

Religion and Patriotism the Constituents of a Good Soldier

Samuel Davies
(1755)

Samuel Davies, Presbyterian preacher and president of the College at Princeton, interpreted the French and Indian war as a religious war. In this excerpt from a sermon preached in Virginia, Davies rouses the anti-Catholic sentiment of his hearers to rally them to arms against the French in the Ohio country. His suggestion that Virginia may have come under control of France was characteristic of Davies' rhetoric. One of Davies' most fond disciples was Patrick Henry, who stated that he learned his oratory skills from listening to Davies. The similarities between the tone and rhetoric here and the rhetoric of Henry are apparent.

To protect your Brethren from the most bloody Barbarities--to defend the territories of the best of Kings against the Oppression and Tyranny of Arbitrary Power to secure the inestimable Blessings of Liberty, British Liberty, from the Chains of French slavery--to preserve your estates, for which you have sweat and toiled, from falling prey to greedy Vultures, Indians, Priests, French, and hungry Gallic Slaves, or not-more-devouring Flames--to guard your Religion, the pure Religion of Jesus, streaming uncorrupted from the sacred fountain of the Scriptures; the most excellent, rational and divine religion that ever was made known to the sons of Men; to guard such a precious Religion (my heart grows warm while I mention it) against Ignorance, Superstition, Idolatry, Tyranny, over Conscience, Massacre, Fire, and Sword, and all the Mischiefs, beyond Expression, with which Popery is Pregnant--to keep from the cruel Hands of Barbarians and Papists your Wives, your Children, your Parents, your Friends--to secure the Liberties conveyed to you by your brave Fore-Fathers, and bought with their blood, that you may transmit them uncurtailed to you Posterity--these are the Blessings you contend for; all these will be torn from your eager Grasp, if this Colony [Virginia] should become a province of France. And Virginians! Britons! Christians! Protestants! if these Names have any import or Energy, will you not strike home is such a Cause?...