

2. ISAAC BACKUS BEFORE CONTINENTAL CONGRESS

In 1774, Isaac Backus, the agent of the Warren Association, presented Baptist grievances to representatives of the Continental Congress meeting in Carpenter's Hall at Philadelphia. James Manning holds the petition from the Warren Association. The main point of the grievances had to do with the power of the state to tax Baptists for support of the established church. Backus declared that this was "taxation without representation." He contended that it is essential to liberty that representation and taxation go together.

When John Adams and Samuel Adams (shown in the picture to the left) accused Backus and the Baptists of being opposed to paying the pence on economic grounds rather than on matters of conscience, Backus declared, "It is not the pence, but the power to impose the pence" to which Baptists objected. He pleaded for separation of church and state and complete religious liberty. He worked diligently for the cause of freedom for more than forty years, and lived to see the 1st Amendment to the Constitution adopted.

The Artist says:

The artist is challenged here to capture individual reactions--the growing resentment for instance of red-faced John Adams as he listens to his home colony raked over the coals for religious persecution. We see the placating expression on the face behind John Adams of the man who can't stand controversy; developing concerned faces; interested faces; and disinterested ones, like the man who's interest lies not with what's being said, but on his own document he's reading. We see the Quakers who take their hats off to no man--stoic, but concerned. Also, the sincere, earnest, Isaac Backus must be shown as he exhorts the delegates to his point of view. He is the center of interest on the canvas, with the doorway window focusing attention on his face, and symbolizing with its radiant design the Christian character and dedication of the man within.

This man rode thousands of miles for this one cause--*religious liberty*--and gave almost a complete life. How he must have wearied sometimes in the struggle, but then to find comfort in *Matthew 11:28-30!*

Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.