

Church History Senior S 5

predominant group had to leave, and thus we have Rhode Island established and we have various ones of them having to leave the community. Then we have a situation developing in which the community, being subject to the church, ceased to be subject to the church but became the supreme over the church and so by 1800 you have in many parts of New England a system in which the church and the state were very closely united together--not the state, I shouldn't say, the local town, the local community. The Congregational Churches were each one theoretically absolutely independent of every other one. They met together in associations for mutual discussions and friendly help, but the theory is exactly that of the Baptists today, that each church is an absolutely autonomous group of believers and that no other group has any authority over it. However, among the Congregationalists there developed this unfortunate situation in which since the entire community was supposed to be Christian, the entire community was organized as a society which had control over the financial affairs of the church. Everyone in the parish was a member of the church in that sense. Then there was what they called church membership; that those who felt themselves to be truly Christian and desirous of serving the Lord truly became members of the church rather than merely members of the society and so in the course of time they came to be a large number of people who were not interested in the church particularly, yet not taking any great part in the spiritual life of the church but who had a vote in the society that controlled the church and so the result of this was that it was quite easy, eventually, for Unitarianism to sweep away the great bulk of the Congregational churches. That is another heading, but we won't mention that at this point here. We'll go on to it under our next head.

Then the Baptists--we noticed the beginning of them in Rhode Island; there were various Baptists who had come to other parts of this country. In the revolutionary war they, like the Presbyterians and the Congregationalists, were solidly behind the cause of the revolutionary and against the <sup>British</sup> government.