

14—Freedom of Religion

“The Story of the Church”

Pastor Mike Cooke

1. Religion in the 13 Colonies

- A. 11 banned Jews, Unitarians and agnostics from public office
- B. 7 paid their ministers with tax dollars
- C. 8 had official established churches
 - 1) Baptism was your citizenship into the colony
 - 2) Church service was mandatory
 - 3) Voting rights were limited by denomination
 - 4) Dissenters or proselytizers were persecuted or expelled
 - a) Quakers are whipped, ears cut off, and hanged (4)
 - b) Salem witch trials kill 20

2. Official Churches in the Colonies

- A. New England—Puritan (Congregational)
 - 1) Massachusetts, Connecticut, New Hampshire
 - 2) Rhode Island—refugees from MA (Puritan, Baptist, Quaker)
- B. Middle Colonies—None
 - 1) New York, New Jersey (Dutch Reformed)
 - a) 1662 Quaker John Bowne arrested on Long Island for have a meeting in his house by Sherriff of Harlaam Resolved Waldron
 - 2) Delaware—Tolerant
 - 3) Pennsylvania (Quaker—William Penn)
- C. Southern Colonies—Anglican (Episcopalian)
 - 1) Virginia, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia

3. Benjamin Franklin (Puritan) Philadelphia (1706-1790)

- A. Flees from Massachusetts and begins to publish critiques of the church
“It is the obligation of all good citizens to criticize hypocritical clergy.”—Silence Dogood, age 15
- B. Supports George Whitfield’s emphasis on virtue
“From being thoughtless or indifferent about religion, it seemed as if all the world were growing religious, so that one could not walk through town in an evening without hearing psalms sung in different families of every street.”

4. John Adams (Puritan) Massachusetts (1735-1826)

- A. Was turned off by Calvinism, Catholicism and dogmatism
- B. Eventually became a “Unitarian” Christian
- C. Believed revolution against British was fundamentally religious

5. George Washington (Anglican) Virginia (1732-1799)

- A. Led the Continental Army in the Revolutionary War
- B. Was a Freemason, spiritual but not sectarian
- C. Believed that religious tolerance was necessary for a united nation
- D. Preferred to use phrases like God, Providence, or Great Architect

6. Thomas Jefferson (Anglican) Virginia

- A. Jefferson Bible, cut and pasted "The Philosophy of Jesus"
- B. Was an avid student of Christian History:
 - 1) Opposed "heresy" and abhorred historical violence
 - 2) Opposed Calvinism, Judaism and religious superstition
- C. Believed organized religion to be opposed to freedom
"In every country and in every age, the priest has been hostile to liberty."
- D. Sought to protect the state from the church

7. James Madison (Anglican) Virginia

- A. Went to Princeton, an evangelical "New Light" school
- B. Appalled at the persecution of Baptists in Virginia
"All men are equally entitled to the free exercise of religion, according to the dictates of conscience, unpunished, and unrestrained by the magistrate."
- C. Opposed taxes to establish a state (national) run church:
 - 1) Who decides what is Christian and not?
 - 2) What version and translation of the Bible will be authoritative?
 - 3) Who decides what is orthodox and heretical?
 - 4) Who carries out the punishment for non-orthodoxy?
- D. Sought to protect the church from the state

8. The Constitutional Convention (1787)

- A. 8 different Christian denominations represented
- B. No one denomination represented more than 20%
- C. Jefferson encouraged James Madison to include a Bill of Rights
 - 1) First Amendment, 1791
"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances."
 - 2) Letter to the Danbury Baptists of Connecticut
President Thomas Jefferson, 1802
"I contemplate with sovereign reverence that act of the whole American people which declared that their legislature should 'make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof,' thus building a wall of separation between Church & State."