

Week Four Religious Freedom

COMPASS POINT

Charles Spurgeon - "The Gospel is like a lion"

- Faithful people came to America seeking religious freedom — and they got it.
- American history has been mythologized
- Do we talk about history, or release the lion?

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Today's questions:

- What circumstances contributed to the separation of church and state in America?
- Whom is the idea supposed to protect?
- Who does it protect against?

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM



RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Question:

Should there be teacher-led prayer in public schools?

Just ponder it....

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Ezra Chapter 1:

¹In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, in order to fulfill the word of the Lord spoken by Jeremiah, the Lord moved the heart of Cyrus king of Persia to make a proclamation throughout his realm and also to put it in writing:

²"This is what Cyrus king of Persia says:

"The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and he has appointed me to build a temple for him at Jerusalem in Judah. ³Any of his people among you may go up to Jerusalem in Judah and build the temple of the Lord, the God of Israel, the God who is in Jerusalem, and may their God be with them.

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM



Photo by Mike Peel

Cyrus the Great
(550 B.C.)

- Ruled over 44% of the world's population
- Issued a charter
- Promised freedom of religion and worship for the diverse people & nations living under his rule

TIMELINE



1517: Martin Luther - 95 Theses

TIMELINE



1530s: Henry VIII - Church of England

TIMELINE



1530s: Henry VIII - Church of England - hybrid



1540s: Edward VI - Protestant



1550s: Mary I - Roman Catholic



1558: Elizabeth I - Protestant

PURITANISM

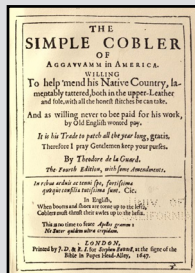
The Puritans:

- Felt Henry didn't go far enough in getting rid of Roman Catholic rituals and liturgy
- Became dissatisfied with their priests
- Were viewed with disdain
- Began emigrating to the Colonies

WHAT THE PURITANS DID IN THE COLONIES



VIEWS ON RELIGIOUS CONFORMANCE



The Puritans in America valued uniformity

Nathaniel Ward, *The Simple Cobbler* (1647)

- Detested four things
- "A wise state will... not tolerate differences in religion."

DEFINITIONS

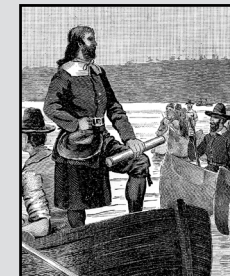
Puritans:

The church should be purified

Separatists:

We should separate from the church because of its condition

ROGER WILLIAMS



Background:

- Born in London, 1603
- Highly educated, took holy orders in Church of England
- Reputation in England for scholarship and piety
- Converted to Puritanism

ROGER WILLIAMS

Background:

- **1630:** Believed the Church was corrupt and became a Separatist
- **1631:** Came to America
- John Winthrop praised him as a godly minister, and the Boston church offered him a post

ROGER WILLIAMS

Conditions in Mass. Bay Colony (1631):

- As a "city on a hill," they believed their survival depended on having religion that was free of error
- Lay and clergy believed the government must prevent error in religion
- So, mandated wearing vestments, using Book of Common Prayer, and compulsory worship
- Offenses are punishable by imprisonment

WILLIAMS' BELIEFS

Per Williams, government has no business enforcing matters of faith:

- Forced worship "stinks in God's nostrils"
- Humans will err in interpreting God's will, so don't give humans the power to enforce it
- Governments of men are already corrupt, so don't put them in charge of faith
- The government should stay out of people's relationship with God

WILLIAMS' BELIEFS

- God endowed us with the inborn liberty to make choices in matters of faith
- Trying to force religion on people was "soul rape"
- The only coercion to be used in matters of faith is God's spirit

ROGER WILLIAMS

Two Fault Lines with Winthrop et al.:

- The relationship between a free individual and government authority in matters of faith
- The proper relationship between government and the church

ROGER WILLIAMS

Banishment:

- Williams attracted a following of those with similar beliefs at a congregation in Salem
- 1635: Mass. Bay Colony Court banished him

WILLIAMS' LEGACY

- Williams purchased land from the Indians, founded Providence, RI, the Providence Plantations, and the first Baptist church in America
- The charter (1663) stated:

"No person within the said colony, at any time hereafter, shall be anywise... punished... or called in question for any differences in opinion in matters of religion ... but that all persons may ... enjoy their own judgments and consciences in matters of religious concerns."

PERSPECTIVES

Observations:

- Puritans saw the Baptists and their like as Separatists, and sought to "purify" the church of them
- The Puritans used trials and banishment (government power) to accomplish their goals
- The Baptists in Rhode Island became the real protectors of religious freedom

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Thought experiment:

Imagine that prayer in public schools is permissible, and your child comes home and describes a prayer that you find objectionable.

What do you suppose the process would be for you to object to the prayer?

Who should have the final say on what prayers are acceptable or not acceptable for the classroom?

ANSWERS TO LAST WEEK'S PUZZLER

"RIGHTS" in the Declaration of Independence

Liberty:

- Is *spiritual freedom* from sin
 - 2 Cor. 3:17; Gal 5:1 and 13
- Reason: God *freed people to worship him*
 - Exod. 4:23, 5:1 and 3; 7:16
- Reason: God freed people so Egypt knew He was the true God
 - Exod. 5:2; 7:5 and 17