Views Of Hell: Puritans Vs. In Essay, Research Paper

Period 4

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Puritan Hell vs. Indian Hell

In the story ? The History of the Dividing Line,? the character Bearskin presents a view of Hell that contradicts the views of Edward?s in ?Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God.? Bearskin?s perception of Hell is a cold, barren place that, although completely undesirable, can be avoided and even escaped from. But in Edward?s eyes, Hell is a pit of molten brimstone that is un-escapable and almost everyone is certain to dwell there for eternity.

The version of Hell in ?The History of the Dividing Line? can be perceived as the more hopeful of the two stories. In the Indian?s story, Hell is a dreadful place, yet can be avoided by one who believes and trusts in God. He describes God, ? that God is very just and very good, ever well pleased with those men who possess god-like qualities? (53). Bearskin shows that if Gods? wills are not taken lightly, and if people act as he wants, then they will be taken care of and given eternal peace and joy. But if one defies God and does not obey his word, they will be forsaken by Him. If someone does not obey the will of God, they will be taken to Hell, where ? All such as tell lies and cheat those that have dwellings with he never fails to punish with sickness, poverty, hunger, and a place in Hell? (53). Although Bearskin describes Hell as a horrible place to live, one still contains the power to be redeemed from it once there, or even avoid it altogether.

In contrast, the vision of Hell in ? Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God,? is absolutely horrifying. Edwards creates a disturbing image of Hell, describing it as ??that lake of burning brimstone, is extended abroad under you. There is a dreadful pit of of the glowing flames of the wrath of God?? (80) This portrayal of Hell differs from Bearskin?s in that Bearskin?s is eternal winter, ?leading to a dark and barren country, where it always winter?(54), cold and barren, while Edwards explains it as a large pit of burning brimstone and molten lava. The two resting places of the damned also differ in the fact that Edwards believes that almost everyone is going to Hell, and no one can escape it, unless they are one of the elect (which he conveniently is). And once one enters Hell, there is no escape, only eternal torture. As Edwards portrays, ??nothing but His pure pleasure that keeps you from being this moment swallowed up in everlasting destruction? (81), God has no obligation to keep humans alive, that everyone should pray for the mercy people receive from God. Edwards version of Hell is much harsher than that of Bearskins, and Bearskins also happens to be more uplifting.

Therefore, both stories differ in the sense of Hell that they project towards the reader. Bearskin wishes, or so it seems, to give the reader hope in the afterlife, that even if the person can not avoid Hell, it is still possible to escape it eventually. But Edwards wishes to completely destroy the human spirit with his version, driving fear into the heart of the human race. Although the two stories differ greatly, they both accurately portray the difference in the religion of the two different civilizations.