

Hebron Baptist Church

Baptists and Slavery

Baptists of the early republic believed in liberty, especially religious and spiritual (“liberty by which Christ has made us free” Gal. 1:5), but they avoided the American Revolution’s implications for slavery. Rhode Island was the hub of the Atlantic slave trade and the Brown family (benefactors of the Baptist-founded College of Rhode Island – later Brown University) were involved in the transporting of slaves.

In the early 1800s, cotton emerged as the leading cash crop of the South and the northern industrial economy depended upon slave-producing cotton. By the 1840s there were a number of prominent white Baptists in the South who joined with the southern Presbyterians, Methodists, Episcopalians, and others in advocating the Southern caste system of white supremacy and black slavery. [The term “white supremacy” originated in the mid-1800s.]

From the advocacy of white supremacy and black slavery emerged a new Baptist denomination. White Baptists in the South withdrew from their northern counterparts on May 10, 1845 and formed the Southern Baptist Convention. This move would better defend the South’s practice of and dependency upon black slavery.

South Carolina’s Baptists were the most influential in the South, with the state reigning as the heart of the slave aristocracy. Baptist elites of 1845 agreed that human equality was antithetical and black slavery morally pure. Baptist sentiment in the South – at least among the denominational leadership – largely perceived the enslavement of blacks as ordained of God.

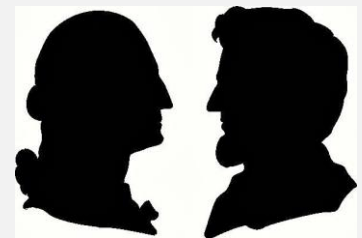
Southern Baptist Theological Seminary was founded in Greenville, South Carolina in 1859 (moved to Louisville in 1877). It started with four faculty members – James P. Boyce, John Broadus, Basil Manly, Jr., and William Williams. All four men were slaveholders and publicly defended slavery as a “righteous” institution and assumed the inferiority of the black race. Later faculty supported the restoration of white rule in the South during Reconstruction (1865-1877) and defended the segregation of schools and society.

Abolition took hold among many northern evangelicals, especially in New England. But, generally, white Baptists – both North and South, agreed to leave the owning of slaves as a matter of individual conscience and politics.

Sources: Kidd & Hankins, *Baptists in America*; Bruce Gourley, *Yes, the Civil War Was About Slavery*



Happy Birthday, Messrs. Lincoln & Washington



Do you remember celebrating the birthdays of Abraham Lincoln (Feb 12) and George Washington (Feb 22) in grade school? You may have cut out silhouettes of the two presidents and attached them to a classroom window.

As children, we wondered if Washington really did cut down the cherry tree and whether Lincoln was a rail-splitter. They were a part of our American heritage; a part of the pride and gratitude of being an American.

But things changed, in 1971, when the third Monday of February was designated as President’s Day. The details of these two great men became lost in the commercialism of mattress sales, “winter break” from school, and a three-day holiday for federal employees. Further chipping away at our American heritage.

Aliyah, the Return of the Jewish People (part 2)



By the end of World War I, the British gained possession of the land of Palestine from the defeated Ottoman Empire. The Balfour Declaration of 1917, issued by Britain declared: “His Majesty’s Government views with favor the establishment in Palestine a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavors to facilitate the achievement of this object...”

British support for a Jewish homeland was the result of the Zionist Movement, founded in Basel, Switzerland in 1896, and the dedicated work of men like Theodor Herzl, Chaim Weizmann and David Ben-Gurion.

In March 1925, the Jewish population in Palestine was officially estimated at 108,000 and it rose to about 238,000 (20 percent of Palestine’s population) by 1933. Further Jewish immigration remained relatively slow until the rise of Adolf Hitler in Germany and the mass extermination of European Jews by the Nazis.

Following World War II, the United Nations officially recognized the State of Israel on May 14, 1948. US President Harry Truman cast the deciding vote. With nationhood, 650,000 Jews returned to their homeland that year.

As of September 2022, Israel’s population stood at 9,593,000, with Jews comprising 73.7%. Jews from all around the world continue to escape extreme poverty and anti-Semitism by “**making Aliyah**” – moving to Israel; moving “up” in the world.

Joshua Mark & Lauren Benderman* - Middle East



Joshua Mark & Lauren Benderman* serve Syrian refugees seeking refuge in neighboring Middle Eastern countries.

Local evangelists had been visiting the Muslim refugees, and more than 100 of those refugees have become Christians. Joshua Mark presented the workers a vision right out of the Bible – profess a commitment to Jesus Christ, grow in discipleship, and then train on how to share their faith.

The local leaders joined with Joshua Mark in the vision of discipleship and evangelism. Now, more than 300 Syrians and local Christians have been trained. This movement may eventually reach Syria and even throughout the Middle East, helping to overcome the violence and oppression faced by so many.

The Syrian situation remains a major refugee displacement crisis. Since the conflict began in 2011, families have suffered under brutal violence that has killed hundreds of thousands of people, torn Syria apart, and set back the standard of living by decades.

In 2021, there were more than 6.8 million refugees and asylum-seekers. They have made their way to Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, and Egypt.

*Missionary names changed to protect them.