

The Heathen School by John Demos Book Analysis

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Introduction

The Heathen School: A Story of Hope and Betrayal in the Age of the Early Republic, just as the title implies, is a story of hope and downfall of a bright idea that was a brain-child of the Protestants who were visionary about the life ahead. The heathen school was a Foreign Mission School in Cornwall, Connecticut, founded in the United States in the early years of the 19th century and was led by Edwin Dwight, who termed it the "Heathen School." The school was a result of early Protestants who had the idea of evangelizing the world by bringing on board boys and men from across the world, molding them into the people they so desired, and sending them back to their countries of origin to continue spreading the morals and teachings and morals acquired from the school.

Our current states of life are often a reflection of our pasts, and it is from our past that we derive ways of moving into the future. The Heathen School is a part of America's rich history, and it cannot be taken away from it, regardless of how bitter and regrettable some of the lessons from the experience were. The events right from the initiation to the growth and finally to the destruction and closure of the school were vital in drawing a route map moving forward with regard to religion and racial perseverance.

Discussion

There is no doubt that the story of the Heathen School is bound to American history in its entirety, and religion played a crucial role in the case. From the American experience, three different perspectives of the American culture are envisaged in the story.

The story is a reflection of the exceptional and generous spirit of the people of America. During the early stages of the development of the school, the American people welcomed the idea sold to them by the Protestant group behind the formation of the school[1]. The idea is interpreted by the Americans as brilliant and one that gives hope to make the world a better a better place for everyone. Religion played a crucial role in getting the idea to sink and be understood by the American natives since the original idea about the school was a good one anyway.

The school brought boys and men from across the continents, regardless of their color, race, or background, onto the bandwagon, therefore serving as a unifying factor for the people of the world[2]. This also brought about equality and the fact that everyone is capable of doing anything,

and the only difference is usually the fact that life does not present equal opportunities to everyone. Religious leaders, such as the Protestants, did well in acting as a unifying factor for the people of the world.

The adventures and occurrences at the Heathen School bring out the fact of admittance that exceptionalism and its consequences also have a 'dark side' appended to it. The story of the school came to see the light of day by virtue of the exceptional behavior and attitude of the people of the people of America^[3]. The Americans saw the idea through microscopic lenses as not just a mere schooling project but one with greater benefits that would transform the world into a better place for the generations to come^[4].

However, their hospitality and exceptionalism are put to the test when the same great idea earlier thought or perceived turns into a story of grief and doom. The same Americans take to the street to protest the activities of the school, but on the contrary, forget that it was a product of their signatures, too! We gain deep insight from this story that every great story has its 'downside' too. Regardless of the magnificence of the idea of transformation of the world as envisaged by the founding Protestants, calamity also results from the same situation.

The story of the Heathen School also brought about another aspect and lesson to the Americans; it raises the question of how we handle and/or deal with others who are manifestly different from us. When things fall apart in 1826 after the condemned inter-marriages between the indigenous Cherokee and the native women of the United States, we see that everything eventually crumbles with street protests and violence being witnessed across the country. This is the story of betrayal, as brought out by Demos. The situation further degrades into racial discrimination and wars amongst people of different ethnic backgrounds^[5]. During this time of crisis, and there was no clear leadership role to contain the situation, all eyes turned to the religious leaders to come up with something that would save the nation from further degradation. From this perspective, we see another role of religion or the church as being a natural creation of the society to be opinion leaders, peacemakers, and harmony finders of the society and country at large.

Conclusion

The story of the Heathen School is a story of hope for the world, as earlier thought out by the originators of the idea. However, we also learn that every bright idea must be carefully implemented, lest its 'downside' manifests its ugly face. There is, however, always hope, even for the tree that has been cut down, as we see America rise again after curtains fall on the racial violence resulting from the school. From this great and inspiring story, we also find the role of religion as being very crucial in the fundamentals of life: It is through religion that the bright idea of the school is born, with all the clear intentions and purpose of striving to make every part of the world a better place for humanity. Religion and/or the church also come in handy during conflict resolution and peace-making, as seen when everything at the school crumbles based on racial lines. The story of the Heathen School should,

therefore, be celebrated across the states of our country as having been a period during which crucial and important lessons of our country were learned and a period when the great people of America stood up against what was a potential degradation of the country.

Bibliography

Demos, John. 2014. *The Heathen School*. 1st ed. Knopf.