

1985

A Theological Interpretation of American History Study Guide

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Recommended Citation

Samson, Steven Alan, "A Theological Interpretation of American History Study Guide" (1985). *Faculty Publications and Presentations*. 198.

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STUDY QUESTIONS

Singer, Chapter One, "Introduction"

Identification

historiography	Frederick Jackson Turner	Charles A. Beard
Karl Marx	Puritanism	Calvinism
commonwealth	divine sovereignty	total depravity
redemption	original sin	magistrate
constitutional checks	spheres	common grace
redemptive grace	Pope Gelasius I	theory of the two swords
covenants	John Winthrop	John Cotton
Halfway Covenant	John Wise	Deism

Questions

1. What does the author mean on page one when he observes that "ideas . . . have consequences?" What is the purpose of historical scholarship? Identify and describe four or five schools of interpretation. What are their strengths and weaknesses?
2. Why are these approaches to American history inadequate from a Calvinist viewpoint? What is lacking? Why are the major schools so weak at present? What does the author believe must be done?
3. Why is Puritanism "the key which unlocks the meaning of colonial history as a whole?" What was the "theological common denominator?" Why were the colonies outside New England not as articulate in their devotion to Calvinism?
4. What was the express purpose of the Puritans who settled New England? What lay at the heart of their entire political, social, and economic system? Why was suffrage limited to church members?
5. Identify and describe four major doctrines of Puritan theology. Why did the Puritans believe government to be necessary? Why did they resist the idea of salvation or redemption by political, social, and economic institutions?
6. What political and religious conditions gave rise to the Puritan philosophy of government? By what standard did they believe the state must be governed? What is the proper position of the earthly magistrate? Whence does he derive his powers? What is the ultimate guide for political conduct?
7. Why were church and state kept separate despite their common theological foundation? How did the Puritans apply the Gelasian "theory of the two swords?" What were the separate spheres of church and state responsibility? Where did liberty find its origin and meaning? How did Gov. John Winthrop define it?
8. Why were John Winthrop and John Cotton opposed to democracy in principle? What did they believe to be the source of true freedom? Describe the Puritan economic philosophy. Why did Puritanism decline? Identify specific causes.

STUDY QUESTIONS

Singer, Chapter Two, "Deism in Colonial Life"

Identification

Rene Descartes	rationalism	Lord Herbert of Cherbury
John Locke	empirical epistemology	Sir Isaac Newton
natural law	Jonathan Edwards	Enlightenment
Cadwallader Colden	Jonathan Mayhew	John Adams
social contract	Whigs	Jean-Jacques Rousseau
natural (human) rights	Charles Chauncey	Unitarianism
James Freeman	Thomas Jefferson	Declaration of Independence
French Revolution	Timothy Dwight	pantheism

Questions

1. What does the author believe to be the effects of Deism in America? What was the origin and nature of Deism? Why did it undergo a change late in the 17th century? What were some of the underlying assumptions of the Enlightenment? Why were these doctrines a repudiation of the entire Puritan system?
2. Who were some of the colonial thinkers associated with this radicalism? What did they believe? Where did the strength of the radicals lie?
3. What are the various theories about the causes of the American Revolution? What does the author believe? Does he view these causes favorably? What were the basic political views of John Locke? Why does the author believe Locke was accepted by the leaders of colonial thought? How had the intellectual temper changed?
4. What were some of the important steps in the rise of religious liberalism? Why does the author compare the American and French Revolutions? Why did he believe their outcomes were different?
5. What were the religious and political views of Thomas Jefferson? What was the nature of his democratic philosophy? What role was played by education? What evidence does the author bring in support of his view that the political thought of the Revolution was not well adapted to "creating a new government?" (42-43)
6. What evidence leads Singer to conclude that the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution? Does he believe that differences in religious outlook played an important role in creating the first political parties? What is the significance of the different reaction by the two parties to the French Revolution? Why did Timothy Dwight seek the secession of New England from the Union?
7. What were the sources of the revolt against Deism? Why did it fail in New England? What was the effect of Transcendentalism on the weakened Deism? What does the author mean by "the intuitionism of the romantic era?" What was the primary source of the leadership within the 19th century reform movement?

STUDY QUESTIONS

Singer, Chapter Three, "Transcendentalism and the Rise of Modern Democracy"

Identification

G. W. F. Hegel	Samuel Taylor Coleridge	Theodore Parker
Ralph Waldo Emerson	Immanuel Kant	Over-Soul
William Ellery Channing	Oliver Wendell Holmes	Charles G. Finney
New England Theology	Henry David Thoreau	lyceum
Charles Fourier	Brook Farm	George Ripley
Plan of Union of 1801	Arminianism	Old School Presbyterianism
nullification	abolitionism	Alexander Stephens
Jefferson Davis	Thaddeus Stevens	Southern home missions

Questions

1. Why did conservative Unitarians like Andrews Norton reject Transcendentalism? How is Transcendentalism related to Deism? What were its European sources? What were the distinct ideas that originated in Rousseau and German idealism?
2. What was the essence of Transcendentalism? What ideas characterized its new epistemology (theory of knowledge) and metaphysics (theory of reality)? What did it teach about the relationship between man and God? What attitude did its supporters take toward institutions and organizations?
3. In what ways did Transcendentalism represent "a revolt against all previous American theological systems?" What does Singer mean by a "democratic theology?" What was the effect of its evolutionary approach to life? Specifically, what were some of the characteristic political and social ideas it promoted?
4. How did the idea that man is merely a part of nature influence the Transcendentalist approach to social reform? What was its role in the abolition movement? In what ways did it resemble Marxian socialism in its purposes and effects? In what ways did it promote collectivism? What are its lasting contributions?
5. What were some of the sources of opposition to Transcendentalism? What were some of the causes of the theological cleavage between North and South? Why did the leaders of Old School Presbyterianism take a stand against Abolitionism? What were some of the specific criticisms?
6. How did theological radicalism influence the Reconstruction? What did Thaddeus Stevens hope to accomplish by radically altering the constitutional system?

STUDY QUESTIONS

Singer, Chapter Four, "Social Darwinism: Its Theological Background and Political Implications"

Identification

Charles Darwin	naturalism	stream of consciousness
William James	William Graham Sumner	Lester Frank Ward
sociocracy	ethical hedonism	sociological jurisprudence
Stephen J. Field	pragmatism	Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr.
John Dewey	instrumentalism	Brooks and Henry Adams

Questions

1. Identify three factors that contributed to the success of Social Darwinism as a theological and philosophical movement. What were some of the scientific developments that influenced this view of society? Did it uphold the Christian view of original sin? What did it believe to be the source of salvation?
2. How was the Darwinian theory of evolution received in Christian circles? Who accepted and who opposed it? What was its effect on the influence of the Christian ethic in politics, society, and the economy?
3. Identify some of the basic principles of psychology taught by William James. How did William Graham Sumner's ideas differ from the Christian view of man? What did he believe the basis of right and rights? Why did he believe monopolies to be desirable? Identify some ways he broke with earlier economic and constitutional thought. What were the views of Carnegie and Rockefeller?
4. How did Lester Ward's view of evolution differ in its implications from Sumner's? How did he believe that man (or society) could control evolution? Did Sumner believe it could be controlled? How did he propose to use sociology, legislation, and education to achieve his "panacea" or solution for all social problems? What were his ideas on Christianity, the family, marriage, ethics, and law?
5. Who supported and who opposed the idea of sociological jurisprudence that the law is not a fixed standard but is subject instead to change and is relative in its meaning and scope? Why did Justice Field's idea of substantive due process prove ineffective as a defense against this changing idea of law? Why were the principles of English common law opposed by Jefferson? Has criminology changed?
6. How did John Dewey apply the philosophy of pragmatism to education? What was his concept of truth? Why did he support the collectivization of industry? What factors made his educational philosophy anti-Christian? What made his philosophy "anti-intellectual?" How has the place of the Bible in education changed?
7. How did Brooks and Henry Adams help change the study and writing of history from the way it was practiced by George Bancroft? What were their basic assumptions? What happened in his pursuit of the meaning of history? What were the two primary forces that historians like Turner and Beard believed to determine history? What economic views did Ely and other opponents of the Manchester School support?
8. Identify some of the consequences of the idea of Social Darwinism.

STUDY QUESTIONS

Singer, Chapter Five, "The Social Gospel and Its Political Effects in American Life"

Identification

social lag	Pelagianism	Social Gospel
German Higher Criticism	Charles G. Finney	Friedrich Schleiermacher
synergism	naturalism	theistic evolution
determinism	John Fiske	Asa Gray
Henry Ward Beecher	Lyman Abbott	Henry Drummond
Walter Rauschenbusch	immanence	Federal Council of Churches
Methodist Social Creed	Harry F. Ward	<u>Outlook</u>
Theodore Roosevelt	New Nationalism	Washington Gladden

Questions

1. What is the thesis of Singer's study? How does he characterize the religious changes that have taken place since the time of the Puritans? What was the Social Gospel movement? What were its aims?
2. How did the government encourage the growth of big business? What were some of the social problems of this period? Where does Singer believe the Social Gospel went wrong? Why were evangelicals apparently insensitive to these social issues? Why did they distrust the Social Gospel?
3. What were the theological roots of the Social Gospel? How did it modify various Christian doctrines? How did the Social Gospel differ from earlier liberalism? How was the Darwinian account of the ascent of man from lower species modified? What points did John Fiske, Asa Gray, Henry Ward Beecher, and Henry Drummond make about theistic evolution?
4. Who was the most important leader of the Social Gospel movement? What was his conception of the Kingdom of God? What did he believe about God, salvation, sin, and the church? What was the Federal Council of Churches? What did the social creeds of the Methodist Church and the Federal Council declare? What were their underlying assumptions?
5. How closely connected was the Social Gospel to Progressivism and socialism, according to Harry F. Ward? Why were the social creeds not real creeds? What role was the federal government expected to play? How did this view differ from the biblical view? How was the Social Gospel reflected in the Progressive Party and its platform?
6. After the defeat of Roosevelt and the Progressive Party in 1912, what were some of the crusades supported by the Social Gospel? What were some of the long lasting effects of the Social Gospel on church and state? Why did it ultimately fail?