

# Dramatic Distinctives

## Lesson from Our Baptist Heritage



### State Churches of Colonial America

#### *The Church Of England*

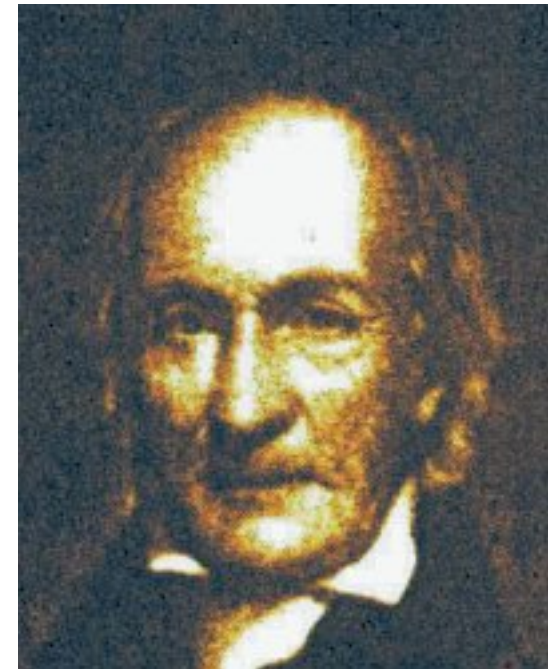
Virginia, Carolinas, Maryland, Georgia

#### *Congregationalist Church (Puritan)*

Massachusetts, Connecticut, New Jersey,  
New Hampshire

#### *Free Church Colonies*

Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, New York



John Leland: A Religious Patriot  
Church-State Separation

Elder John Leland  
(b. 1754, d. 1841)

Early life in Grafton, Massachusetts

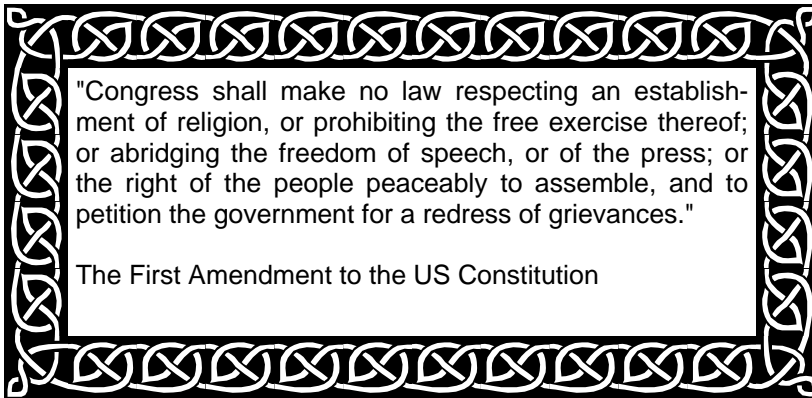
Religious Experience and Calling

Itinerant Preacher

Pastorates and Conversions

Champion of Church-State Separation

The Mammoth Cheese Affair



Never promote men who seek after a state-established religion; it is spiritual tyranny--the worst of despotism. It is turnpiking the way to heaven by human law, in order to establish ministerial gates to collect toll. It converts religion into a principle of state policy, and the gospel into merchandise. Heaven forbids the bans of marriage between church and state; their embraces therefore, must be unlawful. Guard against those men who make a great noise about religion, in choosing representatives. It is electioneering. If they knew the nature and worth of religion, they would not debauch it to such shameful purposes. If pure religion is the criterion to denominate candidates, those who make a noise about it must be rejected; for their wrangle about it, proves that they are void of it.

Excerpt from July 4th Oration by John Leland, July 5, 1802



The word morality, is not in the Bible: it is a word, however, of common use, but of somewhat indefinite signification. The Armenians use the word to express those actions of men which tend to the good of families, societies, etc., when these is no gracious disposition in the men who perform those actions. The Hopkinsianists, and Calvinists, make use of the word to describe the quality of actions, or the motives which stimulate. Others, again, say, there is a legal honesty consists in conducting so to ourselves and others, that the laws cannot impeach us, but that moral honesty is from a sense of God's laws of men enjoin it or not. But so far as my acquaintance extends, all parties agree that the words of our Lord give the best description of morality that was ever given: "Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye the same to them." Taking this to be a just description of morality, I wish to ask whether the hierarchy of Massachusetts teaches men this lesson? Let the ruling party in the state answer. Gentlemen, were you the minor part, should the Quakers, Methodists, or Baptists, form a majority in the various towns and parishes in this state, and tax all those of the standing order to pay their preachers, build their meeting-houses, endow their colleges, etc., or, in order to get relief therefrom, that you must give them a certificate, or sue your money back out of the treasury, and that none of your order could be admitted jurors, but the case must be decided solely by them, would you not in such cases, say (if you are allowed to speak,) "you know, in your consciences, that you are not doing as you would be done by?" The question then arises, whether the establishment of religion is friendly to piety, morality, and religion, or whether it is not rather, in its nature and tendency, sapping the foundation of all of them? "I speak as unto wise men, judge ye what I say." To myself, there remains no doubt, that the religious establishments of Massachusetts, and all state establishments of Christianity in the world, are all of them, ANTI-CHRISTOCRACIES.

John Leland, *Events in the Life of John Leland, The Writings of the Late Elder John Leland*, edited by L. F. Greene (New York: G. W. Wood, 1845), 29.