

“Remembering the Righteous: Virginia Baptist Historians”
Psalm 112:6

Introduction: The following is a list of the major Baptist historians for the state of Virginia.

1. Robert Baylor Semple – *A History of the Rise and Progress of the Baptists in Virginia* (1810)
2. George William Beale – *Semple’s History of the Rise and Progress of the Baptists in Virginia* (1894)
3. James Barnett Taylor – *Virginia Baptist Ministers* (1838)
4. George Braxton Taylor – *Virginia Baptist Ministers* (1912)
5. Robert Boyle C. Howell – *The Early Baptists of Virginia* (1857)

Body: Let us notice a history of these men and their writings.

- I. Robert Baylor Semple (1769-1831)
 - A. He was baptized in December, 1789, by the Theodoric Noel, and joined the Upper King and Queen church.
 - B. In 1790, the Bruington Baptist Church was constituted, and Semple became its pastor. This church he served until his death, a period of forty years.
 - C. He made frequent and extensive tours throughout lower Virginia, strengthening the churches and proving a great blessing to the people.
 - D. He was deeply interested in the cause of missions, and was one of the first in Virginia to advocate their claims.
 - E. Semple served as president of the Baptist Convention of Virginia in 1813, trustee of Columbian College in 1821, moderator of General Meeting of Correspondence, 1807, and first president of the Baptist General Association of Virginia in 1823. In 1820, he was elected president of the Triennial Convention, serving until his death.
 - F. The General Committee of the Baptists in Virginia in 1788 appointed six of its members “to collect materials for compiling and publishing a history of the Baptists in Virginia.”
 - G. The unique contribution of Virginia Baptists to modern life is religious freedom. Baptists in Rhode Island, Pennsylvania, South Carolina and elsewhere made singular pioneering efforts, but the major installment for religious liberty was paid in Virginia. The testing ground was there; there the decisive battle was fought and won. Patrick Henry, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, John Leland and the Baptists played key roles in gaining a victory for mankind. It is fitting that Semple’s history should continue to live, if for no other reason, to tell something of the price paid for this prize trophy.
 - H. Note on the 1810 Book:
 1. Inscription by John Chiles
 - a. John Chiles was born in Caroline, Virginia.
 - b. John Married Judith Cobb and had nine children.
 - (1) Judith Cobb was born in Golansville, Caroline, Virginia on 1762.
 - (2) She died on September 21, 1829.
 - c. John Married Polly Hargraves.

- d. He passed away on 1817 in Caroline, Virginia.
2. Child – Silas Mercer Chiles

II. George William Beale (1842-1921)

A. Richard Lee Tuberville Beale (1819-1893)

1. Civil War Confederate Brigadier General and US Congressman. He was born in Westmoreland County, Virginia, and was an 1837 University of Virginia graduate.
2. He was an attorney in his home county until he was elected to the United States Congress in 1846. He also served in the Virginia 1851 constitutional convention and in the state Senate.
3. He was commissioned First Lieutenant of cavalry in May 1861 and served in a provisional unit, Lee's Light Horse, later organized into the 9th Virginia Cavalry. He quickly rose in rank being commissioned Captain in July, Major in October, and Lieutenant Colonel the following April.
4. He fought on the Virginia peninsula in early 1862, then served under Major General J.E.B. Stuart in the Second Bull Run and Antietam campaigns. In October 1862 he was promoted to Colonel of the 9th after three times offering his resignation from the service. Annoyed with the minutiae of regular duty, he asked for a guerrilla command or for the opportunity to return to the ranks as a Private. Superiors dissuaded him from following either course, convincing him to retain his regular rank and command.
5. That December he fought at Fredericksburg and the following spring and summer served in the cavalry's campaigns through Gettysburg. After 3 months' recuperative leave for a wound received in a September skirmish, he returned to duty in January 1864 as a part of Major General W. H. F. Lee's division. At this time some of his command took part in the pursuit and capture of Union cavalry involved in the Kilpatrick-Dahlgren Raid. Late in the year a shortage of general officers boosted him to brigade command without a commission. On January 6, 1865, his appointment came through and he was made a Brigadier General.
6. After Lee's surrender, he reestablished his law practice in Hague, Virginia, and in 1879 was elected once again to Congress. He later would die in Hague.
7. He was the author of: *History of the Ninth Virginia Cavalry, in the War Between the States*.
8. View of Beale Cemetery and Beale Grave.

B. George William Beale (1842-1921)

1. Virginia Baptist Ministers – Sixth Volume – Pages 90-92
2. He was the author of: *A Lieutenant of Cavalry in Lee's Army*

C. Frank Brown Beale (1852-1908)

1. He was ordained on November 16, 1873. Elders Wm. H. Kirk, Wayland F. Dunaway, Geo. H. Northam, and Geo. W. Beale took part in the ordaining service.
2. His ministry began at once with Menokin, Nomini, and Machodoc Churches, and the divine favor rested signally on his labors. Soon after beginning his work on this field he was induced to hold night services in the town of Tappahannock,

where the old Episcopal Church edifice of Colonial days was in use for Baptist preaching.

3. Despite the increased mental and physical labor required, the necessity of crossing the river in a small boat — often under adverse conditions of weather — and other difficulties, this work enlisted his warmest interest, and he gave to it the ardent enthusiasm of his nature, with the result that, in 1876, a church was organized, the old courthouse purchased, renovated, and dedicated, and the spiritual body and place of worship were styled Centennial.
 4. He was permitted to see their number increase to 117, a parsonage provided, and the church become strong in the intelligence, piety, and liberality of their membership.
 5. In 1889 he resigned the care of the churches in the Northern Neck, which he had served for fourteen years, and located in Tappahannock as pastor of Ephesus Church in conjunction with Centennial. The care of Ephesus was held for three years, when he accepted that of Howerton's, and in 1892 that of Upper King and Queen.
 6. In this field — Centennial, Howerton's, and Upper King and Queen — numbering approximately five hundred members, he was in the position in which he was destined to toil for sixteen years and to accomplish his best work.
 7. His burial was made at Upper King and Queen Meeting-House, and the funeral services, on a sweet Lord's Day morning, drew together a sympathetic multitude, amongst whom were hundreds whose moistened cheeks and irrepressible sobs betokened their sense of grief and loss. His intimate friend and beloved co-laborer, Andrew Broaddus, delivered the sermon.
 8. Lewis Peyton Little – Pages 405-406
- D. Robert Hunter Beale (1844-1905)
 - E. Thomas Arthur Beale (1855-1881)
 - F. John Lee Beale (1860-1943)

III. James Barnett Taylor (1804-1871)

- A. At the age of thirteen young Taylor was baptized, and united with the First Baptist church of New York.
- B. At the age of sixteen he began to speak publicly for Christ, and in 1824 he was licensed to preach.
- C. Soon after he was appointed by the General Baptist Association of Virginia to labor as a missionary in the lower section of the Meherran district.
- D. He was ordained, May 2, 1826, at Sandy Creek. In 1826 he became pastor of the Second Baptist church of Richmond, Va., in which relation he continued sixteen years, during which the church was greatly enlarged and strengthened. Six hundred and sixty members were added to the church, three new churches were organized by members mainly from his congregation, and ten or twelve of those whom he baptized entered the ministry.
- E. He was a very efficient worker, also, in behalf of foreign missions. Dr. Taylor preached frequently in the surrounding country and in the adjacent cities. As the result of his labors in Baltimore, in connection with the Rev. John Kerr, the Calvert Street Baptist church was formed.

- F. In 1838 he traveled West as agent of the Virginia Baptist General Association. In 1839 he was elected chaplain of the University of Virginia, where his labors among the students and in the community resulted in great good.
- G. In 1840 he became pastor of the Third Baptist church (Grace church), Richmond, and through his labors their beautiful church edifice was built.
- H. In 1844 he traveled South with the missionary Kincaid, stimulating the churches to greater zeal in the cause of missions, and collecting large sums of money for the Northern board.
- I. He traveled constantly; preached three times on almost every Sunday; addressed letters of encouragement to missionaries, and of exhortation to churches and individuals; edited several journals, and accomplished an amount of good of which his immediate associates alone were cognizant.
- J. He served for three years as Confederate post-chaplain.
- K. He was for a short time editor of the *Religious Herald*; he originated the *Southern Baptist Missionary Journal* and *Dome and Foreign Journal*. He wrote a "Life of Lot Cary," a "Life of Luther Rice," and two volumes of the Lives of Virginia Baptist Ministers," containing more than a thousand pages, a most valuable work, the materials of which were collected only after vast toil and innumerable hindrances. He also began a "History of Virginia Baptists," for which he was specially fitted, but which he did not live to complete.
- L. Virginia Baptist Ministers

IV. George Braxton Taylor

- A. He was the eldest son of James Barnett Taylor.
- B. He entered the University of Virginia, and after a three years' course graduated in most of the schools of that institution. While a student at the university he was ordained to the ministry at Charlottesville, and during the remainder of his university course served as pastor of two country churches in the vicinity.
- C. After leaving the university, he became the first pastor of the Franklin Square Baptist church, Baltimore, and continued in that relation two years.
- D. From Baltimore he removed to Staunton, Va., and became pastor of the church in that place, where he remained about twelve years, during which time the church was greatly prospered. After the beginning of the war, he, with the consent of the church, acted as chaplain in Gen. Stonewall Jackson's corps during the entire campaign of 1862, and subsequently officiated both as pastor and chaplain of the post, until the close of hostilities.
- E. He also visited the Army of Northern Virginia at the time of the "great revival," and took an active part in that remarkable work of divine grace.
- F. In 1869 he became chaplain of the University of Virginia, a position adorned by some of the ablest clergymen in the State, and served during the usual period of two years, at the termination of which he was recalled to the pastorate of the Staunton church. He returned to that place, and remained until 1873, when he was appointed by the Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention missionary to Rome, with the special duty of administering the affairs of the Italian mission.
- G. The mission at Rome is one that lies near to the hearts of all Baptists, and especially Southern Baptists. Six years ago serious troubles had embarrassed the work in that

- city. It was necessary to find a man who should be both gentle and wise, to whom the whole management of the mission must be intrusted if any permanent good was to result from it. Dr. Taylor was thought to be such a man, and accordingly he was urged to accept the position. This he did, and sailed with his family from New York in July, 1873, for Rome, where he soon won the confidence of the evangelists and churches. From the very day of his arrival he made himself felt as a prudent and persevering laborer for the Master. The vexatious troubles vanished, and the mission began at once to thrive, and has been steadily advancing ever since, so much so that the Italian mission is now the most flourishing of all the foreign work of the Southern Baptist Convention.
- H. A convenient chapel has been secured at the cost of about \$25,000, situated in one of the most eligible positions in the city, being a few steps only from the Pantheon and from the University of Rome. The mission comprises 10 stations, 9 evangelists, and nearly 150 members; and churches have been either established or strengthened.
 - I. Virginia Baptist Ministers
- V. Robert Boyle C. Howell
- A. He was born in Wayne Co., N.C., on the 10th of March, 1801, and died in Nashville, Tenn., on Sunday, April 5, 1868.
 - B. He commenced preaching about 1825, and was ordained, in 1827, in Cumberland Street church, Norfolk, Va., where he labored until 1834, after which he came to Nashville.
 - C. Here he built for the First Baptist church of Nashville a fine house of worship, and gathered a membership of over 500.
 - D. He resigned April, 1850, to take charge of the Second Baptist church of Richmond, Va., in which he labored until the 19th of July, 1857, when he returned to the scene of his early successes, where he had acquired the reputation of one of the most learned and eloquent divines in the country.
 - E. In the earlier days of his ministry he had to contend with the antimissionaries of his own denomination and with the followers of Alexander Campbell. He was often found in debate with them by voice and pen, and he always acquitted himself as a loyal disciple of our Lord Jesus Christ.
 - F. As a minister, he was regarded as one of the ablest and most learned men in the South, and no one exercised a greater or more beneficial influence within or outside of the church. His life was unspotted, his Christian course was marked by the highest virtues. His courtesy and kindness of heart made him a universal favorite, notwithstanding the fierce theological debates in which he was often engaged. He was a thorough Baptist, and always jealous of the fair fame of his denomination. Dr. Howell was for many years president of the Southern Baptist Convention, and one of its vice-presidents at the time of his death. He had filled also the post of vice-president of the American Baptist Historical Society. He was a member of the Historical Society of Tennessee, and was president of the board of trustees of the asylum for the blind, an institution endowed and sustained by the State of Tennessee.
 - G. His death occurred on Sunday, about noon, at the very hour in which, for more than forty years, he had stood up for Jesus in the pulpit. For a week before his death he was speechless but conscious. He knew all that was said around him; and when the

pastor of the First church of Nashville spoke of the infinite pity and compassion of the Saviour for his suffering servant, he burst into tears. On being asked if he saw Jesus, he answered by pointing first to his heart and then to heaven.

VI. Miscellaneous

A. Zion Baptist Church

1. Church Marker
2. Church

B. Ash Camp Baptist Church

1. It was raised under the ministerial labors of Rev. Henry Lester, who was their pastor until 1808.
2. Richard Dabbs became the pastor. He travels almost incessantly, and is thought by some of his intimate friends for some years past to have preached more sermons than there are days in the year.
3. Richard Dabbs remained pastor of this church until 1821. Other men that pastored after Dabbs was Daniel Witt.
4. Welsh Tract and Mount Tirzah was constituted from Ash Camp.
5. The first temperance society organized in Virginia was in connection with this church.
6. The Appomattox Association met at Ash Camp church, in Charlotte county, in October, 1805. A query respecting the propriety of admitting unbaptized persons to communion was introduced at this session. The question was answered by a large majority that none but persons baptized upon a profession of faith were proper communicants.
7. The subject of open communion has been more agitated among the Baptists in this part of Virginia than in any other. Some respectable Baptists were induced from this consideration to think favorably of a mixed communion. It was certainly a very erroneous mode of forming an opinion. If open communion be wrong in itself, it cannot be made right by the practice of men, however exemplary they may be in other respects.

C. Upper King and Queen Baptist Church

1. Elder Theodrick Noel became their pastor in 1780. Under the ministry of Elder Noel the church flourished, and gradually increased until the year 1785. In this year God descended in mighty power. A greater work of grace has probably never been known in Virginia within the limits of one church.
2. It continued with little abatement during the year 1789. It was usual to baptize every monthly meeting, and for many months there were seldom, if ever, less than twenty baptized, but more frequently forty, fifty and sixty. Many respectable private persons and three or four preachers were among these.
3. Robert Baylor Semple pastored this church until 1827.
4. Andrew Broadus pastored the church after Semple.
5. Andrew Broadus Jr. pastored the church after Broadus.
6. Frank Brown Beale pastored the church after Broadus Jr.

D. Order Book No. 19 1773-1776 Richmond County

1. Landon Carter
2. Lewis Peyton Little – Pages 451-452

- E. Circuit Court for Richmond County
 - 1. Lewis Peyton Little – Pages 451-452
- F. Robert Carter III
 - 1. Robert Carter III
 - a. Semple – Page 178
 - b. Semple – Page 475
 - 2. Nomini Hall Plantation
 - a. Semple – Page 178 (Footnote)
 - 3. Gertrude Beale Arnest (1858-1914)
- G. Coan Baptist Church
 - 1. Semple – Page 181
- H. Samuel L. Straughan
 - 1. This Day in Baptist History – Pages 113-115

Conclusion: Psalm 85:5- *“Wilt thou not revive us again: that thy people may rejoice in thee?”*