

## The Divine Right to Occupy the Land

Before leaving England in 1630, John Winthrop and other Puritans attended church services and heard a sermon preached by Rev. John Cotton. In the sermon "God's Promise to His Plantation," the Rev. Cotton said that the Puritans were God's chosen people. In 1633 Cotton left England and settled in Boston.

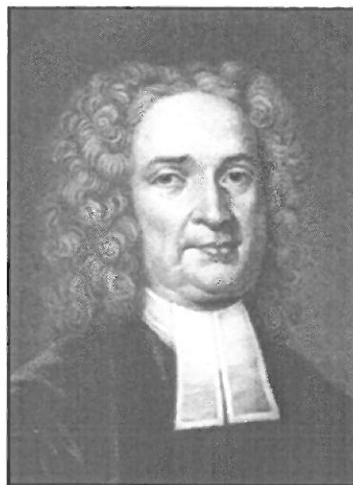
### Primary Source

The placing of a people in this or that country is from the appointment of the Lord. . . . When either He gives them to discover it themselves, or hears of it discovered by others, and fitting them. . . . He carrieth them along to it, so that they plainly see a providence of God leading them from one country to another. . . . He makes room for a people to dwell there. . . . Now, God makes room for a people. . . . when He casts out the enemies of a people before them by lawful war with the inhabitants. . . . [Or] when He makes a country, through not altogether void of inhabitants, yet void in the place where they reside. Where there is a vacant place, there is liberty for the sons of Adam or Noah to come and inhabit, though they neither buy it nor ask their leaves. . . .

### Contemporary English

God places a people in this or that country. God either lets men discover a country themselves or, upon hearing that land has been discovered by others, God sends them to it. The settlers can plainly see the influence of God leading them from one country to another. God makes room for a people to live there when he drives those who live there away by a just war. Or, God permits his people to settle on land that is vacant even though it is in an inhabited country. Where there is vacant land, there is liberty for the people who honor God to come and live there even though they neither buy it or get permission to settle there.

Source: *Annals of America*, Vol. 1 (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, 1976), p. 107.



John Cotton

## Questions

1. If you were a Puritan getting ready to settle in New England how would you react to Rev. Cotton's sermon?
2. What rights do you have from God to settle this new land?
3. How must you deal with the native people of North America?
4. What advice do you think Rev. Cotton would give Puritan settlers in New England after the Pequot War of 1636?

## Vocabulary

providence of God	God's will; by fortune of God
sons of Adam or Noah	children of God (in this sense, Christians)
void of inhabitants	unsettled; no one living there