THE FOUR FREEDOMS
Roosevelt’s speech was widely used as a shorthand for American war aims. In most versions, these aims were portrayed as private protection of family and loved ones—rather than public obligations to flag and country.
Rockwell's version of “freedom from want” avoiding any hint of state responsibility (remember that many New Dealers saw this as a call for an expanded welfare state). Instead, “want” is satisfied by a sumptuous family meal. This image sparked some resentment among European allies, who felt it diminished the importance of sacrifice.
Although “freedom of religion” could be understood as a political battle, as something that the state could violate or protect (see following slide), Rockwell's version portrayed a simple scene of family worship.
Sidebar 9.7 The Four Freedoms
Rockwell also chose a local and familiar setting—a town hall meeting of some sort—to illustrate “freedom of speech.”
The irony of this “freedom,” of course, was that it was sharply curtailed by the war. Civilian and military campaigns stressed the importance of stifling free speech for the sake of wartime security.
Sidebar 9.7 The Four Freedoms
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Click here to play “Careless Talk” PSA
Rockwell's version of “freedom from fear” most clearly relied on the idea of family security. What is deserving of protection is not an abstraction (like the borders or the state) but a family’s children.
Sidebar 9.7 The Four Freedoms