

Religious Freedom in American society

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Religious Freedom and Migration to America

Religious freedom is considered to be an intrinsic part of American society. An example of this can be traced to the seventeenth century when some of the people from England migrated to America to practice their beliefs independently. The religious refuge started in 1600 when the first separatist Puritans escaped the religious repression under King James I and Charles I. They came to America and formed New England. The various sects of Christianity, such as Separatist Puritans, Catholics, and Quakers, all came to America to escape prosecution and be independent in practising their religion. Although all came for religious freedom, they have different [belief systems](#) that set them apart. (Library of Congress, n.d.-a)

Separatist Puritans and Religious Reform

For instance, the Separatist Puritans came to America to practice puritanism without the strong control of the Catholic or the church of England. The Puritans emerged from the Church of England because they disagreed about the liturgy and rituals of the Catholic Church. When Henry VIII established the State Church of England, many of the dissenters thought it would incorporate their ideologies regarding the liturgy, rituals, and beliefs. However, the church kept many of the rituals and liturgy of the Catholic church which is why the dissenters continued criticizing the protestant beliefs and the church of England. They opposed the practices of the Catholic church. During the reigns of Queen Mary, many of the dissenters were sent to exile or prosecuted for criticism and preaching Puritan beliefs. But regardless, the dissenters stayed in England and preached. Initially, the Puritans remained with the church of England but worked to purify the Church of England from the influence of the Catholic Church. Their way of cleaning the Church of England was by making it less like the Catholic church. They believed in the scripture and considered the bible the truth. They believed in the predestination. They believed that God has the power to send a person to hell or heaven, and people cannot change it. They believed in the Old and New Testaments in the literal sense. However, some of them thought it was not used to stay with the church. Thus, they decided to leave, and they became known as Separatist Puritans. (Library of Congress, n.d.-a)

Political Dimensions of Puritan Migration

However, their religious cause was politicized as they started supporting parliament to gain power over the monarchy. As the Puritans wanted parliament to be strong and powerful, they went against the crown forces. Nonetheless, the working against the crown forces created problems for the

Puritans. The reformists did not stop advocating for alienating the Church of England from Catholic practices, but they did not succeed in persuading many people as they were scared of the crown. Hence, they decided to separate from the church of England and establish a church based on their ideologies and beliefs. However, the crown did not like the separatist ideology of the Puritans and tried to suppress it. The crown executed many of the members of Puritan members to control the separatist endeavors of the Puritans. Also, it was all happening at the catholic-protestant tensions which escalated the religious oppression. Consequently, they decided to leave and move to New England to be able to set up a church manifesting their belief system, and they were successful in building a church in New England or America based on Puritan beliefs. (Library of Congress, n.d.-a)

Catholic-Protestant Conflict and Settlement

Similarly, the catholic-protestant disagreement started in the 1500s and 1600s when some groups tried to reform the Catholic beliefs and practices. The new group that was willing to control the powers of the Roman Catholic church was named the protestants. The Roman Catholic churches of the time were powerful politically and spiritually. However, some people, such as [Martin Luther](#), criticized some of the practices of the Catholic Churches. For example, they believed the bible was the only way to instructions and people could change their final place in heaven or hell by working hard on good deeds. However, the reformists believed God has decided about a person's faith life, and it cannot be changed. Since they had certain views on Catholicism's belief system and practices, they promoted Protestantism. The Protestants broke away from the Roman Catholic church. Elizabeth forced the Catholics to the corners and tried to suppress the Catholics who wanted the traditional ways of the Roman Catholic Church. In James, I reign the Catholics out of frustration conspire to kill him, but they failed. The Catholics hereafter were labeled traitorous, and all their freedom was confiscated by the king. They were forced to take an oath, and they swore to forbid all relations with the Roman Catholic church. Hence, the religious freedom of the Catholics was restricted, and they were forced to follow the protestant's way of living. Due to such restrictions, Catholics moved to America because they wanted to have religious freedom, but it was not provided by the crown. (Library of Congress, n.d.-a, n.d.-b)

Quaker Beliefs and Social Justice

Lastly, the Quakers who believe God is present in all humans and humans can build a full relationship with God, and people can experience heaven or hell in this world. They wanted to make the world a better place by ensuring human rights and social justice. It was formed because George Fox was dissatisfied by the teachings of the Church of England and other non-conformist groups. He believed people could experience God without involving the clergyman and every person has something of God. His ideas infuriated the establishment because they were discomforting for the people and the establishment as the society was divided racially and socially. It posed a threat to social hierarchy and equalized all the people, which caused the Quakers to be strongly denied the freedom to practice

their religious beliefs. They were persecuted in Britain, due to which they traveled to America in the hope of being free to adhere to their religious beliefs. (Library of Congress, n.d.-b)

Shared Motives and Differences Among Religious Groups

Hence, all three groups escaped during the reformation of the 1500s, 1600s, and 1700s due to the oppression that they faced in Britain. However, it was not purely for religious reasons, especially in the case of the first separatist Puritans. The Separatist Puritans went to America seeking political, economic, and social stability. Moreover, it was convenient for them to leave a place where they could establish a church based on their religious beliefs without any opposition. The reformists of the time sought religious freedom from state coercion and political oppression. Nonetheless, the state and the churches had a strong hold on the lives of the people. Therefore, they were able to suppress the dissent. (Library of Congress, n.d.-a, n.d.-b)

Conclusion on Religion and Political Refuge

To conclude, the separatist Puritans, Quackers, and Catholics suffered due to state oppression, and they moved to America to escape the rivalry and oppression. However, it was not only because of the religious reasons. Rather, it was because they had found a new place with better economic, religious, and social opportunities for the people who arrived there later. Also, each of these groups left Britain to live in America gradually because they were scared of being prosecuted in England. Moreover, their right to practice the freedom of religion was confiscated. These reformists were crucial in changing the control of religion on the society by promoting democracy, spiritual freedom, and independence and paving the way for future generations. (Library of Congress, n.d.-c)

References

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