Does the Difference Really Matter?

The Persecution Experienced by America's Early Baptists

Does the Difference Really Matter?

Today's Questions:

1. Why were the Baptists persecuted?
2. Where did most of the persecution occur?
3. What was the result of the persecution?
4. Was it worth believing differently?
5. What difference does this make for me this week?

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Does the Difference Really Matter?

I. The Goals of Persecution

-Punishment

-Fear

-Conformity

-Power

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I. The Goals of Persecution

Like any other new country, America started off without local and national laws. Every region had to figure out their own social, political, and religious structures. Some communities were favorable to religious freedom, but most were not. Baptists wanted religious freedom for all.

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I. The Goals of Persecution

-Every colony had their own ideal community

-Ideas that did not conform to the ideal were unwelcome

-Many communities were founded because of religious convictions, but they tended to be intolerant of competing views

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II. The Locations of Persecution

-Massachusetts

-Virginia

-South Carolina

Persecution also took place in other colonies, but these three are the most notable for the suffering they inflicted.

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II. The Locations of Persecution

-Congregational churches were the primary perpetrators

-They promoted the state-run church

-The Baptist ideals strongly opposed the Puritan views

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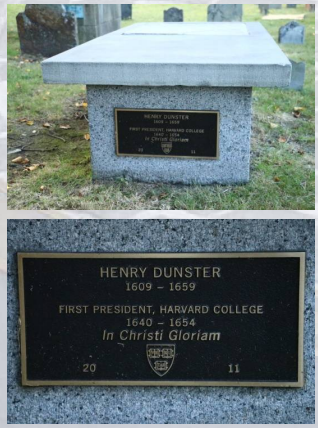
Henry Dunster (from Week 02)



The first president of Harvard, Henry Dunster, was forced to resign after serving for only a little longer than 12 years because he refused to have his infant child baptized. The Puritans viewed his beliefs as a threat to the school and the doctrine they were trying to teach. Dunster died a few years later in shame rather than prestige.

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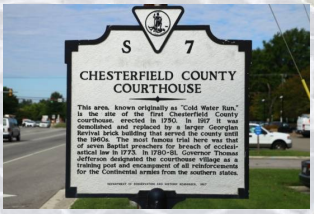
John Weatherford and Six Others

In Chesterfield, Virginia, seven Baptist were imprisoned between1770-1774. Their crime was preaching without the approval of the state. Despite being thrown in jail, they continued to preach through the windows to anyone who would listen. The jailers' attempts to quiet them were unsuccessful, and many more were converted.



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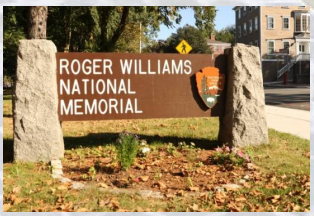
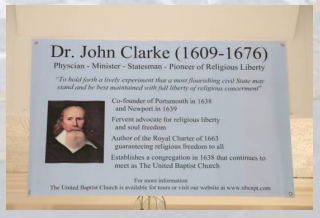
Roger Williams and John Clarke

Both Roger Williams and John Clarke came to America seeking religious freedom that they could not find in Europe. Instead, they were greeted with more religious intolerance. So after failing to find a community that would accept their Baptistic views, they founded the colony of Rhode Island with religious liberty for all, not just Baptists.





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Obadiah Holmes

Obadiah Holmes was imprisoned and whipped mercilessly in Boston after holding a private service on Sunday in an elderly man's home. His flogging took place on the same location that the Boston Massacre would later occur. He told the magistrates, "You have struck me as with roses; yet I pray God that it not be laid to your charge."

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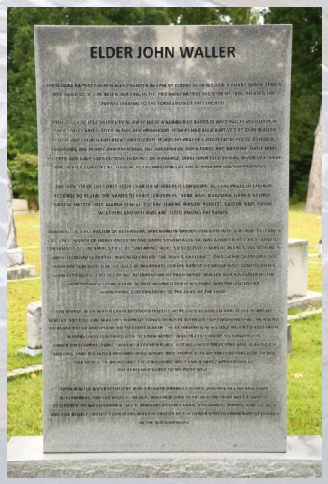
John Waller

John Waller was a modern-day Paul. Once a fierce opponent of the Gospel, he was convicted by the Holy Spirit after being on the jury for an arrested Baptist preacher. After being saved he suffered whipping and many imprisonments during his 35-year ministry. It is said that he baptized over 2000 converts and organized over 20 churches.



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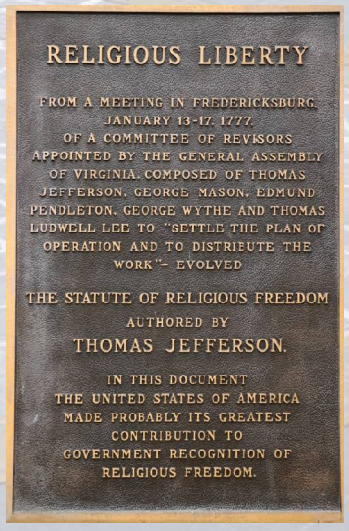
III. The Results of Persecution

-The Baptists strengthened in their resolve

-The Gospel continued to spread through the country

-The concept of religious liberty took root in America



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What Difference Does This Make for Me This Week?

1. Decide which convictions are worth fighting for and which ones are not.

2. Seek to persuade, but allow God to do the transformation.

3. Examine whether or not your convictions are truly biblical or not.

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"Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are well known to God, and I also trust are well known in your consciences."
-2 Corinthians 5:9-11

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"So they called them and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered and said to them, 'Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.'"
-Acts 4:18-20

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