

John Winthrop, Reasons for Emigrating to New England (1631).

[Winthrop, the governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, drafted this statement as a justification for establishing colonies in New England, and as a defense against their detractors.]

Reasons to be considered for justifying the undertakers of the intended Plantation in New England, & for encouraging such whose hearts God shall move to join with them in it.

1. It will be a service to the Church of great consequence to carry the Gospell into those parts of the world, to helpe on the coming of the fullness of the Gentiles, & to raise a Bulwork against the kingdom of AntiChrist which the Jesuits labour to rear up in those parts.
2. All other churches of Europe are brought to desolation, & or sins, for which the Lord begins allready to frown upon us & to cut us short, do threaten evill times to be coming upon us, & who knowes, but that God hath provided this place to be a refuge for many whome he meanes to save out of the generall callamity, & seeing the Church hath no place left to fly into but the wilderness, what better worke can there be, then to go & provide tabernacles & foode for her against she comes thether:
3. This Land grows weary of her Inhabitants, so as man, who is the most precious of all creatures, is here more vile & base than the earth we treade upon, & of lesse prise among us then an horse or a sheep: masters are forced by authority to entertaine servants, parents to mainetaine their owne children, all townes complaine of the burthen of their poore, though we have taken up many unnecessary yea unlawfull trades to mainetaine them, & we use the authoritie of the Law to hinder the increase of our people, as by urging the Statute against Cottages, & inmates, & thus it is come to pass, that children, servants & neighbors, especially if they be poore, are counted. the greatest burthens, which if thinges were right would be the chiefest earthly blessinges.
4. The whole earth is the Lords garden & he hath given it to the Sonnes of men with a general Commission: Gen: 1: 28 : increase & multiplie, & replenish the earth & subdue it, which was againe renewed to Noah: the end is double & naturall, that man might enioy the fruits of the earth, & God might have his due glory from the creature: why then should we stand striving here for places of habitation, etc, (many men spending as much. labour & coste to recover or keepe sometimes an acre or two of Land, its would procure them many & as good or better in another Country) & in the meantime suffer a whole Continent as fruitfull & convenient for the use of man

to lie waste without any improvement?

5. We are grown to that height of Intemperance in all excess of Riott, as no man's estate allmost will suffice to keepe saile with, his equals: & he who fails herein, must live in scorne & contempt. Hence it comes that all artes & Trades are carried in that deceitfull & unrighteous course, as it is allmost impossible for a good & upright man, to maintain his charge & live comfortably in any of them.

6. The fountains of Learning & Religion are so corrupted as (besides the unsupportable charge of there education) most children (even the best wits & of fairest hopes) are perverted, corrupted, & utterly overthrowne by the multitude of evill examples & the licentious government of those seminaries, where men straine at gnats & swallows camels, use all severity for maintenance of cappes & other accomplishments, but suffer all ruffianlike fashions & disorder in manners to passe uncontrolled.

7. What can be a better worke, & more honorable & worthy a Christian then to helpe raise & supporte a particular Church while it is in the Infancy, & to join his forces with such a company of faithfull people, as by a timely assistance may growe stronge & prosper, & for wante of it may be put to great hazard, if not wholly ruined:

8. If any such as are knowne to be Godly, live in wealth & prosperity here, shall forsake all this, to join themselves with this Church & to run an hazard with them of an hard & meane condition, it will be an example of great use both for removinge the scandall of worldly & sinister respects which is cast upon the Adventurers; to give more life to the faith of Gods people, in their prayers for the Plantation; & to encourage others to join the more willingly in it.

9. It appeares to be a worke of God for the good of his Church, in that he hath disposed the hearts of so many of his wise & faithfull servants, both ministers & others, not onely to approve of the enterprise but to interest themselves in it, some in their persons &, estates, other by their serious advise & helpe otherwise, & all by their prayers for the welfare of it. Amos 3: the Lord revealeth his secret to his servants the prophetts, it is likely he hath some great worke in hand which he hath revealed to his prophetts among us, whom he hath stirred up to encourage his servants to this Plantation, for he doth not use to seduce his people by his owne prophetts, but commit that office to the ministry of false prophetts & lying spiritts.

Source: R.C. Winthrop, *Life and Letters of John Winthrop*, 2 vols. (Boston, 1869), 1: 309-11.
*Some spelling has been modernized.

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