

ONE NATION UNDER GOD

American Heritage and Religious Freedom

Philip R. Bryan, B. D., M. A., Ph.D.

BAPTISTS and the AMERICAN REVOLUTION



Baptist Chaplains Served Their Country

Program V

BAPTISTS AND THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

Introduction

Reporter I: Good morning! Welcome again to the Bicentennial series which tells about our American Heritage and Religious Freedom. Today, the fifth Sunday of the series, we will focus upon the role that Baptists played in the American Revolution itself.

Baptist Recognition of the Continental Congress

Reporter II: On September 5, 1774, in Carpenter's Hall, Philadelphia, the first Continental Congress assembled. Eight days after Congress first met, the Warren Association of Baptist Churches recognized it as a type of Supreme Court for the American Colonies because they sent it an appeal for freedom of religion.

Reporter III: The Philadelphia Baptist Association, the oldest such body in America, sent a large committee to Congress to aid the appeal of their New England brethren. In 1807, Dr. Samuel Jones, in a sermon before the Philadelphia Association, said: "On the assembling of the first Continental Congress, I was one of the committee, under appointment of your body, that, in company with ...Isaac Backus, of Massachusetts, met the delegates in Congress from that State...to see if we could not obtain some security for that liberty for which we were then fighting and bleeding at their side. It seemed unreasonable to us that we should be called to stand up with them in defence of liberty if...it was to be liberty for one party to oppress another."

Those two Baptist associations, therefore, formally recognized the Revolution and the Continental Congress. In doing so, they were among the first religious groups in the Colonies to give their influence to gain support for that Revolutionary Legislature.

Reporter IV: It does not detract from their recognition that they wanted Congress to assist them in securing relief from persecution. There is ample reason to believe that the public approval of two such respectable bodies, given at a time when doubt and alarm prevailed everywhere, had a powerful influence in strengthening the faith of patriots in and out of the first Continental Congress.

Enthusiastic Baptist Advocates of the Revolution

Reporter I: Baptists already had walked through the furnace of persecution. They knew what suffering meant. The whole denomination, therefore, was overflowing with enthusiasm for the Revolutionary cause. Their aid in securing Revolutionary freedom was of the highest importance; difficulties to them were trifles and opposition only stirred up greater power in them rather than controlling it.

Reporter II: The Baptist General Association of Virginia notified the Convention of the people of Virginia that "they had considered what part it would be proper to take in the contest, and had determined that they ought to make a military resistance to Great Britain in her unjust invasion, tyrannical oppression, and repeated hostilities." That action undoubtedly had great weight with the Convention whose delegates voted for the Declaration of Independence the next year in the Continental Congress.

Reporter III: Preachers also were devoted to helping in the Revolution. Their patriotism led some ministers to become **Chaplains in the Army**. Baptists held great interest in the soldiers of the Revolution. Having confidence in the power of prayer, they were anxious to have men of God minister to their armed forces in camps, hospitals, and battle-fields, so that they might not only point them to the One Who gives health and healing to the sick and wounded, and victory in every fierce struggle, but also that they might pray to God for success in battle. In that spirit, Baptist ministers were eager to go to the army as chaplains. Leading pastors from the East, the Middle States, and the South served with their armed brethren in all the struggles, dangers, and sacrifices of the Revolutionary War.

Reporter IV: Some of the Baptist chaplains were Jeremiah Walker, John Williams, and Elder M'Clanahan from Virginia; Charles Thompson and Dr. Hezekiah Smith from Massachusetts; Dr. Rogers from Pennsylvania; and David Jones and John Gano from New Jersey.

John Gano, who was born in Hopewell, New Jersey, possessed to a large degree the patriotic spirit of the Baptists of that place, which had so many representatives engaged in the Revolution. He was also a very brilliant man. Leaving the pastorate of the First Baptist Church of New York, he entered the army as a chaplain. He performed services which rendered him invaluable to the officers and men with whom he was associated.

Reporter I: One historian has written about Gano: "In the fierce conflict on Chatterton's Hill he was continually under fire, and his cool and quiet courage in thus fearlessly exposing himself who stood near him."

Gano himself in speaking of it said: "My station in time of action I knew to be among the surgeons, but in this battle I somehow got in front of the regiment; yet I durst not quit my place for fear of dampening the spirits of the soldiers, or of bringing on myself an imputation of cowardice."

Reporter II: When we read of the self-sacrifice of men like those, we are not surprised that they attracted the attention of General Washington, and that he declared that "Baptist chaplains were among the most prominent and useful in the army." There has been a strong tradition that Baptist chaplain John Gano baptized General Washington one night, but that cannot be substantiated historically to everyone's satisfaction.

Baptist Support in Other Areas

Reporter III: Some ministers served the Revolution in other areas. James Manning, D. D., president of the college now known as Brown University, was one of those. Few men in his day, in his own or other denominations, wielded a more extensive influence. In the Revolution he was the most influential man in Rhode Island. Other Baptist ministers included: David Barrow, Daniel Marshall, Oliver Hart, and Dr. Richard Furman.

Reporter IV: Dr. Stillman of Boston was a Christian of great consecration. No one in Massachusetts was recognized as a more fervent friend of liberty than that pastor of the First Baptist Church of Boston. In eloquent terms he advocated the doctrines of the Revolution in a sermon preached in 1766 on the repeal of the Stamp Act and in another sermon in 1770 before the Honorable Artillery Company of Boston.

Reporter I: As a preacher, Stillman had no superior in New England. Among his admirers were John Adams, General Knox, and Governor Hancock. Stillman was one of the twelve delegates from Boston in the convention which ratified the Constitution of the United States. He rendered valuable help to that almost equally divided assembly in securing a majority of nineteen votes for ratification.

Reporter II: Brethren out of the ministry planned and worked and suffered much in the cause of freedom also. Conspicuous among that class of Baptists is the name of John Hart, a Signer of the Declaration of Independence. John Hart of New Jersey was well informed on Colonial and European questions. He thoroughly understood the basic rights of mankind. He was held in such high esteem that he was usually selected to settle the disputes of his neighbors, who spoke of him affectionally as "Honest John Hart." When he entered the Continental Congress, in 1774, he was about sixty years of age. He resigned from Congress in 1775 when he became Vice-President of the Provincial Congress of New Jersey. He was again elected in 1776 when he took his place among the patriots and heroes who sent forth the immortal Declaration of Independence. It was issued on July 4, 1776.

Reporter III: Hart's signature on that famous document brought the wrath of the British authorities upon him. He had to flee. During this flight, one night he had a dog house for his shelter and its owner for his companion! In 1776, 1777, and 1778, Hart was elected Speaker of the House of Assembly of New Jersey. He built the Baptist Church of Hopewell and gave it its burying ground. John Hart, the Baptist, left a name fit for the famous document that proclaimed to the world our national birth!

Reporter IV: Another Baptist layman who served valiantly in the cause of the Revolution was Colonel Joab Houghton of New Jersey. Colonel Houghton was at worship in the Hopewell Baptist meeting-house when he received the first information about the battles of Concord and Lexington. His great-grandson has given the

following description of the way Houghton received the news: "Stilling the breathless messenger he sat quietly through the services, and when they were ended, he passed out, and mounting the great stone block in front of the meeting-house he beckoned to the people to stop....At the first words, a silence, stern as death, fell over all....He told them all the story...; then pausing, and looking over the silent throng, he said slowly: 'Men of New Jersey, the red coats are murdering our brethren of New England! Who follows me to Boston?' and every man of that audience stepped out into line, and answered: 'I! There was not a coward nor a traitor in old Hopewell Baptist Meeting-house that day.'"

Reporter I: John Brown of Rhode Island was a Baptist whose record is an honor to all Americans, as well as Baptists. He owned twenty vessels, any or all of which might have been seized by the British navy at any time. From the very first, however, he was a frank Revolutionist. In 1772, a British armed schooner called the "Gaspee" came into Narragansett Bay to carry out orders from British officials in Boston, with a view to prevent violations of the revenue laws. The ship was a continual annoyance to the ship owners. On June 9 she ran aground on Namquit, below Pawtuxet. Mr. Brown heard of it; so he immediately ordered eight large boats to be placed in charge of Captain Abraham Whipple, one of his best ship-masters. At about two a. m., Mr. Brown and his boats reached the "Gaspee"; two shots were exchanged, one of which wounded Lieutenant Duddingston. "That was the first British blood shed in the war of independence." The crew and officers left the "Gaspee" very speedily, and Whipple blew her up. Brown was the last man on board.

Reporter II: Baptist laymen crowded the ranks of the Army and labored for the triumph of the Revolution with all their might. They earned for themselves, therefore, a reputation for love of country and valor which will never die. John Adams of Massachusetts was on some occasions the bitterest enemy the Baptists had in Revolutionary days. Yet he gave them considerable credit for bringing Delaware from the gulf of disloyalty to the platform of patriotism.

Reporter III: On October 19, 1781, the American army entered Yorktown after they had taken Cornwallis and his troops as prisoners. The Philadelphia Baptist Association was in session when the news reached them on the night of October 23. At sunrise, the Association met and praised God for the victory. They also recorded their grateful feelings in appropriate resolutions. To some Americans the capture of Cornwallis was a terrible blow, but the oldest Baptist association in the land got up by sunrise to celebrate the best news that had reached them for six long years - tidings for which they sincerely thanked God. That was the spirit of the whole Baptist people all over the land!

Conclusion

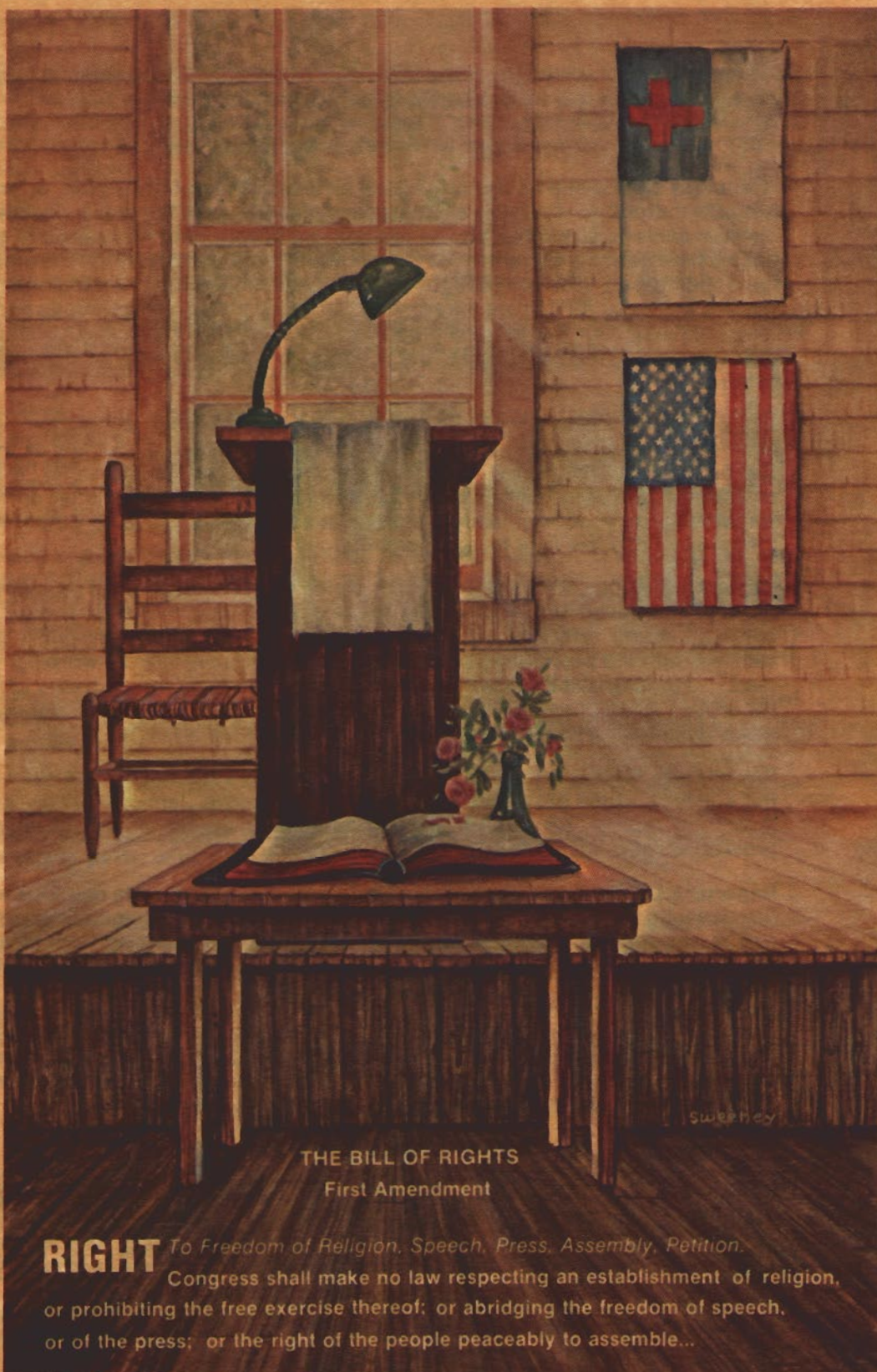
Reporter IV: Next week we will learn how a Baptist minister was instrumental in getting the Bill of Rights added to the U. S. Constitution.



ONE NATION UNDER GOD American Heritage and Religious Freedom

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JOHN LELAND and the BILL of RIGHTS



THE BILL OF RIGHTS
First Amendment

RIGHT *To Freedom of Religion, Speech, Press, Assembly, Petition.*
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...

Freedom of Religion Guaranteed by Leland's Efforts

Program VI

JOHN LELAND AND THE BILL OF RIGHTS

Reporter I: Hello. Welcome to the sixth part of the special Bicentennial series of programs. Today's study should be of interest to all true Americans.

Guarantees of Religious Freedom

"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 of the right of the people peaceable to assemble, and to petition the government for redress of grievances." Thus begins the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States. The first ten amendments have been called "The Bill of Rights." Americans of all races and religions are justly proud of the Bill of Rights, for in it are expressed clearly and plainly certain rights and privileges which they hold dear. Our Baptist forefathers can claim credit for influencing James Madison in his quest for getting the Bill added to the constitution. Baptists were led by a staunch patriot John Leland.

Reporter II: On March 7, 1788, about twenty Baptist ministers and laymen met at the Williams Meeting House in Goochland County, Virginia. The group was known as the Virginia Baptist General Committee. Leader of the committee was Baptist minister John Leland, a close friend of Thomas Jefferson, Patrick Henry, and James Madison. The matter before the committee was simple, yet important: Should the Baptists of Virginia encourage the General Assembly of Virginia to ratify the new federal constitution?

Reporter III: Baptists were not opposed to a plan for a federal union of the states. They raised the question, however, because of concern over an apparent lack of guarantees for complete religious liberty. Virginia Baptists were joined by citizens of all faiths in being basically satisfied with the proposed Constitution. They especially like the wording of Article VI which read: "...No religious test shall ever be required as a qualification to any office of public trust under the United States." That article outlawed any chance that the federal government could make religious beliefs or nonbeliefs a qualification for office.

Reporter IV: Although the contents of the proposed constitution had been formulated under the direction of the great minds of George Washington, James Madison, Benjamin Franklin, and John Adams, Rev. John Leland had serious doubts about the effectiveness of any provisions for religious freedom.

Reporter I: Leland asked, "Where are the guarantees of complete religious freedom? Where is the protection for the individual to believe or not to believe, to worship or not to worship, to be free to support his church or any religious cause, and free also from all compulsion of the government to support some church? Remember, we stand for religious liberty!"

Reporter II: Accordingly, the men assembled at the meeting in March 1788 agreed upon a statement that included these words: (read in unison) "We the Virginia Baptist General Committee unanimously hold that the new federal constitution, proposed to the States for their ratification, does not make sufficient provision for the secure enjoyment of religious liberty; and therefore it should be amended to make such provision."

Leland Enters the Race

Reporter III: One of the committee members, Colonel Charles Barbour, had originally announced as a candidate to the state convention which had been called to consider ratification of the proposed constitution. As a consequence of this meeting, he announced that he would withdraw from the race if John Leland would enter the race to represent Orange County.

Reporter IV: Barbour explained to Leland: "Announce for delegate! In that way you will be able to block the ratification of the constitution. Without Virginia the constitution will never be

accepted. A new convention will be forced to permit a clear statement guaranteeing religious freedom!"

Reporter I: At first Leland would have no part in running against his friend James Madison. At the insistence of Barbour and others, however, Leland finally agreed to consider the matter. The issue was very important to Leland. He did not want to betray his friendship with Madison, but a serious principle was at stake. A summary of Leland's position on religious liberty shows the urgency of his concern.

Reporter II: (Leland)

"First, there must be complete freedom of conscience. No one must be subject to penalties by any civil, military, or ecclesiastical authority because of religious belief or nonbelief.

"Second, there must be complete freedom to practice religious beliefs and activities, including the propagation of the faith at home and abroad, so long as they conform to respect for the person and the laws of human decency and safety.

"Third, there must be effective separation of church and state, specifically: (a) no taxation in any amount for any church, religious activity, or establishment, (b) no control of any religious organization by an agency of the government, (c) no favoritism by the government toward any religious organization, whether by extending diplomatic relations or concessions to its ministers, leaders, or programs."

Reporter III: Leland and his Baptist friends already had asked Madison to write into the constitution the protection they desired. Madison could see that the Baptists had a valid point in wanting to stand "firmly by their avowed principle of complete separation of church and state," but he balked at adding to the constitution. Instead, he asked for delay. In doing so, Madison sided with John Adams, whom Baptists considered to be a champion of established religion.

Reporter IV: Leland's disappointment in Madison's decision prompted him to write a pamphlet entitled "Objections to the Constitution." Composed of ten objections, the first and last were especially to the point:

"There is no Bill of Rights. Whenever a number of men enter into a stage of society, a number of individual rights must be given up to society, but there should be a memorial of those not surrendered, otherwise every natural and domestic right becomes alienable, which raises Tyranny at once, and this is as necessary in one Form of Government as in another...."

What is clearest of all - Religious Liberty, is not sufficiently secured. No religious test is required as a qualification to fill any office under the United States, but if a majority of the Congress with the President favour one system more than another, they may oblige all others to pay to the support of their system as much as they please; and if oppression does not ensue, it will be owing to the mildness of Administration, and not to any Constitutional defense, and if the manners of people are so far corrupted, that they cannot live by Republican principles, it is very dangerous leaving Religious Liberty at their mercy."

Leland and Madison Find a Compromise

Reporter I: Before Madison left Philadelphia to campaign in several letters telling him about Baptist opposition to the constitution and the plans for candidates who would run on the platform of rejecting the constitution. It was fairly well agreed that ratification by Virginia was imperative if the constitution was to become the law of the land. Among the letters was one from Captain Joseph Spencer, a Baptist who had served time in prison for his religious faith. He discussed the mounting opposition to the constitution and added: "Mr. Leland and Mr. Bledsoe and Sanders are the most publick men of the society in Orange, therefor as Mr. Leland lies in

your way home from Fredericksburg to Orange would advise you to call on him and spend a few hours in his company...."

Reporter II: In the meantime, Leland had decided to try to strike a bargain with Madison. If Madison would agree to be a member of the First Congress and present constitutional amendments that Baptists wanted, Leland could announce that he would not run for delegate to the convention and would even support James Madison.

On the way to Orange County, Madison stopped overnight at Mount Vernon for a visit with George and Martha Washington. He then hurried to Fredericksburg. There he was warned again that he needed to gain Leland's support, if he were to be elected as a delegate to the state convention. Madison then went to see John Leland. After exchanging the usual greetings, Madison and Leland strolled outside of the house into the side yard. There, under some great oak trees, they talked.

Reporter III: Soon afterward, Candidate James Madison spoke at a picnic near Gum Springs, six miles from Orange. He told his listeners that he would run for the First Congress and if elected, would introduce the amendments suggest by Rev. Leland and friends. Leland withdrew from the race. Madison was elected as delegate. The United States Constitution was ratified. It subsequently became the law of the land. As an elected member of the First Congress, Madison kept his promise. He worked hard at formulating the first ten amendments - Bill of Rights.

Reporter IV: On January 2, 1789, Madison wrote a letter to Rev. George Eve, who was pastor of the Blue Run Baptist Church in Orange County. He stated: "Circumstances have now changed. It is my sincere opinion that the Constitution ought to be revised, and that the first Congress...ought to prepare and recommend to the States for ratification the most satisfactory provisions for essential rights, particularly the rights of conscience in the fullest latitude, the freedom of the press, trials by jury, security against general warrents, etc."

Conclusion

Reporter I: Early in the first session of Congress, James Madison submitted the Bill of Rights which was soon adopted. All Americans therefore, should be thankful toward John Leland, an American patriot and Baptist preacher who, in the face of much criticism and misunderstanding, stood for his principles - principles which all true Americans now hold dear!

Reporter II: Next week we will consider a number of cases of religious persecution which took place in Colonial America.

(The John Leland story is graphically and beautifully presented in the film, "Magnificent Heritage," a Broadman Films production. Rental arrangements may be made through the publisher of these studies or through other authorized film agencies. 16mm sound, color, 60 minutes.



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**RELIGIOUS
PERSECUTION
in
COLONIAL
AMERICA**



Baptists Were Whipped in Public Places

Program VII

RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION IN COLONIAL AMERICA

Introduction

Reporter I: Good morning! Welcome to another segment of the Bicentennial series entitled "One Nation Under God." Today, the panel will tell several stories which illustrate how our Baptist forefathers often suffered religious persecution in Colonial **Seventeenth Century Massachusetts**

Reporter II: On July 16, 1651, Elders John Clarke and Obadiah Holmes and Deacon John Crandall went from Newport, Rhode Island, to visit one of their church members in Lynn, Massachusetts. The member, elderly William Witter, was blind. Although Witter lived about two miles out of town, the local town officials soon learned about the visiting strangers. On the following Sunday, two constables entered the house and presented a warrant for the arrest of the three visitors. The arrest was made while Clarke was preaching a sermon.

Reporter III: Soon after their arrest, the three men were compelled to attend another religious meeting in town. As a gesture of objection, Clarke and his companions did not remove their hats during the service! The three men were later moved to Boston prison to await trial. Finally, on July 31, they were examined and sentenced "without (the officials') producing either accuser, witness, jury, law of God, or man," Clarke later explained.

Reporter IV: In the course of the examination, Clarke continued: "The Governour upbraided us with the name of Anabaptists; To whom I answered, I disown the name, I am neither an Anabaptist, nor a Pedobaptist, or a Catabaptist; he told me in hast(e) I was all; I told him he could not prove us to be either of them; he said, yes, you have Re-baptized; I denyed it saying, I have Baptized many, but never Re-baptized any; then said he you deny the former Baptism, and make all our worship a nullity; I told him he said it...."

Reporter I: Clarke eventually was ordered released on August 11, 1651. Some friend apparently had paid his fine. For awhile it appeared that Clarke would be permitted to have a public debate with his foes, but that never took place. Matters did not go so well for Obadiah Holmes. Someone had paid Crandall's fine of five pounds, but Holmes refused to allow anyone to pay his thirty pounds. As a result, he was whipped in a public place. He later explained that the man struck with all his strength, "...Yea

spitting on his hand three times..., with a three-coarded whip, giving me therewith thirty strokes....”

Eighteenth Century America

Reporter II: Religious persecution against Baptists was not very widespread in North and South Carolina or Georgia. The story was different, however, in Virginia. That likely explains why Virginia was where Baptists came out so strongly for the Bill of Rights. Persecution in Virginia was of two kinds - popular and legal. Baptist fidelity to their convictions and “frivolous” charges brought by “ignorance and malice” produced popular violence. Baptists were charged with (1) dissenting from the Church of England, (2) refusing to commune with those of other denominations, (3) refusing to baptize infants, (4) insisting on immersion for baptism, and (5) causing division. They were accused also of (6) continually condemning others in their preaching, (7) having little human learning, and (8) holding noisy meetings. Many people were fearful (9) that if they became strong enough, they would massacre their fellow citizens and take possession of the country!

Reporter III: One interesting story of persecution involved Lewis Craig in 1767. Craig was fined in Spotsylvania County, Virginia, for preaching. Very dramatically, Craig told the grand jury: “I thank you, gentlemen, for the honour you did me. While I was wicked and injurious, you took no note of me, but now having altered my course of life and endeavoring to reform my neighbors, you concern yourself much about me.”

One of the members of the jury was a certain John Waller, nicknamed “Swearing John” and the “Devil’s Adjutant” because of his wickedness. Waller, moved by Craig’s testimony, soon was converted, baptized, and called to preach! The next year he was arrested for preaching and brought before the same grand jury!

Reporter IV: The principal period of persecution of Virginia Baptists occurred between 1768 and 1774, although there was an isolated occurrence in 1778. In August, 1771, several preachers, including Craig and Waller, were arrested in Caroline County. Waller and the others preached from the windows of the prison, carrying on a fruitful ministry. On more than one occasion, prosecutors charged Craig, Waller, and their friends with being disturbers of the peace. One prosecutor alleged that “they cannot meet a man upon the road, but they must ram a text of Scripture down his throat!”

Reporter I: One famous incident involved Jeremiah Moore of Fairfax, Virginia. Originally an active layman in the Church of England, Moore had been arrested, in 1773, for preaching "the Gospel of Jesus Christ." That Baptist had received a sentence of life imprisonment! A significant thing happened, however. Patrick Henry was brought to Alexandria for Moore's defense. Henry made such an impassioned speech that Moore was released from his life imprisonment. He later obtained legal license for preaching in various places. During the course of his speech, Patrick Henry made a statement which has become famous: "Great God, gentlemen, a man is in prison for preaching the gospel of the Son of God!"

Reporter II: Garnett Ryland, noted authority on Virginia Baptist history, has summarized and analyzed the persecution in Virginia as follows: "The imprisonments of more than thirty individuals in the jails of nine counties so far from arresting the Baptist movement has accelerated it by arousing sympathy for the prisoners, by kindling interest in their message and by awakening understanding and appreciation of their insistence on unrestrained exercise of freedom of belief in religion and liberty to preach the Gospel to every creature."

Conclusion

Reporter III: Those examples of persecution should remind us that America has indeed come a long way in the area of religious freedom. Next week we will look in retrospect over the American Bicentennial story and draw a few conclusions relative to the implications of our series of programs.



Program VIII

THE BICENTENNIAL STORY IN RETROSPECT AND IMPLICATIONS

Introduction

Reporter I: Good morning! Today is the two hundredth birthday of our country! (Note: If you did not begin the series so it would end on July 4 the wording may be change to "This year is...") In the final segment of the special series on the American Bicentennial celebration we are going to look at the Bicentennial story in retrospect, as well as try to pinpoint several implications of it. We hope that the series has made all more aware of the rich heritage of Americans and of Baptists. Baptists, especially should be encouraged to protect and maintain their religious freedom.

Retrospect

Reporter II: As the famous song states, America is indeed the "Sweet Land of Liberty." In spite of her many weaknesses, the United States of America has become the greatest nation freedom-wise in the history of the world. Freedom - especially religious freedom - did not easy. Freedom had to be won. It developed over a long period of time. Indeed, religious persecution has showed its ugly head in America at various times.

Reporter III: Historically, religious freedom developed out of the Reformation in Europe during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. There was no real freedom, however, except for a period in Holland. That did not last.

Baptists were the first religious group to call for complete freedom - even for Jews and Moslems. Seventeenth century General Baptists, Thomas Helwys and John Murton, made those pleas, but they were spurned.

Reporter IV: In the New World, Rhode Island became the first modern state to grant complete liberty of conscience. Such an approach, as practiced in that colony established by Baptists like John Clarke, was so unique that it was called a "a lively experiment." Baptists led also in a hard struggle in New England to obtain separation of church and state. Isaac Backus worked diligently to get rid of state supported churches.

Reporter I: Baptist took a very active part in the Revolutionary War. Ministers served as chaplains and patriots. Laymen distinguished themselves as soldiers and statesmen. John Hart - Baptist layman from New Jersey - was one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence. Dr. Stillman of Boston worked hard for the ratification of the United States Constitution by the state of Massachusetts.

Reporter II: The United States Constitution was written largely by James Madison, but Baptists exerted influence upon its content and ratification. Although they had serious questions about the guarantees of religious freedom in the document, a compromise between Baptist John Leland and Madison led to the ratification of the Constitution, as well as the adoption of the Bill of Rights. Those guarantees were felt to be necessary because of persecution which Baptists had experienced even in America.

Implications

Reporter III: Baptists have always stood for the separation of church and state. They have done that out of conviction and because they have often been the victims of persecution. Much of the

persecution came at the hands of church members - not pagans - who had the political power of the state behind them.

Reporter IV: Separation of church and state does not mean a negative attitude toward the state or toward religion such as was seen in Nazi Germany of World War II or in modern Russia under Communism. Separation does not mean the support of paganism or atheism by the state. It is not an abolition of religion.

Reporter I: Separation of church and state does mean that the state is not to promote or hinder religion - even the religion of Baptists. Baptists should be very careful in their state and local governments, including city councils and school boards that they do not use political and governmental power to propagate their religion. Baptists must not become "established" churches!

Reporter II: Separation of church and state and freedom of religion mean that we must permit non-Baptists - even radical religious groups - to have the same freedom we have in propagating their faith and attempting converts. Many local laws aimed at Jehovah's Witnesses, and other groups, clearly have violated that principle. If we can legally suppress such groups in our town, then false religious groups can legally suppress us in other towns and states.

Reporter III: As much as we may abhor false religious beliefs, so long as they do not violate the rights of others, we must grant them the same freedom we have. The price of real religious freedom is complete toleration of other beliefs. Men even have a right to be unbelievers and not attend any church, if they so wish. The United States is not Israel. America is not a theocracy, although God has indeed blessed her and has had a great hand in her heritage! Remember, Baptists were the despised and suspected radicals of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries!

Conclusion

Reporter IV: Let us be proud to be Americans. Let us be proud to be Baptists! Let us strive to protect freedom of religion. Our forefathers, through a long struggle of persecution and work within the political framework, earned us our heritage. Let us be willing to do the same. Let us be good Baptists and good citizens!

The story of religious freedom in our American heritage is largely a Baptist story! Let us keep the flag waving and strive to keep ourselves as **One Nation Under God!**

SUGGESTED READING FOR FURTHER STUDY

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Program VI, John Leland and the Bill of Rights

Armstrong. **The Indomitable Baptists**.

Program VII, Religious Persecution in Colonial America

Armstrong. **The Indomitable Baptists**.

Asher. "The Life and Letters of John Clarke."

Baker, Robert A. **The Southern Baptist Convention and Its People**

1807-1972. Nashville: Broadman Press, 1974.

Dawson. **Baptists and the American Republic**.

Program VIII, The Bicentennial Story in Retrospect and Implications.

All of the preceding programs.