


## GOVERNOR WINTHROP

 OHN WINTHROP, colonial governor of Massachusetts, was born near Groton, Suffolk, England, January 22, 1588. He was educated at Trinity College, and made some study of law before settling upon his estates at Groton. What manner of man he was we see by his own journals, and by his *Life and Letters* (2 Vols. 1864-67), edited by a descendant of the Governor, Robert C. Winthrop. A Puritan by conviction, he early acquired great influence among the Puritans of England, as well as among those of New England, in so much so that in October, 1629, he was chosen governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, and set sail thither in the following year in the "Arbella," at the head of a fleet of eleven ships, in which were some nine hundred colonists. On the voyage he wrote a treatise entitled "A Model of Christian Charity," and began a journal of daily events which, with various breaks, was continued until within a few weeks of his death. This journal, which forms a faithful record of colonial happenings, was edited by James Savage in 1825-26, and published as "The History of New England from 1630 to 1649." Winthrop was governor from 1624 to 1634, and again in 1637-40; 1642-44; and 1646, till his death at Boston, March 26, 1649. A man of learning, dignity, and self-command, he exercised a beneficent influence upon the colony in its early years. What has generally been called the "impeachment" of Governor Winthrop was a memorable occasion in the history of the colony and in Winthrop's personal career. There is no narrative of the circumstances of the case, except that which he has left in his own history. The account will be found in Winthrop's journal, with characteristic observations and incidents. The occurrence out of which the affair grew was, indeed, trifling in its original aspect. The question whether a certain person should be the captain of a militia company in the town of Hingham seems by no means important enough to have set the colony by the ears and to have occupied the whole of an unusually protracted session of the General Court. In 1869, his essay on "Arbitrary Government, and the Government of Massachusetts Vindicated from that Aspersions," was printed from his manuscript for the first time. Many of the Winthrop papers have been issued by the Massachusetts Historical Society.

### "LITTLE SPEECH" ON LIBERTY

[Winthrop styles this his "little speech"; but few speeches of that period or, indeed, of any other period, have obtained a wider celebrity in history. "The circumstances in which this address was delivered," says James Grahame, "recall the most interesting scenes of Greek and Roman history; while in the wisdom, piety, and dignity that it breathes it resembles the magnanimous vindication of a judge of Israel. Winthrop was not only acquitted by the sentence of the court and the voice of the public, but recommended so prevailingly to the esteem of his fellow citizens by this and all the other indications of his character that he was chosen governor of Massachusetts every year after as long as he lived."]

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I SUPPOSE something may be expected from me upon this charge that has befallen me, which moves me to speak now to you; yet I intend not to intermeddle in the proceedings of the court or with any of the persons concerned therein. Only I bless God that I see an issue of this troublesome business. I also acknowledge the justice of the court, and for mine own part I am well satisfied. I was publicly charged, and I am publicly and legally acquitted, which is all I did expect or desire. And though this be sufficient for my justification before men, yet not so before the God who hath seen so much amiss in my dispensations (and even in this affair) as calls me to be humble.

For to be publicly and criminally charged in this court is matter of humiliation (and I desire to make a right use of it), notwithstanding I be thus acquitted. If her father had spit in her face (saith the Lord concerning Miriam), should she not have been ashamed seven days? Shame had lien upon her, whatever the occasion had been. I am unwilling to stay you from your urgent affairs, yet give me leave (upon this special occasion) to speak a little more to this assembly. It may be of some good use to inform and rectify the judgments of some of the people, and may prevent such distempers as have arisen amongst us.

The great questions that have troubled the country are about the authority of the magistrates and the liberty of the people. It is yourselves who have called us to this office, and, being called by you, we have our authority from God, in way of an ordinance, such as hath the image of God eminently stamped upon it, the contempt and violation whereof hath been vindicated with examples of divine vengeance.

I entreat you to consider that, when you choose magistrates, you take them from among yourselves, men subject to

like passions as you are. Therefore, when you see infirmities in us, you should reflect upon your own, and that would make you bear the more with us, and not be severe censurers of the failings of your magistrates, when you have continual experience of the like infirmities in yourselves and others.

We account him a good servant who breaks not his covenant. The covenant between you and us is the oath you have taken of us, which is to this purpose, that we shall govern you and judge your causes by the rules of God's laws and our own, according to our best skill. When you agree with a workman to build you a ship or house, etc., he undertakes as well for his skill as for his faithfulness; for it is his profession, and you pay him for both. But when you call one to be a magistrate he doth not profess or undertake to have sufficient skill for that office, nor can you furnish him with gifts, etc., therefore you must run the hazard of his skill and ability. But if he fail in faithfulness, which by his oath he is bound unto, that he must answer for. If it fall out that the case be clear to common apprehension, and the rule clear also, if he transgress here, the error is not in the skill, but in the evil of the will: it must be required of him. But if the case be doubtful, or the rule doubtful, to men of such understanding and parts as your magistrates are, if your magistrates should err here, yourselves must bear it.

For the other point concerning liberty, I observe a great mistake in the country about that. There is a twofold liberty, natural (I mean as our nature is now corrupt) and civil or federal. The first is common to man with beasts and other creatures. By this man, as he stands in relation to man simply, hath liberty to do what he lists: it is a liberty to evil as well as to good. This liberty is incompatible and inconsistent with authority, and cannot endure the least restraint of the

most just authority. The exercise and maintaining of this liberty makes men grow more evil, and in time to be worse than brute beasts: *omnes sumus licentia deteriores*. This is that great enemy of truth and peace, that wild beast, which all the ordinances of God are bent against, to restrain and subdue it.

The other kind of liberty I call civil or federal; it may also be termed moral, in reference to the covenant between God and man in the moral law, and the politic covenants and constitutions amongst men themselves. This liberty is the proper end and object of authority, and cannot subsist without it; and it is a liberty to that only which is good, just, and honest. This liberty you are to stand for, with the hazard (not only of your goods, but) of your lives, if need be. Whatsoever crosseth this is not authority, but a distemper thereof. This liberty is maintained and exercised in a way of subjection to authority; it is of the same kind of liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free. The woman's own choice makes such a man her husband; yet, being so chosen, he is her lord, and she is to be subject to him, yet in a way of liberty, not of bondage; and a true wife accounts her subjection her honor and freedom, and would not think her condition safe and free but in her subjection to her husband's authority. Such is the liberty of the church under the authority of Christ, her king and husband; his yoke is so easy and sweet to her as a bride's ornaments; and if, through forwardness or wantonness, etc., she shake it off at any time, she is at no rest in her spirit until she take it up again; and whether her lord smiles upon her, and embraceth her in his arms, or whether he frowns, or rebukes, or smites her, she apprehends the sweetness of his love in all, and is refreshed, supported, and instructed by every such dispensation of his authority over her. On the

other side, ye know who they are that complain of this yoke and say, let us break their bands, etc., we will not have this man to rule over us.

Even so, brethren, it will be between you and your magistrates. If you stand for your natural corrupt liberties, and will do what is good in your own eyes, you will not endure the least weight of authority, but will murmur, and oppose, and be always striving to shake off that yoke; but if you will be satisfied to enjoy such civil and lawful liberties, such as Christ allows you, then will you quietly and cheerfully submit unto that authority which is set over you, in all the administrations of it, for your good. Wherein, if we fail at any time, we hope we shall be willing (by God's assistance) to hearken to good advice from any of you, or in any other way of God; so shall your liberties be preserved, in upholding the honor and power of authority amongst you.

## SIR JOHN ELIOT



**S**IR JOHN ELIOT, a British patriot and statesman, who figured prominently in the struggle between the Crown and Parliament in the era of Charles I., was born at the family seat at Port Eliot on the river Tamar, England, April 20, 1592, and died in the Tower of London, Nov. 27, 1632. Educated at Exeter College, Oxford, young Eliot for a while travelled on the European continent, in company with George Villiers, afterward Duke of Buckingham, and a dissolute minister of Charles I. Eliot was knighted in 1618, and through the influence of Buckingham, then his friend, but who later on was his bitter opponent and enemy, he became vice-admiral of Devon, and five years afterward (1624) entered Parliament as member for Newport. In Parliament, Eliot became a stout upholder of its privileges, supporting with much eloquence the measures of the constitutional party in the House against the autocracy of Charles and his favorite Buckingham. For his freedom of speech, he was imprisoned in the Tower of London for a week, but when again at liberty he continued to denounce in Parliament the King's illegal taxation, oppression of the people, and disregard of the rights of the Commons. In the third Parliament, hostility to the King's arbitrary conduct was pronounced and emphatic, and this manifested itself in the form of a remonstrance, known in English history as "the Petition of Right," deemed the second great Charter of the liberties of England. This Petition Charles was forced to sign, and Eliot had much to do in drawing up the document, which brought upon him the ill-will of the King. Matters fast became worse, for Charles continued his illegal means of raising money, and when the Commons continued to protest, Charles threw a number of its members into prison and angrily dissolved Parliament. This occurred in 1629, and among those imprisoned was Sir John Eliot, who was confined in the Tower, and there died in 1632—the King meanwhile governing England without the aid or check of a national council. As an orator Eliot exhibited much force and enthusiasm, but was not an especially logical thinker. During his imprisonment he wrote an account of the first Parliament of Charles I, called "Negotium Posterorum;" and a political treatise, "The Monarchy of Man." These, with "An Apology for Socrates," a vindication of himself; "De Jure Majestatis, a Political Treatise of Government;" and the "Letter-Book of Sir John Eliot," were first published two hundred and fifty years after his death.

### SPEECH ON THE PETITION OF RIGHT

[The Petition of Right provided, that no loan or tax might be levied but by consent of Parliament; that no man might be imprisoned but by legal process; that soldiers might not be quartered on people contrary to their wills; and that no commissions be granted for executing martial law. On the 2d of June, 1628, Charles returned an evasive answer to this petition, in which he endeavored to satisfy the Commons without giving a legal and binding assent to their demands. The next day Sir John Eliot made the following speech. It breathes throughout that spirit of affection and reverence for the King's person which was still felt by both Houses of Parliament. It does not dwell, therefore, on those recent acts of arbitrary power in which the King might be supposed to have reluctantly concurred. The entire speech was directed against the royal favorite, the Duke of Buckingham.]