

One Nation Under God/ Marching to Freedom

God and Caesar Conflicts
in the 1950s



Class Goals

- ◆ Contact information – GodandCaesar@gmail.com or thcastner@comcast.net
- ◆ Finish the story of the disestablishment of religion in Massachusetts.
- ◆ Explore the different models of church/state engagement seen in the early Cold War and Civil Rights Movement.

Isaac Backus

- Baptists like Backus use the Revolution as a pretext to fight for complete liberty of Conscience
- *An Appeal to the Public for Religious Liberty*
- Trip to Continental Congress
- Appeal to Provincial Congress

Backus on Religion Liberty

- ◆ “The church is armed with *light and truth* to pull down the strongholds of iniquity. . . gain souls to Christ” and exclude those who will not submit to the authority of the Church. The state, on the other hand, “is armed with the *sword* to guard the peace and the civil rights of all persons and societies and to punish those who violate the same.”


The Returns of the Towns

- ◆ Reports of individual town meetings provides a window to the views about church and state of a broader range of people.

- Major Themes

- ◆ Anti-Catholicism - “we Mean Not to have any but Protestants to Rule us”
- ◆ Framingham denied that good government needed Christianity and feared too much connection of Church and State.
- ◆ Others wanted much stronger religious language

MA Constitution of 1780

- Provides opportunity for Baptists and others to secure religious freedom
 - Instead the Standing Order, maintaining close ties to the revolutionary government strengthened their political influence.
 - While provided theoretical equality for all Protestants, it guaranteed tax support for Congregational Churches and Sabbath attendance laws.
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Samuel Cooper

- ◆ Sermon to commemorate the New Constitution
 - The People of Massachusetts are like the People of Israel
 - We are living in the fulfillment of Biblical Prophecy
 - MA Government modeled after the Israelite Republic under the Judges
 - The success of the Government depends on the religious character of the people.

The Barnes Case (1810)


- ◆ Important Case that clarified the rights of dissenters to receive tax dollars
 - Parson's ruling proved that the ideology of the Standing Order was alive and well thirty years into the constitution.
 - An unincorporated church could not receive get tax dollars.
 - Universalists were upset that they needed permission from the state to be a recognized church.

Religious Freedom Act of 1811

◆ *An Act Respecting Public Worship and Religious Freedom*

- Effectively overturned the Barnes Case
- Gave unincorporated churches the right to receive tax dollars
- Itinerant ministers also eligible for support.
- Gave churches the right to own and manage money without a charter.

Constitutional Convention of 1820

- Separation from Maine necessitated a new Constitutional Convention
 - Daniel Webster argued that religion was “the only security of the good order of society, [and] the basis of the moral character of the community, [and] the only protection of a free government.”
 - Proved unable to generate adequate support for a compromise amendment.
 - But, it did drop all religious oaths and requirements for holding government office.
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Dedham Case

- Symbolized the growing rift between Unitarians and conservatives in Eastern Massachusetts.
- The Court ruled that the parish (town) had the right to hire ministers, control the meeting house and other property.
- The Trinitarian Church lost control of itself to the Unitarian town.
- As a result Trinitarian Congregationalists stopped supporting the Standing Order

Final Collapse - 1833

– Thomas Whittemore – Universalist Publisher

- ◆ “In order for Religion to do any good [it] must operate on his heart; it must regulate his affections; it must subdue his passions; it must impress its likeness on his soul: but this a mere artificial support can never do; this a legal enactment never will affect.”
- ◆ The People agreed and the 11th amendment overwhelmingly ended state taxation in support of religion.

Jeremiah vs. Hananiah

- ◆ Do you prefer prophets who preach peace, prosperity, and complacency, or those who preach repentance and judgment?
- ◆ “The prophets who preceded you and me from ancient time prophesied war, famine, and pestilence against many countries and great Kingdoms. As for the prophet who prophesies peace, when the word of that prophet comes true, then it will be known that the Lord has truly sent the prophet.”
Jeremiah 28:8-9

Religion and the Cold War

- ◆ America's fighting against "evil empires" in World War II and the Cold War predisposed it to see itself as the Godly nation fighting godlessness and tyranny.

Truman on the Cold War

- ◆ “We must always make spiritual values our main line of defense. . . . Freedom of religion as well as the freedom and security of nations is seriously threatened by anti-religious forces. . . . It is, therefore, necessary that all loyal American citizens join together to stem the tide of these evil forces by girding ourselves with the sword of faith and the armor of truth.”

Eisenhower and the Cold War

- ◆ “What is our battle against communism if it is not a fight between anti-God and a belief in the Almighty? Communists know this. They have to eliminate God from their system. When God comes in, communism has to go.”


Senator McCarthy

- ◆ "The great difference between our western Christian world and the atheistic Communist world is not political gentlemen, it is moral. . . Karl Marx dismissed God as a hoax, and Lenin and Stalin have added in clear-cut unmistakable language their resolve that no nation, no people who believe in a god, can exist side by side with their communistic state. . . Today we are engaged in a final all-out battle between communistic atheism and Christianity."

Billy Graham

- ◆ After the Soviet test of the Atomic Bomb, he remarked to a Los Angeles crusade that the Soviet Union was “. . . against God, against Christ, against the Bible, and against all religion.”
- ◆ According to Graham only a religious revival could help defeat the Soviet threat.
- ◆ Convinced William Randolph Hearst to “Puff Graham.”

Will Herberg

- ◆ In 1955 Sociologist Will Herberg claimed American society was created by a “triple melting-pot” of Protestants, Catholics, and Jews.
 - ◆ Helped create the relatively new notion of a Judeo-Christian heritage.
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Affirming our Civil Religion

- ◆ Addition of “one nation under God” to the pledge of allegiance.
- ◆ Addition of “In God we Trust” as the national motto and to currency.”
- ◆ “This Country makes no sense unless it is founded on a strong religious belief. And I don’t care what it is.”
 - Eisenhower
 - Ceremonial Deism or Evangelical Christianity?

The Problem of Means and Ends

- ◆ If we are the “Godly nation” what means are we justified in adopting in fighting against our enemies?
- ◆ Do we trust in our military and our missiles for defense or God?
 - “Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the LORD our God. (Psalm 20:7)
- ◆ Are we justified in overturning governments that oppose our economic or other interests?

Iran 1953


- ◆ The elected government of Muhammad Mussadeqh moved to nationalize the oil industry – based on unfair (imperialist) deals with the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (BP)
- ◆ The CIA (under Kermit Roosevelt) worked to overthrow Mussadeqh and restore the Shah to the throne.
- ◆ We aided him and turned a blind eye to human rights abuses in exchange for cheap oil.

Guatemala 1954

- ◆ The elected government of Jacobo Arbenz Guzman nationalized (with compensation) the land of large landholder including the American owned United Fruit Company. Allen Dulles (head of the CIA) on the Board
- ◆ John Foster Dulles: important Presbyterian Lay Leader – Sec State – Did legal work for United Fruit Company.
- ◆ The CIA worked with the local Catholic Church to overthrow Guzman.
- ◆ The coup led to a repressive regime and decades of instability and Civil War.

Barbara Savage's Perspective

"The emergence in the late 1950s of a Southern civil rights movement with churches, church people, and church culture at its center was a powerful and startling departure. . . . The movement is best thought of not as an inevitable triumph or a moment of religious revival, but simply as a miracle."



Contemporary Scholarship

- ◆ Jane Dailey, “Sex, Segregation, and the Sacred after *Brown*.” JAH (June 2004)
 - Argued that a theology of segregation was crucial to the resistance to the Civil Rights movements and just as much a part of American religion as King’s version.
 - Often fears of interracial marriage were expressed in religious language.
 - The Government’s stripping of tax exempt status from Bob Jones University for failing to integrate was crucial to the formation of the modern religious right. (Ballmer)

David Chappell – *A Stone of Hope*

- ◆ Saw the Civil Rights movement as a religious revival.
- ◆ Prophetic religion was key to the movement's success and power.
- ◆ The pro-integrationist message of the Bible, major southern denominations, and many religious leaders helped to mute white resistance.

Martin Luther King

- ◆ But more basically, I am in Birmingham because injustice is here. Just as the prophets of the eighth century B.C. left their villages and carried their "thus saith the Lord" far beyond the boundaries of their home towns, and just as the Apostle Paul left his village of Tarsus and carried the gospel of Jesus Christ to the far corners of the Greco-Roman world, so am I compelled to carry the gospel of freedom beyond my own home town.

King's Prophetic Critique

- ◆ American Segregation is a scandal in the eyes of God and contradicts the Gospel and core American values.
- ◆ American society must rededicate itself to fighting against poverty at home and overseas.
- ◆ American militarism is a threat to world peace and stability (especially in Vietnam)


King's Dream

- ◆ I have a Dream – or I have an eschatological vision?
 - We cannot be satisfied as long as a Negro in Mississippi cannot vote and a Negro in New York believes he has nothing for which to vote. No, no, we are not satisfied, and we will not be satisfied until "justice rolls down like waters, and righteousness like a mighty stream. (Amos 5)
 - I have a dream that one day every valley shall be exalted, and every hill and mountain shall be made low, the rough places will be made plain, and the crooked places will be made straight; "and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed and all flesh shall see it together. (Isaiah 40)

SNCC Founding Statement 1960

- ◆ Nonviolence, as it grows from the Judeo-Christian tradition, seeks a social order of justice permeated by love. Integration of human endeavor represents the crucial first step towards such a society.
- ◆ Through nonviolence, courage displaces fear. Love transcends hate. Acceptance dissipates prejudice; hope ends despair. Faith reconciles doubt. Peace dominates war. Mutual regards cancel enmity. Justice for all overthrows injustice. The redemptive community supersedes immoral social systems.
- ◆ By appealing to conscience and standing on the moral nature of human existence, nonviolence nurtures the atmosphere in which reconciliation and justice become actual possibilities.

Competing Visions

- ◆ A Civil Religion that promotes “ceremonial deism,” patriotism, and American power and activity in the world.
 - ◆ A Prophetic Critique that calls America toward a “beloved community” reflecting inclusion, concern for the poor, and pacifism.
 - ◆ Which vision do you prefer?
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