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Date

PURITANICAL CONCEPTION BY JOHN WINTHROP.

The early seventeenth century was characterized by the forming of European colonies such as England, Netherland, Spain and France in America. The settlers built colonies that had distinctive social, political, religious and economic approach. Lord Baltimore of England, a catholic founded the first colony of Maryland (Berwick 157-157). The Mid-Atlantic region of North America came second with the establishment of the New Netherland colony. In the year 1644, the British took over the New Netherland colony and named it New York but the Dutch settlers were entitled the right on freedom of worship. New England formed the third colony of settlers in North America. The growing need for religion reforms in the Church of England attracted many puritan protesters from Plymouth. Led by lawyer John Winthrop, they formed The Massachusetts Bay colony that governed itself rather than falling under the rules of England company directors. The colony fought for the separation of the state, church and the freedom of religion (Berwick 157-157).

In the year 1645, while serving as the deputy-governor of Massachusetts, John Winthrop was impeached. Together with other dissent magistrates, they were accused of interfering with the election of a local militia officer. The magistrates were charged and fined for having exceeded their legal powers .John Winthrop was acquitted and he made the famous “little speech” on liberty. He addressed both the natural and federal or state liberty. Natural liberty which he described as corrupt, deals with how man relates with the fellow men. Every man has the freedom to good and bad. Exercising the natural liberty makes men evil and it draws conflict with the authorities. Civic or moral liberty links with; the agreement between God and man and the agreement between the politics and constitution in relation to men (SCHAAR 493-518). Winthrop termed the federal or civic liberty as the only object of authority just like Christ has made us free. It is the only liberty that is good, honest and just. John Winthrop drew the relations between a woman and her husband. The woman makes a choice on the husband who becomes her lord. She is accountable to her husband through freedom or liberty but not through slavery or the domination of the husband. The church is under the authority of Christ who is her husband and king (SCHAAR 493-518). The church’s spiritual peace is realized only when there is a bond with the Christ, the husband. There is liberty between the state and the citizens, the magistrates who have authority from God are called into the office by the citizens. He argues that citizens should bear with the magistrates’ weaknesses rather than disapproving them.

Puritans led by John Winthrop worked hard to “reform” the Church of England from its catholic doctrines that had strong influence on the social, political and theological concepts of the Americans. The “subjection to authority” as proposed in the Puritan liberty is widely accepted in the twenty first century American society. Some of the key puritan values and beliefs are; intolerance to any error, strong value for education and that Godly people should be responsible and hardworking (Kang, N.p). They perceived the English society as having been corrupted by the past colonial influences. I do not find John Winthrop view to be compatible to our sense of religious freedom. Puritans viewed Godly people as sober and responsible. Majority of the people today are not responsible yet they associate themselves with religious practices.

Works cited

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