

The Early Quakers

Monotheistic believers, to whom Jesus is fully God, were first persecuted by Roman pagans, then by Roman Catholics, then by virtually every major leader of the Protestant Reformation. We turn now to consider another source of hostility which kept the embers of persecution against them aglow in the seventeenth century — the Puritans of New England.

The objects of puritan cruelty were the early Quakers, who were Anti-Trinitarians. The Puritans of seventeenth century Boston harassed and imprisoned the Quakers for denying the Trinity and worshipping Jesus Christ as the one true God. This is one reason the Quakers were expelled from New England. Those returning to New England were put to death. William Robinson, Marmaduke Stephenson and Mary Dyer were among the Quakers who refused to recant their beliefs and paid the ultimate sacrifice. ⁱ

A Boston preacher, named John Norton wrote a book, in the mid 1600s, attacking the Quakers, entitled The Heart of New England Rent. One point on which he attacked the Quakers was concerning the Quaker views of the Trinity. He compared the Quakers to Praxeas and Sabellius.ⁱⁱ He fumed,

“They acknowledge one God and three, viz., the Father, and the Son and the Holy Ghost; but they deny that these three are distinct persons.” ⁱⁱⁱ

(The **Origin** of the **Trinity** Doctrine, Newly Revised by David E. Adams, Walker, W.V.: Dayspring Publications, 1996, 53-54)

ⁱ Weisser, Quoting Quaker Biographies, Vol. 2, Art. Boston Martyrs, 228-30

ⁱⁱ Ibid., Quoting John Norton, The Heart Of New England Rent, 2

ⁱⁱⁱ Ibid., Norton, 3