

JOHN WINTHROP OR ROGER WILLIAMS? (Part-two of a six-part study)

In this segment, we will begin to outline some of the significant similarities between Winthrop and Williams, as well as their critically important differences. Both men were born and raised in England, within overlapping generations. Both held to a Calvinistic theology. They were also disenchanted with the corruption within the Church of England. That perspective toward the Anglican Church eventually resulted in each individual choosing a fresh start in the New World. Both ended up landing in an area of North America that is now Massachusetts. Any consideration of their spiritual life can only result in one simple conclusion: both men were deeply devoted to Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord.

Such a commitment was expressed by the Pilgrims in their Mayflower Compact, as well as the settlers of Virginia at Cape Henry. The arrival of these groups in what would become the United States of America was unmistakably accompanied by their desire to glorify God and promote the Christian faith. As they sought to escape their persecutions in theocratic England, they viewed their fresh start in the New World as a God-given opportunity to express their commitment to Christ with complete freedom, without any interference from the English government.

Nevertheless, the differences which emerged between John Winthrop and Roger Williams, are what make them so unique in the origination of our nation, as well as so monumentally important in determining the future direction of Evangelical Christianity in America. First of all, Winthrop was a Puritan. He believed that the Anglican Church could be “purified” or reformed from within. But due to the extenuating circumstances placed upon him by the government for his criticisms of the Church, he decided to leave England and establish an exemplary model for what the Christian faith should be. His intense desire for the Massachusetts Bay Colony was that it would be “that city on a hill,” referred to by our Savior in Matthew 5:14. On the other hand, Roger Williams identified with the Pilgrims in being what was known as a “Separatist Puritan.” He and they came to the conclusion that the Church of England, in all of its corruption, was beyond any hope of reformation. At least initially, the similarities in how they viewed ecclesiastical corruption, as well as a shared theological perspective, created a sufficient common ground for their peaceful co-existence within the Massachusetts Bay Colony. At least initially.

Sincerely in Christ,

Henry Igras >> Acts 28:31 >> speakingtruthwithlove.com

Don't forget! Part three of this study will be posted on Saturday, September 3