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Humanities
16 October 2019

Puritan: Study Guide

Background

- Puritans valued hard work and self-sacrifice, but also valued material success.
 - Wealth was considered to be the reward of a righteous life
- Most Puritans and especially the early Pilgrims wore all black clothing because that is all they had.
- Those who settled the Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1630 were more wealthy and could afford to buy colorful clothing when it was available and were even known to drink beer or other alcoholic beverages occasionally.
- Puritans valued family life, community service, art and literature
 - They were the first to establish a printing press, free public grammar schools and colleges (Harvard)
- They did not tolerate religious viewpoints that were different than their own

Beliefs

- Believe humans are “inherently evil and so must struggle to overcome their sinful nature.”
 - One of the first things a Puritan child learned
- Believe “Personal salvation depends solely on the grace of God, not on individual effort.”
 - Believe that only those who are selected by God are saved and go to heaven (Predestination).
 - The only way one could be saved was by directly experiencing God’s grace in a religious conversion.
- Believe “The Bible is the supreme authority on earth.”
 - Puritans argued that the Bible was the main guide in both governing the moral and spiritual life but also in governing the church and society as a whole.
 - Wanted to make Puritan churches more democratic and focused on their congregations rather than around ruling bishops.
 - Led to Puritans being more intolerant of others: Used the Bible to defend their occupation of the land and use of force against Native Americans.
 - Saw themselves as God’s chosen people.

Beliefs about Sinners

- Those who are not converted walk over the pit of hell with an uncountable number of weak places that cannot be seen
- God would need to be at the expense of a miracle to take out any wicked man at any time
- Natural men are “held in the hand of God, over the pit of hell
- If you were never born again and raised from being dead in sin then you are in the hands of an angry God
- The only reason one has not dropped into the pit of hell is because God’s hand has held them up

Education

- Says prayers for his children and mentions each one by name to the Lord
- Tells them delightful and scriptural stories at bedtime and concludes with a lesson of piety
- Whenever he interacts with his kids he leaves one sentence that will be beneficial to them
- At bedtime, engages children in silent prayer and gives plain and brief directions/ suggestions of what they should pray for
- Teaches them to do acts of kindness for each other and for other children
- Teaches the children how to write as soon as possible

Vocab

Personal Salvation- saving one’s own soul from sin and its consequences

Inherently Evil- born bad; inherit sins/bad genes when born

Abate- lessen, reduce or remove

Providence- the protective care of God or of nature as a spiritual power

Focus Questions

- 1) What are the Puritans main values in life?
- 2) What do they worship/ what do they believe is the “supreme authority on Earth”?
- 3) How have Puritan beliefs changed overtime/ how are they similar in present day?