A model of christian charity and sinners in the hands of an angry god

In John Winthrop's, A Modell of Christian Charity, and Jonathan Edwards', Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God, what it means to be a Christian is developed in two respectively distinct ways. While both John Winthrop and Jonathan Edwards backed the same principles of Christianity in their sermons, they differ in the rhetoric they employed and the time period in which they preached.

Jonathan Edwards, like John Winthrop, tried to generalize to the people of his time how they were to act as a Christian if they desired to lead a good and generous life. Jonathan Edwards was revolutionary for his style of preaching, for he, unlike his predecessors, utilized what could be called the ' fire and brimstone' approach to allow his congregants to feel the power and wrath of God. His general purpose with this approach was to ignite a sense of fear within his listeners in order to relay to them that how they acted and conducted themselves was subject to being overrun by sin. If their demeanor was void of Christian ideals, Edwards explained that their fate was a terrible punishment in Hell. In other words, if the colonists were filled with sin, Edwards indirectly claimed that they were not viable to ascend into heaven because God was not ready to accept them: " The only reason why they are not fallen already, and do not fall now, is only that God's appointed time has not yet come" (Edwards 1). While Edwards clearly had the colonists' best interests in mind, he undoubtedly found it more useful to take a harsher approach rather than a gentler one.

In A Modell for Christian Charity, a series of questions and answers are propagated by Winthrop that express what Winthrop sees as the epitome of Puritan ideals such as giving to the needy. Similarly, John Winthrop wanted

his congregants to demonstrate what it meant to be Christian. Throughout the sermon, Winthrop exudes unmatched optimism to articulate the justness of God as a higher being and God's impact on human existence. He communicates to the colonists that God " hath disposed of the condition of mankind, as in all times some must be rich, some poor, some high and eminent in power and dignity; others mean and in subjection"" (Winthrop). Winthrop expresses this as necessarily true in order to demonstrate to his congregants that despite this innate hierarchical positioning of people in society, a common ground must be reached so people act with " justice and mercy" in mind toward one another (Winthrop).

Despite the extremely general similarity, A Model of Christian Charity and Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God demonstrate a key difference in the rhetoric that is utilized. Edwards' diction and imagery are rather dark, fearful, and tangible in comparison to Winthrop's lighter and gentler rhetoric. Edwards almost forces his congregants to feel intimate to the words he is saying with this approach as he describes " That World of Misery" and " Lake of Burning Brimstone" to be " extended abroad and under you" (Edwards 2). It is evident that Edwards is appealing to the colonists' senses with the words like ' burning' and ' extending' . . . ' under'. In this sense, it is almost as if Edwards is trying to achieve the effect that his listeners are experiencing Edwards protestations and threats in the moment. With this dark, fearful, and tangible diction Edwards can develop a sermon that inspires his congregation to rethink their everyday behaviors and experience a rebirth of thought. In contrast, Winthrop exercises words and phrases like " brotherly affection", " glory", and " common good" to achieve a similar idea

(Winthrop). By doing this, Winthrop can revamp the young and inexperienced colonists with positivity and hope, so they are able to construct a newly founded state. The gentler approach reflects how Winthrop visualizes these colonists would act toward one another in order to work together with grace and cohesiveness. While Edwards utilizes fear tactics, Winthrop tries to act like a guide for the colonists that is reflective of the times.

A Modell for Christian Charity and Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God display different statuses of the Christian faith due to the different time periods in which they were written. When Edwards was writing, he was in the presence of a Puritan movement that was almost the opposite of the revolutionizing Puritan movement experienced by Winthrop. Edwards was preaching during the 1730s and 1740s in what is known as the First Great Awakening, where there was a revitalization of Christian ideology sweeping across the colonies and Great Britain. There was a fear present in devout Puritans like Edwards that new influences were going to taint the pure faith and digress people to sin. Since A Modell of Christian Charity was preached in the early 1600s – a time where the colonies were still in the developmental stage — Winthrop focused on instilling moral ideals to ensure the colonists had the correct state of mind to construct a righteous community in the newly founded colonies. Winthrop saw this as an opportunity for a " new birth" of the Puritan faith and values (Taylor, 161). Winthrop's doctrine is based on a myriad of themes and reasonings such as communalism and exceptionalism to reflect the Puritan ideals such as love, unity, and charity, so these new colonies could develop into what Winthrop

envisioned as a potential Christian utopia. Generally, Winthrop hoped that these " Puritan values could help the colonists prosper" in this new state (Taylor, 159).

Despite Edward's and Winthrop's similar intent to instill what it meant to be Christian into the English colonists, it is evident that A Modell or Christian Charity and Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God exemplify differing rhetoric used by the Edwards and Winthrop in order to achieve a similar goal and different statuses of the Christian faith in American history.