

# Religion and Witchcraft



November 26<sup>th</sup>, 2014

# Protestantism



- ❧ Most of England was Protestant. Under that heading, there were many different congregations.
- ❧ The official church was the Church of England (Anglican Church).
- ❧ Its head was the king of England.
- ❧ The Church of England was formed when King Henry VIII split from the Catholic Church over a matter of divorcing his first wife.

# The Church of England



- ❧ The Church of England got to decide how church services would be held all over England.
- ❧ It was supported by the country/people's tax money.
- ❧ The church services were often rather elaborate.
- ❧ The churches were fancily decorated.

# Puritans



- ❧ Puritans were one of the larger dissenting groups of Protestants. They were Calvinists.
- ❧ They thought that church services should be plain and simple.
- ❧ They liked to wear dark clothing.
- ❧ They didn't like gambling or drinking or theatre because the Puritans thought that your life should be devoted to God.
- ❧ They were very suspicious of human nature because they thought that human were easily prone to falling into sin.

# More Puritans



- ❧ In better times, the Puritans could host their own church services if they occasionally went to a service of the Church of England. However, often it was illegal and they could be fined and imprisoned for their beliefs.
- ❧ So they left England to find religious freedom. One group chartered a boat called *The Mayflower* and went to America. They founded a colony at Plymouth Rock in 1621.
- ❧ Other Puritans joined the parliament, which they saw as a good way to push their beliefs.

# Witchcraft



# Witches



- ❧ People believed that witches were a personification of the devil, and people hunted them.
- ❧ If you were a woman and on the outskirts of society you were suspicious. Women who didn't marry or were social misfits or knew about medicine and treating illnesses were often arrested for being witches.
- ❧ And during the 17<sup>th</sup> century, a witch hunt hysteria took over in England, Scotland and Puritan colonies.

# More Witches



- ❧ Hundreds of people were executed for witchcraft.
- ❧ Some people claimed to have a special ability to prove whether or not someone was a witch.
- ❧ It was considered normal to torture people who were thought to be witches.
- ❧ Those who were condemned were plunged under water while their thumbs were tied to their toes until they drowned, which proved they were innocent.
- ❧ Some were hanged, burned, or pressed to death.



# Witchcraft Trials



- ❧ These trials were a result of the hysterical fears of the people.
- ❧ Those who didn't believe in witchcraft were too scared to go against the wrath of the people who called for the executions.
- ❧ This is a good example of how human emotions can easily destroy the institutions created to protect everyone.