

INSTRUCTIONS FOR PRINTING BULLETINS

**Note: Print half as many lasers as needed since each sheet of paper has 2 bulletins.
Printing on a light tan or cream colored paper will provide a more historical look.**

If using a printer which prints 2-sided:

Print page 2 on the front side and page 3 on the back side—landscape (horizontal) printing.

If using a printer which prints 1-sided:

Print page 2, then flip paper, place back in tray and print page 3—landscape (horizontal) printing.

After printing, cut printed bulletins in half. A swing-arm cutter works best.

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For permission to reprint any text or images, please contact:

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CELEBRATING 400 YEARS OF BEING BAPTIST

Baptist Contributions to 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 the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.” So reads the First Amendment of the United States Constitution, ratified in 1791. Yet without the fierce advocacy of Baptists, the First Amendment might never have been enacted.



John Leland

The story of how Baptists helped secure religious liberty and the separation of church and state in America begins in seventeenth-century England, when Baptist leader Thomas Helwys in 1612 penned *A Short Declaration on the Mystery of Iniquity*, advocating separation of church and state. This heretical declaration resulted in Helwys’s imprisonment at the hands of King James I. In America, Roger Williams in the 1630s and 1640s, echoing Helwys’s argument in print and in deed, founded Rhode Island upon the principles of religious liberty and church-state separation.

Meanwhile, theocratic governments persecuted Baptists in other colonies. Against the backdrop of ongoing persecutions, Isaac Backus of Massachusetts in 1773 published “An Appeal to the Public for Religious Liberty: Against the Oppressions of the Present Day.” The treatise was printed in Boston the same year that Bostonians revolted against British incursions upon colonial freedoms in what came to be known as the Boston Tea Party. While Americans protested against England in defense of freedom, some Baptists, particularly in Massachusetts and Virginia, served jail time for their dissenting religious views and practices.

Moving from Massachusetts to Virginia in 1776, evangelist John Leland rose to prominence among Virginia Baptists, emerging as their leading advocate for religious liberty and separation of church and state. In 1776, Leland led Virginia Baptists in supporting Thomas Jefferson’s effort to revoke assessment taxes to support religion. After that effort was defeated, Jefferson responded in 1779 with his “Act for Establishing Religious Freedom.” Led by Leland, Baptists were the primary early supporters of this act, which became law in 1786. In 1787, when Virginia Baptists learned that the United States Constitution as submitted to the states did not guarantee religious freedom and church-state separation, they mounted protests. Through the now well-connected Leland, they successfully pressured lawmakers to include freedoms of liberty, speech, and press in the Constitution. Finally, in 1791, the long-cherished Baptist vision of a nation founded upon religious liberty and separation of church and state was realized.

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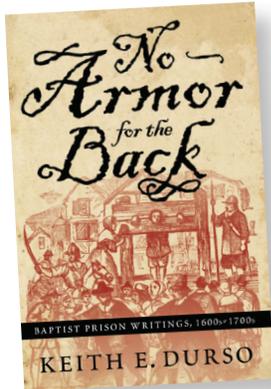
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BAPTIST HERITAGE RESOURCES

No Armor for the Back: Baptist Prison Writings, 1600s-1700s

by Keith E. Durso



**Special Price
\$18.00**

List price \$23.00

Price good through April 30, 2009.

To order this resource,
e-mail pamdurso@baptisthistory.org
or call 678-547-6095.

The Center for Baptist Studies produces a **free monthly e-journal**, *The Baptist Studies Bulletin*, which is distributed through e-mail.

The Center also offers an **on-line certificate program** in Baptist studies for both laity and clergy; timely and relevant **educational conferences**; and a **website** with valuable **Baptist resources**. For more information, visit www.centerforbaptiststudies.org.

The Baptist History and Heritage Society publishes a **journal**, *Baptist History and Heritage*, and **newsletter**, *Baptist Heritage Update*. The Society also has an informative **website**, which features an **on-line resource catalog**, a **membership application**, and a new **series of articles** titled "History Speaks to Hard Questions Baptists Ask." For more information, visit www.baptisthistory.org.

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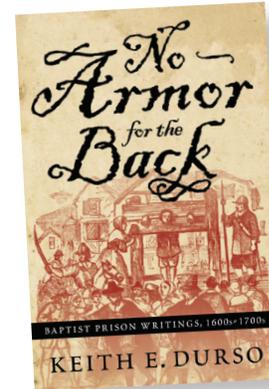


This bulletin insert is the fourth of twelve to be provided monthly during 2009 by the Baptist History and Heritage Society and The Center for Baptist Studies. The article was written by Bruce T. Gourley, interim director of The Center for Baptist Studies, Mercer University.

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