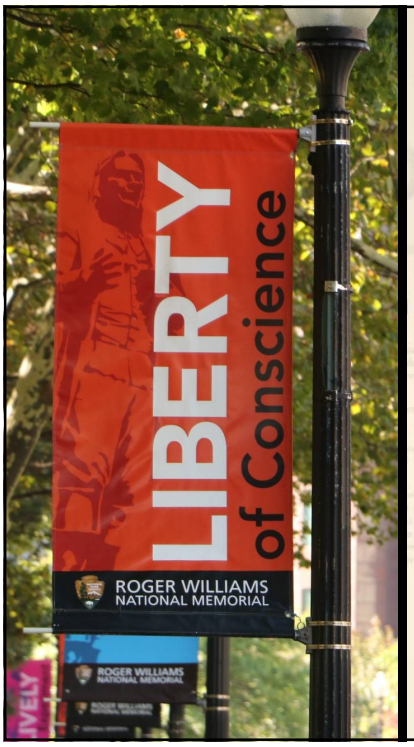

Where Did Religious Liberty Begin?

Where Did Religious Liberty Begin?

Today's Questions:

1. What is religious liberty?
2. Who had a vision for religious liberty?
3. What was the "Lively Experiment"?
4. What role did the Baptists have?
5. What difference does this make for me this week?

The Other Liberty: The History of Early Baptists in America

Where Did Religious Liberty Begin?

I. The Definition of the Idea

A. Conscience rather than Coercion

B. General rather than Specific

C. Permission rather than Toleration

Religious liberty says, "I may not agree with you, but I will grant you full freedom to believe and practice what you think is right."

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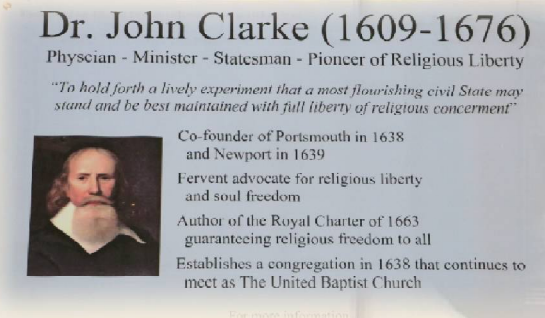
Where Did Religious Liberty Begin?

II. The Proponents of the Idea

A. Roger Williams

B. Dr. John Clarke



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Where Did Religious Liberty Begin?

III. The Birth of the Idea

A. Providence

B. Newport

C. Rhode Island

Together, Roger Williams and John Clarke attempted to do something radical in America.

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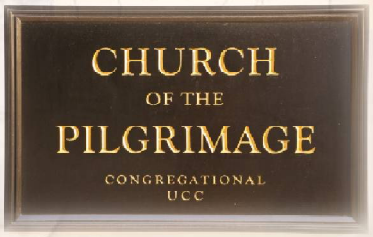
Where Did Religious Liberty Begin?

The New Church of England

Massachusetts Bay was home to the Puritans, and they virtually became the Church of England in America. Church and state were inseparable and did not permit freedom of religion outside their faith and practice. Puritanism was strongest in Boston. It was slightly more lenient in Salem, and the Separatist Puritans in Plymouth were the most tolerant of Baptist beliefs. But Plymouth did not practice full separation of church and state either for many years.



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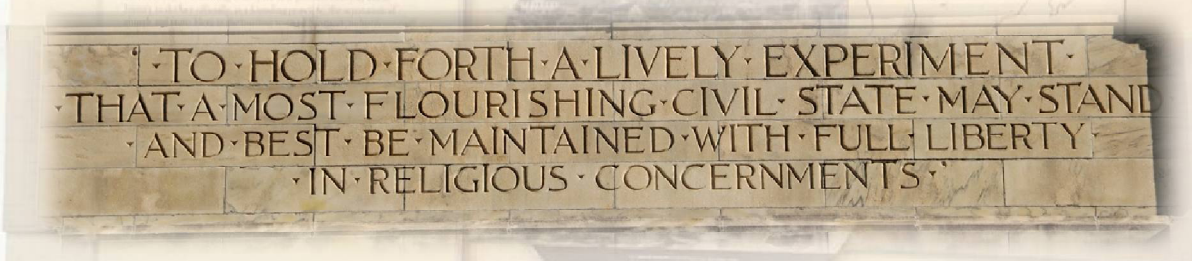
Where Did Religious Liberty Begin?

"A Lively Experiment"

The concept of establishing a settlement with full religious liberty was referred to as "a lively experiment." The success of this experiment was one of the first major building blocks in a future nation that granted every citizen full religious liberty.



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Where Did Religious Liberty Begin?

IV. The Results of the Idea

A. Freedom for Baptists

B. Freedom for All

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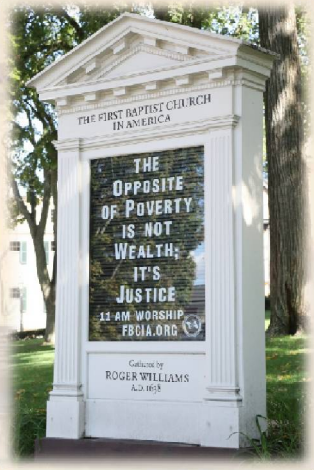
Where Did Religious Liberty Begin?

More on Roger Williams

Roger Williams was only pastor of his new church for a few months. Although he had accepted Baptist beliefs and been immersed along with his new congregation, he eventually became an adherent to the concept of apostolic succession. He thus believed that his baptism was illegitimate and that no true church existed unless God restored the line with new apostolic authority.



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Where Did Religious Liberty Begin?

More on Dr. John Clarke

John Clarke deserves the credit for the securing the charter that officially gave Rhode Island the right to form a colony with full religious liberty for all inhabitants. He returned to England and spent 12 years there before King Charles II finally granted the charter. His church in Newport was not founded as a Baptist church but became one six years later under his leadership.

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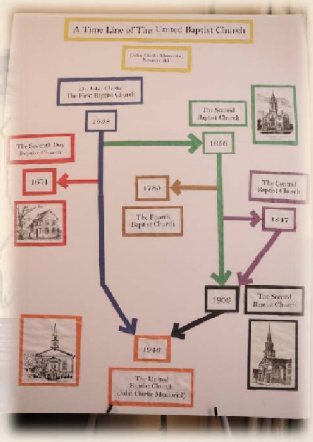
Where Did Religious Liberty Begin?

More on Baptists in Rhode Island

The early Baptists in Rhode Island and the rest of New England struggled to form their own identity. Their common goal was to form churches that conformed as closely as possible to biblical principles. But they did not all know exactly what that church was supposed to look like, and they lacked the inter-church organization that solidified the place of the Puritan churches in America.



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Where Did Religious Liberty Begin?

What Difference Does This Make for Me This Week?

1. Determine what your responsibilities are to the government and what your responsibilities are to the church.
2. Seek to persuade, but allow the Holy Spirit to open the eyes and hearts of others to truth.
3. Praise God for the liberty you enjoy!

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Where Did Religious Liberty Begin?

"Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God...For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same."

-Romans 13:1,3

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Where Did Religious Liberty Begin?

"I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase."

-1 Corinthians 3:6-7

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