



 Rev. John Miller
*New York Considered
 & Improved*
 1695
 EXCERPTS

John Miller, an Englishman and Episcopal minister, gained his insight into the New York colony while serving as chaplain to the English soldiers stationed there in the 1690s. In his lengthy report to the Bishop of London, Miller surveys the colony's climate, resources, settlements, population, commerce, and military fortifications. Noting the colony's weaknesses, he offers proposals for the moral and religious improvement of the colonists, the conversion of the Indians, most emphatically, the "subduing & resettlement" (i.e., invasion) of French Canada. After surveying the colony in Ch. 1, he proceeds to its "evils & inconveniences."



Ch. 2
Of the
Evils &
Inconven-
iences in
New York

Come we now to consider those things which I have said to be either wanting or obstructive to the happiness of New York & here I shall not speak of every slight or trivial matter but only these of more considerable importance which I count to be six:

- 1 the wickedness & irreligion of the inhabitants
- 2 want [lack] of ministers
- 3 difference of opinions in religion
- 4 a civil dissension
- 5 the heathenism of the Indians &
- 6 the neighborhood of Canada; of every one of these I shall say something as shall be most material.

Irreligion

The 1st is the wickedness & irreligion of the inhabitants which abounds in all parts of the Province & appears in so many shapes constituting so many sorts of sin that I can scarcely tell which to begin with. But as a great reason of & d inlet to the rest, I shall first mention the great negligence of divine things that are generally found in most people of what sect or party whatsoever they pretend to be. Their eternal interests are their least concern & as if salvation were not a matter of moment when they have opportunities of serving God they care not for making use thereof, or if they go to church 'tis but too often out of curiosity & to find out faults in him that preacheth rather than to hear their own or what is yet worse to slight & deride where they should be Serious. If they have none of those opportunities they are well contented & regard it little if there be any who seem otherwise & discontented; many of them, when they have them, make appear by their Actions 'twas but in show; for though at first they will pretend to have a great regard for God's ordinances & a high esteem for the Ministry, whether real or pretended, a little time will plainly evidence that they were more pleased at the novelty than truly affected with the Benefit, when they Blight [criticize] that which they before seemingly so much admired & Speake evil of him who before was the subject of their praise and commendation [i.e., the author, Rev. John Miller] . . .

Drunkenness	I am minded to speak of . . . drunkenness, which though of itself a great sin is yet aggravated in that it is an occasion of many others. 'Tis in this Country [colony] a common thing even for the meanest persons, so soon as the bounty of God has furnished them with a plentiful crop, to turn what they can as soon as may be into money, & that money into drink. at the Same time when their family at home have nothing but rags to protect their bodies from the Winter's cold; nay, if the fruits of their plantations be such as are by their own immediate labor convertible into liquor such as Cider Perry &c. [etc.] they have scarce the patience to stay till it is fit for drinking, but inviting their pot-companions, they all of them neglecting whatsoever work they are about, set to it together & give not over until they have drank it of[f]. . . .
Swearing & cursing	In a town where this course of life is led by many, 'tis no wonder if there be other vices in vogue because they are the natural product of it, such are cursing & swearing to both of which People are here much accustomed, some doing it in that frequent horrible & dreadful manner as if they prided themselves both as to the number & invention of them. This joined with their profane Atheistical & scoffing method of discourse makes their company extremely uneasy to sober & religious men who sometimes by reason of their affairs cannot help being of their society & becoming ear-witnesses of their blasphemy & folly. 'Tis strange that men should engage themselves so foolishly & run into the commission of so great a sin unto which they have no sufficient, often not a pretended, provocation & from which they reap no advantage nor any real pleasure; & yet we see them even delight in it & no discourse is thought witty or eloquent except larded with oaths & execrations. . . .
Adultery, fornication & unlawful marriages	. . . There is no sufficient provision for the marrying of People in this Province, the most that are married here being married by Justices of the peace for which there neither is nor can be in New York any Law, on this account many looking upon it as no marriage at all & being easily induced to think it so when they find themselves pinched by the contract think it no great matter to divorce themselves as they term it & marry to others where they can best & according to their own liking. Whether this manner of marrying by Justices of the Peace be a sufficient engagement to the married couple to live together is to me a matter not disputable & in the meanwhile the Scandal & Evil that flows from hence is very great. . .
Theft	. . . But now of late since Some people are become wealthy enough to purchase & have by them what is worth the taking away & that the out parts of the Province (where the best land is) towards Canada are so harassed by the French & their Indians that men are fearful to plant & dwell there & that people are fallen into so great debauchery & Idleness, thieving is become more frequent & many considerable robberies have been committed in my time in New York to the great discouragement of Industrious people & increase of vice & sin. There are many other wickednesses which I might Speak of as wanting redress but there is no need of enlarging on their account for where these of greater note already spoken of are discouraged, the rest will of themselves fall to nothing.
Ch. 3 Of the Ministry & deficiency therein	A second & great inconvenience this Province Suffers under is in relation to a Ministry, for it is most certain that where there are persons of Some repute & Authority living who give good example by their sober lives & conversations & diligence in their duty. Sin is mightily discouraged & religion & virtue gain ground upon her daily & increase & flourish & that where there are none Such, vice has a free course & Religion continually decays & what by the negligence of men & the malice & subtlety of the Enemy of all goodness runs to ruin. Now in New York there are either: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. No Ministers at all that is of the settled & established Religion of the nation [i.e., Anglican] & of Such there is not oftentimes one in the whole Province nor at any time except the Chaplain to his majesty's forces in New York [i.e., the author, Rev. Miller], that

does discharge or pretend to discharge the duty of a Minister & he being but one cannot do it everywhere . . .

2. Or Secondly if there be any Ministers they are Such as only call themselves so & are but pretended Ministers. Many or them have no orders at all [i.e., have not been ordained] but set up for themselves of their own head & Authority or if they have orders are Presbyterians, Independents &c. . . they take more care to please the humors & delight the fancies of their hearers than to preach up true religion & a Christian life. . . .

3. Or thirdly if there be or have been any Ministers & those Ministers of the Church of England, they have been here & are in other Provinces, many of them such as being of a vicious life & conversation have played so many vile pranks & shown such an ill light as has been very prejudicial to Religion in general & the Church of England in particular, or else they have been such as though sober yet have been very young & so instead of doing good have been easily drawn into the Commission of evil & become as scandalous as those last mentioned. . . .

**Ch. 4
Of
difference
in Religion**

The Province of New York, being peopled by several nations, there are manifold & different opinions of religion among them, as to which, though there are but very few of any sect who are either real or intelligent, yet several of the partisans of Each sort have, every one, Such a desire of being uppermost & increasing the number of their own party that they not only thereby make themselves unhappy by destroying true piety & setting up instead thereof a fond heat & blind Zeal for they know not what but also industriously obstruct the settlement of the establish'd Religion of the nation which only can make them happy & have hitherto either by their craft & cunning or their money prospered in their designs & to do thus they have but too much pretence from the Scandalous lives of some Ministers . . .

**Ch. 5
Of the civil
division**

Miller describes the residual hostility among New York colonists who supported or opposed the failed rebellion against the royal governor led by Jacob Leisler in 1689 — one of three colonial rebellions spurred by the Glorious Revolution in England, in which the Catholic James II was replaced by the Protestants King William III and Queen Mary II.

. . . these injuries done by either side to their opposites have made a most unhappy division & breach among them which will hardly of a long time admit of cure except some very prudent & moderate method be used for that purpose, more than has already been put in practice.

**Ch. 6
Of the
heathenism
of the
Indians**

The next thing in this Province blameable is the Heathenism of the natural Indians who here in the very heart of a Christian country practice their barbarous & devilish customs & modes of worship notwithstanding it is now 60 years & more since Christians first inhabited this Country & 30 years since the English were possessed thereof. Indeed there is something to be said in excuse hereof that is the unsettledness of the Country, for a long time the Several changes of Government it has undergone & the small number of the English at present & something to be objected that is that it would be first reasonable to settle religion among those who are professed Christians before we pretend to the conversion & settlement of the Indians. . . .

**Ch. 7
Of Canada**

CANADA although not in this Province but far distant from it is yet a great enemy to the peace & happiness of it.

1. As it is the reason why the most fruitful part thereof lies at present waste, forsaken by its former inhabitants & hindered as to its future improvements.

2. As it is the reason why his Majesty & the remainder of this Province are at great charges in maintaining Albany & the frontiers against the insults of the French & their Indians.

3. As they debauch our Indians from their fidelity & instruct them in Popery [i.e., Roman Catholicism], both which at present are & hereafter will be much to the damage of

this Province. Add hereunto that by the damage they do to the other Provinces, New England, &c. or are at all times ready to do, they put the King of England & his subjects to a great deal more charge [expense] to defend themselves than the King of France or the Jesuits (if it be their Country as some Say it is) are at to defend Canada against us, though we are in all more than twenty times their number. . . so that it appears a matter highly requisite to be Endeavored to conquer & subdue Canada & that before it grow stronger in fortifications than at present it is & indeed it is a shame it should not be effected when we so much exceed them in strength in those parts & when if it please God to prosper us therein we shall not only be freed from the charges [expenses] which at present every province is at more or less, but Canada may be so settled that it may be great Addition of Strength & wealth to the English in America without being in a little time any charge but rather a benefit to the Crown . . .

Ch. 8
Of the
more
general
means for
correcting
the evils in
New York

The great, most proper, & as I conceive effectual means to remedy and prevent all the disorders I have already mentioned & promote the settlement & improvement of Religion & Unity both among the English subjects that are already Christians & the Indians Supposed to be made so is That his Majesty will graciously please to send over a Bishop to the Province of New York who if duly qualified empowered & settled may with the Assistance of a small force for the Subduing of Canada by God's grace & blessing be Author of great happiness not only to New York in particular but to all the English plantations [colonies] on that part of the continent of American in general. . . .

Ch. 9
Of
converting
the Indians

When I speak of converting the Indians — by Indians I mean principally those five Nations which lie between Albany & Canada & are called 1) Mohawks or Maquaes, 2) Oneidas, 3) Chiugas, 4) Onundagas & 5) Senecas, of whom though most of the Mohawks are converted to Christianity by Dr. Delliuss & Some of the Oneidas by the Jesuit Millet, yet the first not being yet established in any good order at all & the last being converted to Popery, I look upon the work as yet wholly to be done & if what has been already done is not a disadvantage to it, yet that little advantage is gained thereby except a demonstration of the inclination of the Indians to embrace the Christian religion. . . .

Ch. 10
Of the
method
how to
subdue &
resettle
Canada

. . . 1. The first thing then to be done in order to the conquest of Canada is to pitch upon a General for the conducting & carrying it on. The General then is to be but one to come & all forces both by Sea & land that are sent or appointed for this purpose: for long Experience has taught us that equal & divided commands have ruined many noble Undertakings & great Armies. . . .

2. The Second thing to be provided for is forces & warlike Provisions Sufficient for Such a design & those to be either sent for England or prepared in America. . . .

Miller continues with extensive and detailed plans for the invasion of Canada and its settlement by English colonists. He concludes:

. . . this is the method which I promised to lay down as proper for the Subduing & resettlement of Canada which if it be not so complete as it ought to be, or not likely to be so effectual as I hoped it might, in the judgment of understanding persons, if yet it will serve but as the first lines of a draft or a motive only to abler heads to do better, I shall not only be contented but very glad And not think that I have lost my labor.

SOLI DEO GLORIA

[Glory to God Alone]