

# **RHODE ISLAND IS A GOOD EXAMPLE OF THE RELATIONS OF OUR BAPTIST FATHERS TO LIBERTY AND THE REVOLUTION.**

Many of the noble sons of Rhode Island, in the "times that tried men's souls," were of other creeds, but a much larger number followed the people, the stream of whose denominational life you can trace through every age till you see it issue forth from the heart of the Great Teacher, stepping up out of the Jordan. Morgan Edwards, a man of great historical learning, who died in 1795, says: "The Baptists have always been more numerous than any other sect of Christians in Rhode Island; two-fifths of the inhabitants, at least, are reputed Baptists. The governors, deputy-governors, judges, assemblymen and officers, civil and military, are chiefly of that persuasion."<sup>1</sup>

"The first work of the Rhode Islanders," says Edwards, "after their Incorporation in 1644, was to make a law that "Every man who submits peaceably to civil government in this Colony shall worship God according to the dictates of his own conscience without molestation."\*"

Rhode Island, as early as 1764, foresaw the coming Revolutionary storm, and to secure cooperation among the colonists established a "Committee of Correspondence," whose special duty it was to stir them up to maintain their liberties with spirit and to concert methods for united effort.<sup>2</sup> On the 4th of May, 1776, just two months before the adoption of the "Declaration of Independence," Rhode Island withdrew from the sceptre of Great Britain, and repudiated every form of allegiance to George III.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Collections of the Rhode Island Historical Society, VI.,

<sup>2</sup> Bancroft's History of the United States, V., 218.

<sup>3</sup> Biography of the Signers of the Declaration of Independence, Philadelphia, 1831, I., 374; Arnold's History of Rhode Island, X. Y., 1860, II., 374.