

- I. Through the Spanish and others of the Latin races, the Catholics as religionists came to be the first representatives of the Christian religion in South and Central American.**
- A. In North America, except Mexico, they (Catholicism) have never strongly predominated.
 - B. In the territory of what is now the United States, except in those sections which were part of Mexico, the Catholics have never been strong enough, even during the colonial period, to have their religious views established as law.
 - C. Catholics in the New World:
 - 1. Catholic missionaries followed Columbus to Haiti, Cuba, and Puerto Rico. Following this, Catholics evangelized Mexico, Central America, and South America.
 - 2. In 1616, the Franciscans of the Roman Catholics settled in Quebec, Canada, and brought these areas into Catholicism.
- II. The exact date of the arrival of the first Baptists in America and their names are uncertain.**
- A. With immigrants arriving in North America came many Baptists.
 - B. There probably Baptists aboard every American bound ship.
 - C. They came in small groups, never in large colonies, as this would never have been allowed.
 - D. Before the colonies were established, the Baptists were numerous in America.
- III. These early settlers were fleeing from persecution and seeking religious freedom.**
- A. The Congregationalists, Independents, Puritans, Separatists, and others who were called pilgrims came with the Baptists and were fleeing persecution.
 - B. Also among the early settlers were adherents to the Church of England and Presbyterians. These, however, were not necessarily fleeing religious persecution.
- IV. The Congregationalists and Presbyterians established different colonies and immediately within their respective territories established by law their own religious view.**
- A. The Congregationalists established their colony in the area of the state of Massachusetts.
 - 1. Before the colony was twenty years old, with the Congregation as the State Church, they passed laws against Baptists and others. The following is an example: "It is ordered and agreed, that if any person or persons, within this jurisdiction, shall either openly condemn or oppose the baptizing of infants, or go about secretly to seduce others from the appropriation of use thereof, shall purposely depart the congregation at the ministration of the ordinance – **every such person or persons shall be sentenced to banishment.**"

2. Banishment in America in those days was serious. It meant to go out and live among the Indians (Native Americans.)

B. The Presbyterians established their colony in the New York and New Jersey regions.

1. The Presbyterian State Religion also made life miserable for the Baptists.
2. Laws were established to over tax the Baptists and then confiscating their property when the taxes could not be paid.
3. These and other offensive laws were passed and directed mainly against the Baptists.

V. The Southern colonies in Virginia, South and North Carolina were settled mainly by adherents of the Church of England (Episcopalians) and they too established their religion by law. Persecution of Baptists was serious and continuous in these colonies.

- A. Baptist preachers were fined and imprisoned.
- B. From the beginning of the colonial period to the opening of the Revolutionary War, more than one-hundred years, the persecution of Baptists continued.
- C. At one time, as many as thirty were in jail for the offense of – “preaching the gospel of the Son of God.”
- D. Three Baptist preachers (Lewis, Joseph Craig, and Aaron Bledsoe) were later arrested on the same charge.
 1. These preachers were brought up for trial. Patrick Henry, hearing of this, rode many miles on horseback to volunteer his services in their defense.
 2. Due to his stirring defense, the preachers were freed.

VI. Probably one of the greatest obstructions to religious liberty in America, and probably all over the world, was the conviction which has grown into the people throughout the previous centuries that religion could not possibly live *without governmental support*.

- A. These churches, who were themselves fleeing from persecution, immediately upon being established in their own colonies in the new world, and having the same authority, denied religious liberty to others, and practiced upon them the same cruel methods of persecution. Especially did so they treat Baptists.
- B. The battle for absolute religious liberty even in America alone is a great history within itself.
- C. For a long time, the Baptists seemed to have fought the battle alone, but they did not fight it for themselves alone, but for all people of every religious faith.