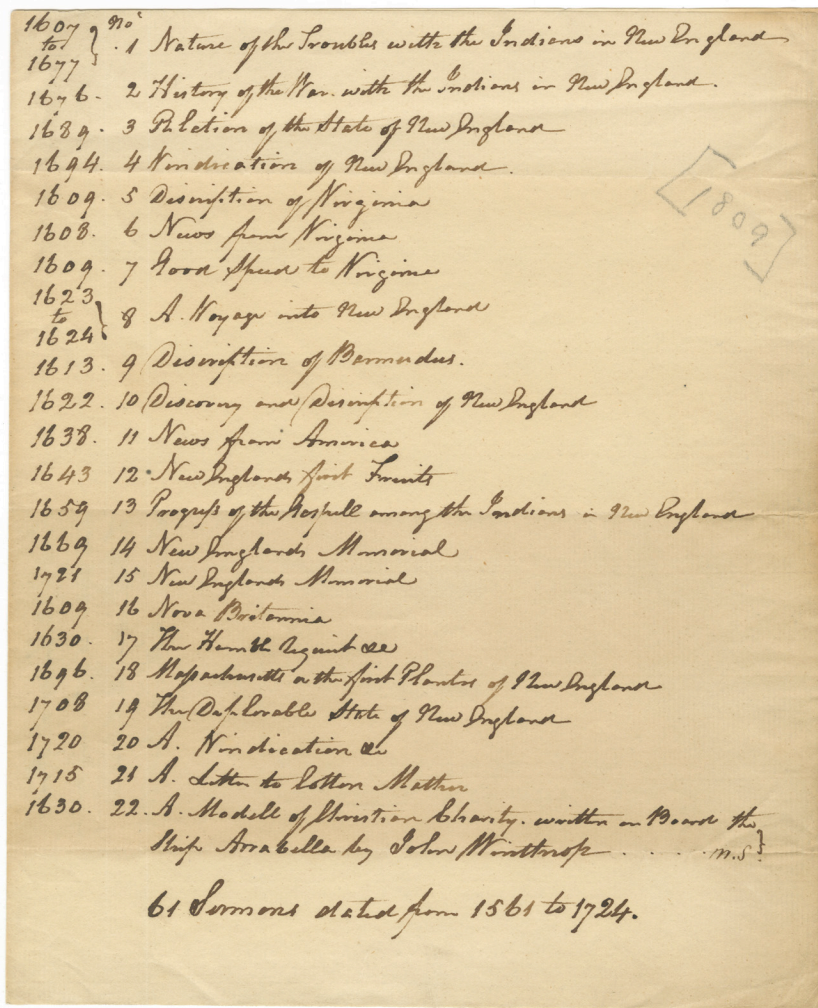


Figure 2. Francis Bayard Winthrop's 1809 "Donation List", New York Historical Society MS; reproduced with the Society's permission.

GODS PROMISE TO HIS PLANTATIONS

2 Sam. 7. 10.

*Moreover I will appoint a place for my people Israell,
and I will plant them, - that they may dwell in a
place of their owne, and move no more.*

As it was delivered in a Sermon,
By JOHN COTTON, B. D.
and Preacher of Gods
word in *Boston*.

PSALME 22. 27. 30. 31.

*All the ends of the world shall remember and turne unto the
Lord, and all the kindreds of the Nations shall worship
before thee.
A seede that shall serve him, it shall be accounted to the Lord for
a generation.
They shall come, and shall declare his righteousnesse unto a
people that shall be borne, that he hath done this.*

LONDON,
Printed by *William Jones* for *John Bellamy*, and
are to be sold at the three *Golden Lyons* by the
Royall Exchange, 1634.

Figure 3. *Gods Providence for His Plantation* [. . .] by John Cotton (London: Printed by William Jones for John Bellamy, 1634), reprint of the original 1630 edition; reproduced with permission of the University of Virginia Library (electronic image).

There's a good example of the most common format for the title pages of early seventeenth-century Puritan sermons. That is to say, in addition to giving the immediate occasion of the sermon, the title page set down the scriptural passages that supplied its homiletic point of reference. Later in the seventeenth century the conventional format changes slightly, as one sees in this example from an Isaac Ambrose sermon of 1674:

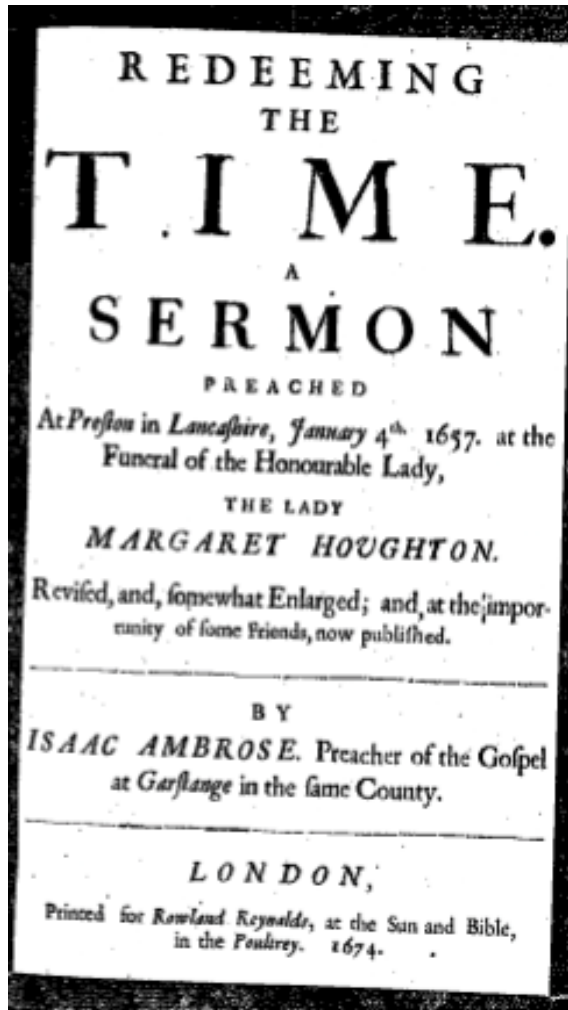


Figure 4. *Redeeming the Time. A Sermon* [. . .] by Isaac Ambrose (London: Printed for Rowland Reynolds, 1674); reproduced with permission of the University of Virginia Library (electronic image).

While this is much closer to the layout that is echoed in the “Christian Charity”, we can see that the MS headnote was certainly composed and designed with these print models in mind. Recognizing the presence of that model, however, we may notice as well how the headnote’s lineation deviates. A printer would not have broken the lines in the way they are broken in the New York Historical Society manuscript. But the appearance of the headnote as we see it now is different from the way it appeared when it was first written. Then it mirrored very nicely the balanced form of a seventeenth-century title page.

That fact becomes apparent when we realize that the headnote was built up in three compositional stages, thus:

First stage: A / Modell of X.tian Charity. / Written / On Board th. Arrabella / On th. Attlantick. / By the Honr.bl John Winthrop Esqr. / In his passage / to New-England in th. North America. / Anno 1630.

Second stage: A / Modell of X.tian Charity. / Written / On Board th. Arrabella / On th. Attlantick. / By the Honr.bl John Winthrop Esqr. / In his passage , (w.th th. Great / Company of Religious people of w.ch he was th. / Gov.r,) from th. Island of Great Brittain, / to New-England in th. North America. / Anno 1630.

Third (final) stage: A / Modell of X.tian Charity. / Written / On Board th. Arrabella !/ On th. Attlantick. Ocean! / By the Honr.bl John Winthrop Esqr. / In his passage , (w.th th. Great / Company of Religious people of w.ch Xtian Tribes he was th. / Brave leader & famous Gov.r!,) from th. Island of Great Brittain, / to New-England in th. North America. / Anno 1630.

The revision process helps us grasp the importance of those exclamation points. The general form of the headnote signals that it wants to be read as a true account of the following document — a statement of relevant contextual facts. But the headnote’s documentary features reveal that an aggressive interpretive view has shaped — and in one crucial respect, has misshaped — the explanation it offers. The author of the headnote is far removed historically from the events that it represents — mistakenly in at least two respects — as fact.

Our inquiry has left us with the essential questions about the New York Historical Society manuscript still unanswered: Who wrote the headnote? Who commissioned the secretarial copy? Who made that copy? And of

course, who wrote "A Modell of Christian Charity"? But now our ignorance has turned to a kind of scholarly bliss. Now we know more about what we don't know. Now we know that without an answer to the first question we can't begin to have confidence about an answer to the last. "A Modell of Christian Charity" will remain a textual version of what Churchill called Russia in 1939: "a riddle, wrapped in a mystery, inside an enigma".

But the documentary evidence allows us to propose an answer to that first question: who wrote the headnote. Because it was consciously scripted to imitate the title page format of a seventeenth-century sermon, identifying its authorship through the handwriting is seriously compromised.²⁸ But we don't need to identify the headnote script with a specific person's calligraphy. The answer to the question is supplied by another script on the cover page — the number "22" at the top. That number above the headnote was written by the person who wrote the headnote, and as we can see from the donation list, that number was apparently written by the man who donated the MS to the New York Historical Society, Francis Bayard Winthrop.²⁹

So perhaps Governor Winthrop did not write the work. He was a lawyer and an administrator, not a minister, and no lay sermons by Winthrop are extant. On the other hand, perhaps a "Christian Charity" sermon was actually written "heere in England" and even delivered "On Boarde the Arrabella! / On the Attlantick ! Ocean!" if the author was someone other than the "Brave Leader & famous Gov.r!". And perhaps Governor Winthrop himself actually commissioned the secretarial document that lay undiscovered in his papers until the nineteenth century.³⁰

28. That is to say, the title/headnote parodied such a design in its first stage. The changes made in the stage two and stage three revisions obscured the initial design structure.
29. The scripting of the numbers on the two documents is the same, and the donation list was prepared by Francis Bayard Winthrop perhaps as late as 1809. Spectral curve analysis of the iron gall inks on the title/headnote page and the donation list corroborate the relation: According to the 2018 report prepared by the Library of Congress (see FRANCE ET AL.) both "have the same shape and inflection points, though we cannot definitively say it is the exact same pen/author, just similar type of ink" (12). The report concludes that "Given the similarity of the curve [. . .] there is a high probability" that they are the same (12).
30. Remarking on the biblical citations in Winthrop's journal (WINTHROP 1996, 726), Van Engen first thought what Rodgers thinks (VAN ENGEN 2013, 557): that Winthrop was sketching out the texts for his sermon. He now judges that

Those surmises gain purchase when we resurrect the likely authors of such a sermon: the two ministers who sailed on the *Arbella*, John Wilson (1575–1648) and George Phillips (1593–1644). Both were known semi-separatists and both would figure prominently in the Bay colony, Wilson at Salem where he served as assistant minister, Phillips at Watertown where he led the congregation. Phillips was curate at Boxted in 1629 when, late that year, he determined to emigrate and asked John Maidstone, Winthrop’s nephew and an important figure in Boxted, to recommend him to Winthrop, which Maidstone did (*Winthrop Papers* II, 164–5). When they met, Winthrop must have been impressed with Phillips since he installed him as the presiding minister on the *Arbella*.³¹ He called Phillips “our minister” and praised his preaching and catechetical work on the voyage.³²

Soon after landing in the new world Phillips left Boston with Sir Richard Saltonstall and a small company of separatists and semi-separatists to found Watertown, where he served as the settlement’s minister and continued his much-admired preaching. He remained in close contact with Winthrop and, at the outset of the voyage, was one of the signatories to *The Humble Request* letter that declared allegiance to “the Church of England [. . .] our dear mother”.³³ That Phillips and not Wilson was signatory

“it makes better sense to see him sitting there *listening* to a sermon and jotting down the scriptural verses that Phillips is using to preach. We have loads of sermon notes from the seventeenth century, and these could be Winthrop’s shipboard sermon notes as he listened to Phillips preach. This actually seems to make more sense, especially since while on board the ship, the journal was very much a journal still (not the ‘History of New England’ it later self-consciously became)” (personal correspondence, 4 May 2018; see footnote 19 above). See also NEUMAN 2013.

31. Maidstone’s recommendation is effusive: “His exelency in matters of divinity is such (as I make noe question but experience will make good,) as that hee is inferiour to very few, if to any: for prooffe wheareof, I stande not vpon mine owne slender conceipte, but refer my selfe to the iudgemente of all the eminenteste Christians that ever have exercised familiarity with him: of whome many are encouraged to goe for his sake, and others to follow, so soone as god shall so dispose: neyther doe I at all doubt, but your owne iudgemente (good sir) is so sounde and peircinge, as it will with shorte experience finde out the truth of this relation. If therefore I may bee so bolde, I desire that in the choyce of your pastor, you would bee mindefull of him, if your selfe shall see it meete. I seeke not any thinge herein (if my worde may bee credited) but the promotion of Christes cause” (*Winthrop Papers* II, 165).
32. See WINTHROP 1996, *op. cit.* 10, 730 and n.
33. *Winthrop Papers* II, 231–3.

is important. Although William Hubbard long ago named John White as the author of *A Humble Request*, Phillips is far more likely, as his biographer Henry Wilder Foote plausibly argued.³⁴ White did not sign the letter, never actually emigrated, and he was not associated with the *Arbella* at all, but with the *Mary and John*, whose passengers he recruited. Phillips was thus far and away the best positioned signatory to express the ecclesiastical and theological issues at the heart of *A Humble Request* so as to persuade the Crown and established church authorities of the loyalty of Winthrop's emigrants. The same is even more true for *A Humble Request's* cognate work, "Christian Charity", since Phillips' homiletic skills were so celebrated. What Foote says of *A Humble Request*, then, might as well be said of "Christian Charity": "Winthrop might have written it, but Phillips, as the only minister on board, would have been the person to whom the task [. . .] would naturally have fallen" (1930, 199). Though Wilson was also aboard the *Arbella*, he was not a signatory. Did Phillips write and perhaps even deliver the sermon "heere in England"? Did Winthrop possess an imperfect copy and have that copied? What are the other possibilities? What difference would it make to know?

As Watertown's minister, Phillips would have written that church's eloquent covenantal decree, as Foote argues he did (1930, 206–7). Though himself semi-separatist, his congregation had many separatist members, and some were not pleased that Phillips was preaching "that the churches of Rome were true churches" (FOOTE 1930, 211). Protesting to the Boston authorities, they called Winthrop and other Boston authorities to Watertown in 1631 to adjudicate their charges. Although the committee ruled that Phillips was "in error", the decision had no practical effect on Phillips' ministry or semi-separatist convictions. He remained close to Winthrop and was Watertown's elected minister till his death.

Besides the documentary evidence of authorship, stylistic evidence sheds some light on the matter. Two signal features of "A Modell of Christian Charity" align it with Winthrop's most important commitments. The first is its insistence on establishing "a place of Cohabitation and Consorteshipp vnder a due forme of Government both ciuill and ecclesiasticall". But the sermon avoids any detailed discussion of institutional issues and makes only a brief declaration of Crown allegiance. In this connection, two of Winthrop's works are particularly revealing: his exploration of the *Reasons to be Considered for* [. . .] *the Intended Plantation in New England* (1629),

34. See FOOTE 1930, 197–201. As Foote points out, the subscription to *A Humble Request* implies that it was "written on board ship" (199).

written at the outset of the venture, and the so-called “Little Speech on Liberty” (1645), which he delivered after the General Court acquitted him of malfeasance in a dispute about a militia election.³⁵ Both of these works illustrate how Winthrop expresses himself on public occasions and questions and they differ sharply in point of style from “A Modell of Christian Charity”. Winthrop was a lawyer and a magistrate, not a minister and a theologian, and his formal prose reflects an executive and managerial attitude toward colonial issues and problems that is far from the clerical and strongly pastoral approach of the sermon. A severe man, he was also notably generous because he knew the duty he owed to those in need. But nothing he ever wrote handled the issue of community love as it is dealt with in the sermon, and the sermon’s final inspiring appeal is the pastoral rhetoric of a minister, not a brave leader and famous governor like Winthrop.

All of Winthrop’s 1629 “Reasons” fall under the following general purposes: “to help on the coming of the fullness of the Gentiles [i.e., Reformed Religion], and to raise a bulwark against the kingdom of Antichrist which the Jesuits labor to rear up in those parts” (1629, 138). Emigration is driven by the political conditions in Europe and England that “are grown to that height of Intemperance in all excess of Riott [. . .] that all artes & Trades are carried in [. . .] deceitfull & unrighteous course” (1629, 139). Like “A Modell of Christian Charity”, “Reasons to be Considered” looks forward to the founding of uncorrupted civil and ecclesiastical institutions. But unlike the “Modell”, “Reasons to be Considered” frames the issues in pragmatic and worldly terms.

Starting with the legal question of what right the emigrants have to the land in America, Winthrop proposes a series of ten “Objections” to the “enterprise” and then gives multiple “Answers” for each one. The land claim is established in the standard European way: “That which lies common, and has never been replenished or subdued, is free to any that possess and improve it” (1629, 140). The other objections are similarly either ethical or instrumental: “It [is] wrong to our Church and Country to take away the good people” (1629, 141); “We have feared a judgment a great while, but yet we are safe. It were better therefore to stay till it comes” (1629, 142); “The ill success of the other Plantations may tell us what will become of this” (1629, 142); the adventure “is attended with many and great difficul-

35. See *Winthrop Papers* II. The large body of the *Reasons to be Considered* for [. . .] MS materials, including drafts, revisions, and related copies, is collected and edited at II, 106–42.

ties" (1629, 142), and so forth. Thinking in particular of Virginia's "ill success" Winthrop doesn't mince words:

for first their mayne end which was proposed was carnal and not religiouse they aymed chiefly at profitt and not the propagation of religion: secondly they vsed vnfitt instruments viz: a multitude of rude and misgoverned persons the very scumme of the land: 3. They did not establysh a right forme of gover[n]ment.³⁶

When he passes to the objection that "It is a work above the power of the undertakers" (1629, 143) he appeals to historical examples that would resonate with the Puritan company:

The Waldenses weare scattered into the Alpes and mountaines of Piedmont by small companies but they became famous Churches whereof some remaine to this day, and it is certaine that the Turckes, Venetians, and other States weare very weake in their beginniges. (*Winthrop Papers* II, 143)

The emigrants are to be inspired by the (oft-cited Reformers') example of the proto-Protestant twelfth-century Waldensians, on one hand, and on the other shamed by the example of the "paynim" Turks and papal Venetians.

Even more interesting is Winthrop's "Little Speech on Liberty" (1645), which he addressed not just to the General Court but to the entire colonial company.³⁷ In it he goes to the pith of the matter that caused the people of Hingham to bring charges against him. The central issue involves "the Authoritye of the magistrates & the Libertye of the people" (WINTHROP 1996, 586). Winthrop declares his view that once the magistrates are chosen by the people, the authorities' judgments, if wrong or even "evill", have to be accepted as legitimate: "if your magistrates should erre here, your selues must beare it" (1996, 587). He then proceeds to explain that the foundation for this rule is established in a legal distinction between two kinds of liberty, "Naturall (I mean as our nature is now corrupt) & Civill or foederal" (1996, 587). The former, he argues, "is common to man

36. *Winthrop Papers* II, 114.

37. Winthrop's "Little Speech on Liberty" appears in his Journal; citations are to WINTHROP 1996, 584–9.

with beastes & other creatures” whereas the latter has “reference to the Covenant betweene God & man, in the morall Lawe, & the Politicke Couenantes & constitutions among men themselues” (1996, 587):

This Libertye is the proper ende & obiecte of Authoritye, & cannot subsist withoute it, & it is a Libertye to that onely which is good, just & honest: this Libertye you are to stand for, with the hazard (not onely of your goodes but) of your lives, if need be [for] it is of the same kinde of Libertye wherewith Ch[r]ist hath made us free. (1996, 587–8)

The argument is formally the same as the one advanced by all Congregationalists who, swearing to the Oath of Supremacy (1534), acknowledged — as the Separatists did not — the authority of the Crown. As Perry Miller pointed out more than seventy-five years ago, however, the argument proved a continual source of conflict and tension for the colonists who — and Winthrop was a pre-eminent example — were seeking religious and political independence from England while at the same time maintaining a formal acknowledgement of Crown authority.

But from the outset Winthrop wanted to shift the seat of administrative control and policy-making to the colony’s civil and ecclesiastical leaders and their “right forme of government”. That was the whole point of Winthrop’s stratagem to carry the king’s charter with him to Massachusetts, conceal it from the settlers, and then require that citizenship in the colony be determined by church membership. The king’s charter did not make that requirement.

When the General Court met at its second session in May 1631 and promulgated the “Oath of a Freeman”, sharp controversies immediately arose.³⁸ The problem was that the magistrates and assistants declared one had to be “regenerate”, that is, admitted to church membership, in order to be a freeman. To accommodate the widespread dissent, an explicit declaration was added to the oath in 1634 declaring that it would not abridge freedom of conscience: “when I shal be called to give my voyce touching any matter of this State, in which Freemen are to deal, I will give my vote and suffrage as I shall judge in mine own conscience may best conduce and tend to the publike weal of the body” (EVAN 1922, 32). But the Bay Colony would continue to be whiplashed by the unresolved juridical contradiction implicit in that revision, as we know from the antinomian crisis and the

38. Citations to “Oath of a Freeman” are to EVAN 1922.

founding of the independent colonies of Rhode Island, Connecticut, and New Haven.

That oath — the colonial equivalent of the Oath of Supremacy — gave to the freemen of Massachusetts Bay the kind of “Libertye” that Winthrop’s “litle speech” called “the proper ende & obiecte of Authoritye”. The exact import of what he was arguing is exposed in a small but telling change he made to the text of the speech he copied in his *Journal*. He changed “this Libertye we are to stand for” to “this Libertye you are to stand for” (1996, 588 n. 3). Certain persons do not “stand for” such liberty, they define and administer it.

These contentious issues do not surface in “A Modell of Christian Charity” because its discourse is shaped by a ministerial (religious) rather than a managerial (administrative) point of view. That intentional perspective underwrites its overriding emphasis on “Justice and Mercy” and the rule of Christian love. In sharp contrast with the secular distinction Winthrop draws in “A Little Speech on Liberty” between natural and civil liberty, “A Modell of Christian Charity” is grounded in a theological distinction between “the lawe of nature and the lawe of grace”:

There is [. . .] a double Lawe by which wee are regulated in our conversation 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 [. . .]. By the first of these lawes man [. . .] is commaunded to loue his neighbour as himselfe [. . .] the former propounds one man to another, as the same fleshe and Image of god, this [latter] as a brother in Christ allsoe, and in the Communion of the same Spirit and soe teacheth vs to put a difference betweene Christians and others. (283–4)

Concluding Unscientific Postscript

All of the scholars who have engaged with this work have, it seems to me, acted in good faith, and not least of all Folsom and Savage in 1838. Our hindsight throws the context of their work into relief. The rise of Unitarianism in the early nineteenth-century seriously exacerbated the critique of Puritan Congregational history and religion that had begun in the early eighteenth-century. Given that cultural situation, one can appreciate the enthusiasm with which the discovery of “A Modell of Christian Charity” was greeted by scholars sympathetic to the legacy of Puritanism. Their attention was understandably focused on the dramatic occasion of the

work, its remarkable discovery, and its message of love, rather than on its documentary status.³⁹ The sermon projected a view of John Winthrop and the Puritans that would stand against the voices of William Ellery Channing and William Cullen Bryant, the critical fictions of Lydia Child (*Hobomok*, 1824) and James Fenimore Cooper (*The Wept of Wish-Ton-Wish*, 1829), and especially against severe works like John Neal's *Rachel Dyer* (1828). It was a reminder that if the Puritan adventure climaxed in the bad eminence of 1792 Salem, it began very differently.⁴⁰ That early antiquarian approach to "Christian Charity", as we know, grew and prevailed through the next 150 years, mutating into the important recent work of scholars like Perry Miller, Sacvan Berkovitch, and Andrew Delbanco.

But the success of that approach came at a cost, though not to the ideas presented in "Christian Charity", however we assess those ideas and whoever wrote the work. For 150 years scholars — literary scholars in particular — did not give their undivided and unbiased attention to a foundational work of American cultural memory. Enspelled by the local (Puritan) ideological conflicts preserved in that memory, we neglected what has always been our special vocation: philological truth, the source and end and test of all historical and cultural interpretation. And in neglecting to seek that truth we have failed to appreciate the significance, the *meaning*, of the work's 200-year disappearance on one hand, or, on the other, the meaning of the meanings it acquired when it was finally made public.

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39. See FOLSOM and SAVAGE 1838, 31–2.

40. For useful discussions of these matters see DICUIRCI 2010, 565–592; GOULD 1995, 58–82; CARAFOIL 1988, 605–22; BAYM 1989, 459–88; SCHULTZ 1973; VANDERBILT 1986. Two key works of antiquarian defense were HOLMES 1805 and GRAHAME 1827 — both, like BANCROFT (1844–1875; see especially vol. 1, chapter 12, "The Pilgrims") later, unabashedly pro-Puritan.

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