

THE STRUGGLE FOR SOUL LIBERTY IN EARLY NEW ENGLAND:
THE 1654 DISMISSAL OF HENRY DUNSTER, FIRST PRESIDENT OF HARVARD,
FOR HIS ANTI-PAEDOBAPTIST VIEWS

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By

Wayne R. Brandow

M.Div. Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary, 2000

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INTRODUCTION

While under sail in the *Arbella*, in route to New England, John Winthrop penned his famous sermon, “A Model of Christian Charity.” In it he wrote, “wee shall be as a Citty upon a hill”¹ This was not just the sentiment of John Winthrop, but also those of a number of men, educated and visionary men of Puritan stamp, who risked their resources and their lives to carve out a place for themselves and their God in the New World. They sought to create a society living according to the precepts of God’s Word as a witness to the world. The Great Migration of 1630 which brought about the settlement of the Massachusetts Bay Colony was a carefully planned endeavor. With charter in hand, the Puritan magistrates and the Puritan ministers would join hands in a noble experiment in building a Christian Commonwealth. After making provisions for church and state they turned their attention to the education of ministers. Edwin Hardy commented on this when he wrote:

“Dreading to leave an illiterate ministry to the churches when our ministers shall lie in the dust,”² is the language by which the founders describe their motives in that far-seeing and self-denying enterprise which they soon undertook for the good of their posterity and to the glory of God. [A college]³ for the preparation of the ministry was one of the first things that our forefathers thought of, and as Cotton Mather well adds, “It was one of the best things they ever thought of.”⁴

¹ I John Winthrop, “A Modell of Christian Charity” in Massachusetts Historical Society, *Winthrop Papers* (Boston, 1929-47), vol. II, 282-95, as quoted in Darret B. Rutman, *John Winthrop’s Decision for America: 1629*, Harold M. Hyman, ed. (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1975) 100

² This quote is from *New England’s First Fruits*, 1643.

³ Hardy has “Colleges . . . was”

⁴ Edwin Noah Hardy, *The Churches and Educated Men: A Study of the Relation of the Church to Makers and Leaders of Public Opinion* (Boston: The Pilgrim Press, 1904), 21.

Therefore, Harvard was founded.

It is ironic then, that the Puritan orthodoxy was to be challenged from within Harvard College itself, the institution that was designated to safeguard it. The very one:

- who came to the rescue of Harvard College after its aborted first start,
- who placed it on such a solid footing so that its degrees were recognized by Oxford and Cambridge, and even had English families sending their sons abroad to study in its halls;
- who had won the hearts of all for his self-sacrifice, his learning, and his gentle and peacemaking demeanor,
- who epitomized the Puritan ideal of leadership - having the right social connections, having personal piety, and having been educated at Cambridge University, “the nest of Puritanism in England,”

This one became a staunch Anti-paedobaptist. He let it be known that he opposed infant baptism, a doctrine that was at the heart of their covenant theology. His name was Henry Dunster, the first President of Harvard.

CONCERNING THE TITLE OF THIS PAPER

“The Struggle for Soul Liberty in Early New England: The 1654 Dismissal of Henry Dunster, First President of Harvard, for His Anti-Paedobaptist Views”

Technically, Dunster was not dismissed. He resigned. Even after his declaration about infant baptism and his resignation, they asked him to reconsider. Dunster knew that in order for him to be allowed to remain he would have to recant. He took a stand by declaring his

views on baptism a second time in a public forum, and sending a second resignation which they did accept.

Because Dunster's dilemma was caused by a matter of conscience, his story is part of the struggle for soul liberty in early New England. It must be observed, however, that unlike Roger Williams and John Clarke, Dunster did not mention the need of tolerance in matters of worship among Christians who differ. He was focused on one issue – baptism.

Concerning the label anti-paedobaptist, Dunster was neither an Anabaptist nor a Baptist. He was at the time of his leaving Harvard until the time of his death, a loyal Congregationalist. The only baptism he underwent in his own life was as an infant on November 26, 1609 in Bury, England. He was never baptized as a believer! He never renounced or was dismissed from membership in the First Church of Cambridge (a Congregational Church).⁵

The reader will discover in this paper that Dunster spoke as a Congregationalist addressing an issue being hotly debated in the Congregationalist churches of his day. That topic was infant baptism. Pastors and churches were divided into two camps as to which infants should be baptized. Dunster held to a third way, that is, do not baptize infants at all!

HENRY DUNSTER⁶

Henry Dunster was born in Bury, England in the year 1609. He was the fifth of nine children of a yeoman farmer. In English society a yeoman was a person who owned and

⁵ A good book to help in deciding if a person is an Anabaptist, Baptist, or Anti-paedobaptist is Mike Renihan, *Antipaedobaptism in the Thought of John Tombes: An untold story from Puritan England*. (Auburn, MA: B&R Press, 2001). This was his doctoral dissertation for Ph.D. from Oxford. This is an excellent book! It changed the author's perspective on Dunster as he previously thought Dunster was a Baptist, like so many Baptist historians.

⁶ This is an abbreviated life of Dunster. For a fuller account please see the only biography of Henry Dunster written to date, Jeremiah Chaplin, *Life of Henry Dunster: First President of Harvard* (Boston: James R. Osgood and Company, 1872). Jeremiah Chaplin was a Baptist minister. A new biography is forthcoming by Arseny James Melnick. Melnick maintains a website on Henry Dunster at www.henrydunster.org He also wrote about Dunster's executive ability in *America's Oldest Corporation and First CEO: Harvard and Henry Dunster*. (West Conshohocken, PA: Infinity Publishing.Com., 2008)

cultivated a small farm, which would place Henry's family in a class of English freeholders below the gentry.⁷

As a boy Henry sat under soul searching preaching and at age twelve he made a profession of faith in Christ. When Dunster went to Cambridge University he sat under the powerful preaching of Preston and Goodwin, but by his own account (see Appendix A) he was not truly converted until after graduation while he was teaching in the Bury Grammar School.

Studying at Cambridge University, Dunster received a BA in 1630 and an MA in 1634 from Magdalene College, Cambridge University. His graduation from Cambridge changed his social status. Previously, he would have been known as Goodman Dunster. From that day on, he would be addressed as Master Dunster. His Cambridge degree was his entrance into the gentry.

HARVARD

In the summer of 1640 Henry immigrated to Boston with his brother Richard. Just three weeks after his arrival ten magistrates and sixteen elders elected him as President of Harvard College.⁸ This occurred on August 27, 1640. There were many difficulties for him to overcome in his new station. The first obstacle was that Harvard had had a failed start under Nathaniel Eaton. Eaton was an angry and abusive fellow, who was hauled into court, fined and fired, after beating an assistant with a club. Prior to Dunster's arrival, Harvard had been shut down for a year.⁹

The second challenge was that Dunster had to get a college off the ground when New England was in the throes of a severe economic crisis. Immigration to New England came to a

⁷ Definition of "yeoman" as found in *Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 10th edition, 1997.*

⁸ Samuel Eliot Morison, *Builders of the Bay Colony*. Reprint (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1981),193.

⁹ A fuller account of the state of the college prior to Dunster and the vileness of Nathaniel Eaton may be found in Geoffrey Thomas, "Ministerial Training from Harvard to Princeton" a paper read at the 1986 Westminster Conference held at the Westminster Chapel, London, England, 29-30.

standstill and even reversed at the start of the English Civil War. Some Puritans went home to England to enter into the fray. Marion Starkey wrote, "The most prosperous of American colonies entered into a depression that continued until Massachusetts found its destiny in shipbuilding and trade with the West Indies."¹⁰ The actual college building was incomplete. It was framed, boarded, roofed, and the ground floor was laid, but that was all. Within two years Dunster graduated the first Harvard class (1642) having gathered some of the former students and recruited new ones. They held commencement in a finished college building.

A year after Dunster's arrival, he married Elizabeth Harris Glover. She was a widow with five children, who lost her husband on the trip over. It was a short lived marriage as she died two years later. This marriage, however, would give greater social standing to Dunster, as two of Elizabeth's daughters married two of Governor Winthrop's sons.¹¹

In March of 1644, Henry married his second wife, Elizabeth Atkinson. She bore him five children. The first three were baptized as infants according to Puritan norms. The last two, Jonathan and Elizabeth, were withheld from baptism, for as we will see, Dunster's views changed.

Consider Dunster's rise to prominence. He went from a yeoman's son, to Cambridge University, to President of Harvard, with the education of New England's most promising youth entrusted into his hands, and he now had social standing as well. Add to all this his impeccable character, his self-denial, generosity, diligence, and organizational abilities, and it becomes apparent that Dunster was a bright and shining star in New England.

¹⁰ Marion L. Starkey. *The Congregational Way: The Role of the Pilgrims and Their Heirs in Shaping America* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc, 1966), 87-88.

¹¹ Chaplin, *Life of Dunster*, 56.

For fourteen years Dunster labored in Harvard. Then the trial of three Baptists and the public whipping of Obadiah Holmes on September 6, 1651 forced Dunster to rethink the issue of baptism, which drastically altered his thought.¹²

DUNSTER MAKES KNOWN HIS VIEWS ON BAPTISM

President Dunster made his views on baptism known while preaching in his home church. He was a member of the church in Cambridge. When its pastor, Thomas Shepard, died, Dunster filled the pulpit until Jonathan Mitchell was called to take Shepard's place. After Mitchell came, Dunster continued to preach in the Cambridge pulpit.¹³ His troubles began when as Isaac Backus wrote, "[Mr. Dunster] boldly preached against infant baptism, and for believer's baptism, in the pulpit at Cambridge, in 1653."¹⁴

¹² Though Dunster did not leave any record of why he changed his mind, many historians place the beating of Holmes as the catalyst to his change of mind.

John Christian wrote, "The trial and whipping of Holmes was the occasion of the conversion of Henry Dunster, the President of Harvard, to the Baptists." As cited in *A History of the Baptists: Together with Some Account of Their Principles and Practices.* (Nashville: Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1922), 381.

George E. Horr commented, "President Dunster was apparently led by the treatment accorded Clarke and Crandall and Holmes to examine the matter of baptism for himself." As cited in "The Baptists" in *The Religious History of New England: Kings Chapel Lectures*, 1-73. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1917), 150.

Isaac Backus wrote, "These people soon after became Baptists; and one of them was most shamefully and cruelly persecuted the next year at Boston. By searching into these matters, Mr. Dunster, President of Harvard College, was brought openly to renounce infant baptism" As cited in *A History of New England Baptists, Vol 1* (Paris, AK: The Baptist Standard Bearer, Reprint of 1871 ed), 453;

¹³ Earlier in the same year that Dunster made his baptism views known, on March 5, 1653, Michael Wigglesworth recorded in his diary the following entry, "Mr Dunster preact today about the thorny ground. god was pleased with set in and awaken my heart, and fear seiz'd upon me . . ." in Michael Wigglesworth, *The Diary of Michael Wigglesworth 1653-1657: The Conscience of a Puritan.* Edited by Edmond S. Morgan (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1946), 11.

¹⁴ Backus, *History of New England Baptists*, II, 418. Another source: "Dunster in his preaching, had often declared his disapproval of infant baptism" as found in George E. Ellis, *The Puritan Age and Rule in the Colony of Massachusetts Bay 1629-1685* (Boston: The Riverside Press, Cambridge, 1888) 396.

Dunster's preaching on baptism took everybody by surprise and none was more unsettled than young pastor Mitchell. Cotton Mather has given us the most detailed account of what happened when he wrote:

Our MITCHEL, presently upon his becoming the pastor of Cambridge, met with more than an ordinary trial, in that **the good man who was then the President of the Colledge, and a member of the Church there**, was unaccountably fallen into the *briars* of Antipaedo-baptism; and being *briar'd* in the *scruples* of that perswasion, he not only forbore to present an infant of his own unto the Baptism of our Lord, but also thought himself under some obligation to bear his testimony, in some sermons against the administration of baptism to any infant whatsoever. The brethren of the Church were somewhat vehement and violent in their signifying of their dissatisfaction at the obstruction, which the *renitences*¹⁵ of **that gentleman** threatened unto the peaceable practice of infant-baptism, wherein they had hitherto walked; and judged it necessary, for the vindication of the church's name abroad in the country, and for the safety of the congregation at home, to desire of him that he would cease preaching as formerly, until he had better satisfied himself in the point now doubted by him. At these things extreme was the uneasiness of our MITCHEL, who told the brethren "that more light and less heat would do better:" but yet saw the zeal of some against **this good man's** error, to push this matter on so far, that being but *a young man*, he was likely now to be embarrassed in a controversie with **so considerable a person**, and with one who had been his *tutor*, and **a worthy and a Godly man**. He could give this account of it: "Through the church's being apt to hurry on too fast and too impatiently, I found myself much oppressed; especially considering my own weakness to grapple with these difficulties; this business did lye down, and rise up, sleep and wake with me: It was a dismal thing to me, that I should live to see truth or peace dying or decaying in poor Cambridge." [boldface mine]¹⁶

¹⁵ Rentinace – noun, *an obsolete word*, the quality of resisting pressure, hardness; recalcitrance. See *The Compact Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary: The Complete Text Reproduced Micrographically* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), 2490.

¹⁶ Cotton Mather, *The Great Works of Christ in America: Magnalia Christi Americana*, 1702. Vol 2. Reprint, (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1979), 95-96.

Mather gives us an insight into the character of Dunster [see boldface in the previous quote]. He stated above that Dunster was “a good man,” “a gentleman,” “a considerable person,” “a worthy and a Godly man.” Such adjectives are used to convey respect.

THE CONCERN OF FRIENDS

Mitchell must have sought the advice of Zechariah Symmes, a senior minister in the nearby town of Charlestown, because Symmes wrote Dunster a cordial letter of inquiry about what transpired.¹⁷ Dunster wrote a response to Symmes’ letter, and the next day, Jonathan Mitchell, paid Dunster a visit on December 24, 1653. The visit found Mitchell being moved by his former teacher’s arguments against infant baptism. Mitchell wrote:

That day after I came from him, I had a strange experience; I found hurrying and pressing suggestions against Paedo-baptism, and injected scruples and thoughts whether the other way might not be right, but infant-baptism an invention of men; and whether I might with good conscience baptise children, and the like. And these thoughts were darted in with some impression, and left a strange confusion and sickliness upon my spirit.¹⁸

Being almost persuaded, Mitchell then went on to explain why he rejected his former teacher’s convincing arguments. He continued:

Yet, methought, it was not hard to discern that they were from the EVIL ONE. *First*, Because they were rather *injected*, hurrying suggestions, than any deliberate thoughts, or bringing any light with them. *Secondly*, Because they were *unseasonable*: interrupting me in my study for the Sabbath, and putting my spirit into a confusion . . .¹⁹

Mitchell, unable to refute Dunster, attributed his views to the Devil.

¹⁷ The letter no longer exists, yet one can surmise his fellow minister’s love and concern, as Dunster speaks of Symmes’ kindness to him in writing it. (This letter, by Dunster, is found in Appendix A)

¹⁸ Cotton Mather quoting from Mitchell’s record of his feelings in *Great Works of Christ in America, Vol 2*, 96.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 96

THE CONFERENCE

In January, a letter was written by the Magistrates to their Ministerial colleagues on the Board of Overseers of Harvard College (see Appendix A).²⁰ They were seeking information so as to know how to act. The ministers contacted Dunster and arranged a debate with him. On February 2-3, 1654, the conference was held with Dunster consisting of nine ministers and two elders which met in the Boston church. The largest contingent came from the Boston church.²¹ The participants other than Henry Dunster were as delineated in the chart below.²²

From Boston	John Wilson, Pastor; John Norton, Teacher Elders: Mr Colbon & James Penn
From Charlestown	Zechariah Symmes, Pastor
From Cambridge	Jonathan Mitchell, Pastor (Harvard B.A. 1647)
From Roxbury	John Eliot, Pastor; Samuel Danforth, Teacher (Harvard B. A. 1643)
From Dorchester	Richard Mather, Pastor
From Dedham	John Allen, Pastor
From Braintree	William Tompson, Pastor

²⁰ The Board of Overseers, of which they were a part, was put into place in 1642 on the year Dunster graduated his first class. It was originally composed of ministers and magistrates from six towns surrounding Harvard. They were Cambridge, Charlestown, Boston, Roxbury, Dorchester and Watertown.

²¹ John Cotton, the famous teacher of the Boston church was not present because he died two years earlier in 1652.

²² Watertown was not represented. Possibly they were without a minister at the time. Later in October of 1654, the General Court would add four ministers not otherwise qualified due to a shortage of ministers. There were John Allen of Dedham, Samuel Witting and Thomas Cobett of Lynn, and John Norton who was of Boston but not yet formerly installed as the teacher of the church as yet. See Samuel Eliot Morison, *The Founding of Harvard College* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1935). 327.

We have already seen how Mitchell was grieved but not angry at the discovery of Dunster’s newly expressed views and argued for more light and less heat. The conference would meet, hoping to untangle the “briars of anti-paedobaptism” ensnaring their friend. This conference was a gathering of those who had worked with Dunster over the years. The tone of the Conference was not adversarial, as many of them were close friends. Danforth and Mitchell were former students, who, upon graduation, worked alongside Dunster as tutors, and helped to manage the day to day affairs of Harvard.²³ Having left Harvard, they were now on the Board of Overseers because of the churches they were ministering in. Richard Mather was a long time friend having known Dunster before he left England.²⁴ Many of the ministers on the board had sons in Harvard at the present time. Four of the ministers were on the board since its inception in 1642 (Eliot, Mather, Symmes, and Wilson). Clearly, these men were not just on a fact finding mission. They cared for their long time colleague, Henry Dunster.

In the chart below, five of the ministers at the Conference had a total of thirteen sons who attended Harvard. Four sons were in Harvard at the time of the Conference.

**Those at the Conference with Dunster who had sons in Harvard
(February 2, 1653/54 to February 3, 1653/54)**

Name	Before the Conference	During the Conference	After the Conference
John Allen	John Allen (B.A. 1643)		Daniel Allen (B.A. 1675)
John Eliot		John Eliot (B.A.1656)	Joseph Eliot (B.A. 1658) Samuel Eliot (B.A.1660) Benjamin Eliot (B.A. 1665)

²³ Both Danforth and Mitchell were Fellows of Harvard and part of the Harvard Corporation the second governing board to run Harvard along with the Board of Overseers. – see Morison, *Harvard College in the Seventeenth Century*,16.

²⁴ Morison pointed out that Richard Mather’s home in England was not far from Dunster’s, his wife came from Bury (Dunster’s hometown), and Dunster’s father would have dealings with the Mather family. He then went on to write with regard to Dunster’s appointment as President to Harvard, “It seems likely that Mather knew the Dunster family and could vouch for Henry’s antecedents.” – Morison, *Harvard College in the Seventeenth Century*, 243.

Richard Mather	Samuel Mather (B.A. 1643) Nathaniel Mather (B.A. 1647)	Eleazer Mather (B.A. 1656) Increase Mather (B.A. 1656)	
Zechariah Symmes		Zechariah Symmes (B.A. 1657)	
William Tompson	William Tompson (B.A. 1653)		Benjamin Tompson (B.A. 1662)

THE DEBATE

Judging by the theme to be debated set forth by Dunster, *solī visibiliter fideles sunt baptizandi* [only visible believers are to be baptized], it would be a formal debate and it would be in Latin. Dunster was in his element. From the transcripts, one will find that there are no derogatory comments made and the sole authority cited for arguments was the Word of God. There are no quotes from the Church fathers, Creeds, or Church traditions. Baptism, whether inclusive of infants or not, would be determined by the weight of the Holy Scriptures. The major disputants were Henry Dunster, John Norton, and Richard Mather. The rest were, for the most part, silent as there were only a few statements interjected by others. The moderator of the debate was John Allen of Dedham.

Norton was the first to debate Dunster. His response to Dunster's thesis was that infants are visible believers. They may not be "active" believers, but they are "actual" believers because they are members of the covenant of grace due to their parent's faith. To clarify the distinction Norton made regarding faith, he said, "Christ in infansie & a man asleep may have actual faith, but do not actively believe." Symmes pointed out that the promise made with Abraham and his seed was carried over to the New Testament believer and his seed, and that if children were left out then the glory of the new would be less than the old. According to the ministers, children were to be baptized because of the covenant made with Abraham, and that covenant was with Abraham, a believer, and his children.

On the second day, Mather was feeling Dunster out as to the state of an unbaptized child. He started the debate with, "Whether baptisme of infants be a Gospel institution? In the

ministers' minds, if an unbaptised infant died, it would be outside of the covenant and therefore to be damned. According to Mather's interpretation of Ephesians 2:11-12, those that are not baptized are, "without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world." Wilson spoke up and said, "To be out of ye Arke is a judm[e]nt. But to be out ye visible Ch[urch] is to be out ye Arke."

These ministers were arguing a point that John Cotton asserted in a sermon before the sentencing of the three Baptists from Rhode Island. He preached that to deny infant baptism is to be a soul-murderer.²⁵ Why? Because a child that dies outside of the covenant in their minds is exposed to judgment. The Puritan cry, "soul murderer," displays the same strong emotions as the pro-lifer who cries out "baby killer" to describe abortionists. To cut a child out of the covenant by refusing to baptize was as bad in the Puritan mind as the doctor who cuts a child out of the womb. Actually, in their minds it was far worse, for that child cut out of the covenant who was denied baptism, was heading for eternal damnation! One can readily see how a rejection of infant baptism would generate great hostility in the Puritan culture. However, in Dunster's peers there is no note of hostility. The only feeling on display was a grave concern over the seriousness of his departure.

In the last session Dunster stated that, "All instituted Gospel worship hath some expresse word of Scripture." He stressed that the recipients of baptism must repent and believe. As children cannot speak, how can they repent? Dunster pointed out that just as the Scriptures restrict the Lord's Supper to those who discern, so they also restrict baptism to those who believe. Verses commonly used in baptism debates (even in our own day) were brought forth by the ministers, such as 1 Corinthians 7:14 (about children being holy).

²⁵ This was mentioned in an account of the whipping of Obadiah Holmes by John Spur. See footnote in Chaplin, *The Life of Dunster*, 173.

The debate convinced no one. Dunster and his friends held to the same positions as before. How did the stalemate affect Dunster? Nothing was done until three months later. Then on May 3, 1654 the General Court passed the following vote:

Forasmuch as it greatly concerns the welfare of this country that the youth thereof be educated, not only in good literature, but sound doctrine, this Court doth therefore commend it to the serious consideration and speciall care of the overseers of the colledge, and the selectmen in seuerall townes, not to admit or suffer any such to be contynued in the office or place of teaching, educating, or instructing of youth or child, in the colledge or schooles, that haue manifested themselues vnsound in the fayth, or scandalous in their liues, and not giueing due satisfaction according to the rules of Christ²⁶

Dunster could see the handwriting on the wall, so he resigned on June 10, 1654. The Court gave Dunster some time to reconsider. They did not want him to leave. They would have liked to retain his services, but they were not going to accept his scruples about baptism. Dunster sealed his fate by speaking out in church during a baptismal service on July 30, 1654.

SPEAKING OUT IN THE MEETING HOUSE

In the Cambridge meetinghouse Dunster made five points. They were, as quoted from court records:²⁷

1. That the subjects of Baptisme were visible pennitent believers, and they only by vertue of any rule, example, or any other light in the new testament.
2. That there was an action now to be done, which was not according to the institution of Christ.
3. That the exposition as it had been held forth was not the mind of Christ.
4. That the covenant of Abraham is not a ground for Baptisme no not after the institution thereof.
5. That there were such corruptions stealing into the Church, which every faithful Christian ought to beare witness against.¹

²⁶ Massachusetts Bay Records, iii, 343-44, as cited in Morison, *Harvard College in the Seventeenth Century*, 308.

²⁷ These five points were brought up at his trial by the prosecution. They can be found in Chaplin, *The Life of Dunster*, 130-131.

William Hubbard, a student of Dunster who graduated in 1642, wrote in his *History of New England* that Dunster might have continued as President “. . . if he hath been endowed with that wisdom which many others have wanted besides himself, to have kept his singular opinions to himself when there was little occasion for venting himself.”²⁸

Dunster submitted his resignation a second time on October 24, 1654. This time it was promptly accepted. After some wrangling, the court allowed Dunster to stay in his house over the winter. He was to vacate the house by the last of March in 1655.²⁹ He moved to Charlestown where some said he resided with Thomas Gould before going on to Scituate in Plymouth Colony in the fall of 1655.³⁰ Dunster would remain in Scituate until his death four years later.

THE TRIAL FOR SPEAKING OUT

Though Dunster resigned his post as President and vacated his house in Cambridge, on April 3, 1655, Dunster was tried before the County Court in Cambridge for the outburst he made during the baptism at the church the previous July. Dunster was sentenced to be publicly admonished at the next Cambridge church lecture by a magistrate and give bond for his good behavior. What law did he break? The violation of the following law, adopted in 1646, was read to Dunster:

Forasmuch as the open contempt of God’s word and messengers thereof is the desolating sin of civil State and Churches: It is ordered, that if any Christian (so called)

²⁸ William Hubbard, *A General History of New England from Discovery to MCDLXXX*. 2d ed. (Boston: Charles E. Little and James Brown, 1848), 556. In the same book, a footnote to the above quote says the following of Dunster, “When shall we be gratified to a just tribute to the memory of HENRY DUNSTER? – a man who, in extensive learning, sincere piety, and all the virtues which ennoble and adorn the Christian character, has been equaled by few, surpassed by none, of his successors – H. “ (H stands for the editor of this edition, William Thaddeus Harris). Hubbard wrote *History of New England* in 1680. Harris’ plea was answered in 1872 when Jeremiah Chaplin wrote, *The Life of Henry Dunster* in 1872.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 314.

³⁰ For the move to Charlestown in the Spring, see Morison, *The Founding of Harvard College*, 377. As to staying with Thomas Gould, see Chaplin, *Life of Dunster*, 200, who cites a narration given by Gould in Backus, *History of New England Baptists*, Vol 1: 290-297. Gould would become the pastor of the first Baptist church in Boston, 1665.

within this jurisdiction shall contemptuously behave himself towards the word preached or the messengers thereof called to dispense, either by interrupting him in his preaching, or by charging him falsely with any error which he hath not taught in the open face of the church, or like a son of Korah, cast upon his true doctrine or himself any reproach to the honor of the Lord Jesus who hath sent him, and to the disparagement of his holy ordinance, and making God's ways contemptible and ridiculous: that every such person or persons (whatever censure the Church may pass) shall for the first scandal be convented³¹ and reproved openly by the magistrate at some lecture, and bound to their good behavior.”³²

The following day, Dunster wrote a letter which reveals the true spirit in which he spoke out in the Cambridge meetinghouse. Consider the following excerpts:

I Answer first, that I am not conscious that I did anything contemptuously or in open contempt of Gods word or messengers, and therefore I am not guilty of the breach of that lawe, as I conceive.

I also acknowledged and do, that for the manner they were not seasonably spoken, but for the matter, I conceived then, and do so still, that I spake the truth in the feare of God, and dare not deny the same or go from it until the Lord otherwise teach me, and this I pray the Honored Court to take for mine Answer.

I Heartily and Humbly pray you, mine Honored Judges, as you desire to find mercy with the gracious Judge the Lord Jesus Christ, that you wilbe pleased to give the most candid and Christian Construction if any were amisse, seeing Charity thinketh no Evill . . . Your Humble Servant and afflicted Brother,

HENRY DUNSTER.³³

If there was no contempt, then what was there but speaking the truth in love! Love as described in 1 Corinthians 13, hopes all things, believes all things, endures all things, but it cannot remain silent when a wrong might be righted, because it rejoices in the truth! Dunster was a teacher. His motive can be discovered in the fifth and last point previously stated concerning his speaking out, i.e – “That there were such corruptions stealing into the Church, which every faithful Christian ought to beare witness against.” There was a serious concern that

³¹ Convent - *verb, obsolete* “to summon before a judge” See the *Oxford English Dictionary*, 544.

³² As cited in Chaplin, *The Life of Dunster*, 132

pressed upon the heart of every Congregational minister in the 1650s, and it concerned baptism. Dunster's preaching and his speaking out in the Cambridge Church all related to that theme.

THE BAPTISM DILEMMA³⁴

Just what was the concern in Dunster's day? The second generation of children had grown up. They were getting married and they were having children of their own. This second generation, being children of believing parents, had been baptized. Although many had professed faith, believed the tenants of their parent's religion, and lived moral and respectable lives, most had not been able to relate their own experience of new birth. As such, they were not full members of the church and could not have their children baptized.

The New England Puritans realized that there was a difference between "temporarie faith" and "reale faith." They knew that a mere intellectual assent to the truth was not enough. James tells us, "Thou believest that there is one God: thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble."³⁵ To become a member of the Congregational Church in early New England one had do more than give a profession of faith or agree to "own the covenant. " They had to relate

³³ Ibid., 133-134.

³⁴ This section upon the controversy around the Half-Way Covenant was brought to the writer's mind while reading Carla Gardina Pestana's book, *Quakers and Baptists in colonial Massachusetts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991). In 1665 the First Baptist Church of Boston was founded and Pestana wrote, "the impetus to gather a Baptist church arose directly out of an objectionable reform being adopted by the established churches – the 'halfway covenant.'" (page 15). She then went on to write, "Every major synod from 1646 through 1662 grappled with the ordinance of baptism," (page 15). Therefore, according to the dates given, Dunster's change of views surfaced during this controversy. Is the baptism quandary of his day THE reason Dunster changed his views and spoke out? There is no way of knowing for sure, as he did not to this writer's knowledge tell why he changed his mind. If, in this paper, the reader becomes aware that Dunster's views surfaced in the context of discussion about baptism, the writer has achieved his goal. Again, let the reader know that this paper is not asserting with certainty why Dunster embraced believers-only baptism, but is postulating a possible cause. Other causes that could have caused the change of belief: the beating of Obadiah Holmes, the Baptist tracts and books circulating in New England at the time, and the more tolerant climate in England with notable Independents like Owen and Goodwin advocating tolerance towards Baptists. Let us not rule out the most obvious, the Spirit of God while reading the Bible. One may be a decisive factor, but all the above no doubt contributed to the change.

³⁵ James 2:19.

their experience of saving faith. This was a step beyond what most Reformed churches required in the seventeenth century. The Anglican, Presbyterian and other churches merely required the acceptance (i.e. belief) of right doctrine and a moral life (a scandalous or immoral life would not correspond with the profession of a true Christian faith)³⁶. The requirement of “relating one’s experience” proved to be an insurmountable barrier to some, who, though being brought up in a Christian home, and who knew and affirmed the faith of their parents, still had not experienced the life changing power of the new birth. Now that the second generation was getting married and having children, they were upset that their unbaptized babies were in danger of Hell fire.

This quandary proved to be a soul-searching pastoral dilemma. Many a good shepherd sought for a way to allay their fears and realized that some troubled ones who hesitated to relate their experience, were in fact regenerate. They were just timid souls.

Two camps among ministers were found at the time of Dunster’s troubles. The minority view was to keep the requirements the same. The majority view was to allow the children of believing parents who have not related their experience of saving faith the right to have their children baptized. These grown children, although they could have their children baptized, would still be unable to partake of the Lord’s Supper *and would still be barred from full membership*. Therefore, they were “half-way “members.³⁷

The “half-way” membership would become the law of the land after 15 years of debate in 1662.³⁸ Here is the wording of that law:

Church-members who were admitted in minority, understanding the Doctrine of Faith, and publickly professing their assent thereto: not scandalous in life and solemnly owning the Covenant before the Church, wherein they give up themselves and their children to

³⁶ Pope, *Half-Way Covenant*, 4.

³⁷ The term “half-way covenant” never appeared in this controversy until used by Jonathan Edward’s followers in the 1760s – See Pope, *Half-Way Covenant*, footnote, 8.

³⁸ Pope, *Half-Way Covenant*, 6.

the Lord, and subject themselves to the Government of Christ in the Church, their children are to be Baptised.³⁹

Mitchell, Mather, Norton, Wilson, and Symmes who met with Dunster on those two consecutive January days in 1653 would all champion the “half-way” measures of 1662. Just nine years hence, what the ministers were hashing out would be brought to the table in the synod. Here is the point to remember. The difficulties Dunster faced about his views on baptism occurred when baptism was a spirited discussion among them all.

CONCLUSION

Though the ministers treated President Dunster with respect and the treatment of the magistrates was milder toward Dunster than others who had been opposed to infant baptism, the longer he held onto his views about baptism, the sterner the measures would become. There was a law on the books to banish those who would persist in the tenants of Anabaptism. This law was not used with respect to his failure to baptize his son Jonathan, nor with respect to his preaching and speaking out in church, but when Dunster failed to bring his next child to be baptized, he was summoned to court again in 1657, and sentenced under the 1644 law against Anabaptists, which threatened banishment. (see Appendix A for the law in full). If he failed to conform, the Puritan establishment wanted him to leave the colony. Dunster died, however, before much could be done to him, two years later in 1659. The Lord took him home to a better colony!

Though his voice was silenced, his views resurfaced in the days ahead in the Congregational establishment. Three years after Dunster’s death, the Congregational Churches adopted the “Half-Way” measures of 1662. Fifteen years later at the Reforming Synod of 1679, Solomon Stoddard persuaded the Synod to agree that a profession of faith should be all that was required for church membership. No longer was a convincing narrative of a conversion

³⁹ Ibid., 7.

experience required.⁴⁰ He went one step beyond and allowed those members of his own church to partake in the Lord's Supper as a converting ordinance, hoping that it might become a means to the experience they lacked. Stoddard's grandson, Jonathan Edwards opposed these measures, insisting upon a regenerate membership.⁴¹ He was dismissed from his pulpit as a result, but Edward's thought fueled the revivals of the Great Awakening. As a result of this, Separate Congregational churches were formed, and from those Separate Congregational Churches came Separate Baptist Churches, and from those Separate Baptist Churches in time, came the massive Southern Baptist Convention.

In Edward's day there was a fork in the road. Those who insisted on the new birth for church membership took the path that leads to Evangelicalism, whereas those who followed Stoddard as far as a mere profession of faith for church membership, first affirmed a creed, then over time the creed became a historical document. Many in that camp went the way of Universalism and Unitarianism. Nominal faith is a danger in our day as well. If we just get someone to walk an aisle, raise a hand, say "the sinner's prayer" or put his name in the "whosoever" of John 3:16 or any other "Evangelical rite" without insisting upon a new life that only God can give, we are heading toward deadness and dissolution. Our faith will end up being a topic of historical discussion rather than a living reality.

Like the Separate Baptists that came out of the Great Awakening, Dunster was for the new birth (the whole early New England establishment was), and he was for the baptism of believers only. Dunster's voice for the time may have been muted, but it did not come to naught.

⁴⁰ Norman Pettit wrote, "he [Stoddard] was able to convince the majority to make mere profession of faith, and not the relation of a personal experience of grace, the requisite for church membership." in *The Prepared Life: Grace and Conversion in Puritan Spiritual Life*, 2d ed. (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1989),202,

⁴¹ In Iain Murray's biography of Jonathan Edwards, Edward's way of determining how one was regenerate and fit for membership differed from the days of early New England. What Edwards looked for was a credible profession of faith, i.e. - one that, as Iain wrote, included repentance and manifested gospel holiness. See Iain H. Murray, *Jonathan Edwards: A New Biography* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1987), 333-338.

He was by nature meek and gentle,⁴² and his gracious example was impressed upon the more than fifty students who graduated under his care. His view of baptism has taken root over all the earth. “Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth” (Matthew 5:5)

⁴² Such is to be the quality of every true minister. Note the qualifications set forth for elders in Timothy and Titus. Chaplin wrote of the “Rules and Precepts” of the Dunster code for the students of Harvard. The following code fits the demeanor of Dunster, which he no doubt modeled as well as required. It is “They shall honor, as their parents, the magistrates, elders, tutors, and *all who are older than themselves*, as reason requires, being silent in their presence, except when asked a question, not contradicting, but showing all those marks of honor and reverence which are in praiseworthy use, saluting them with a bow, standing uncovered &c.” as cited in Chaplin, *The Life of Dunster*, 66.

APPENDIX A

ORIGINAL DOCUMENTS

DUNSTER'S CONFESSION OF FAITH AND CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE⁴³

Deare brethren and sisters in Christ, I account it no small mercy that the Lord has called me to give an account of that fayth and love I beare to Christ and his Church and people. 1: Concerning fayth,

1. The summe of [the] Christian religion contaynes fayth and obedience; as you are dayly taught.

1 Concerning fayth. I hold no fayth which is not grounded on the revealed Word of God in the worlde, the only rule of fayth and manners, so that they are not to be heard though they come as angels from heauen. It teacheth 1 God & 2 Ourselves. 1 Concerning God. We come to knowe him 1. in his essence and persons

1 Concerning his essence, I believe there is one God, the only maker of all things, who is in himselfe full wise and holy and gracious, every way perfect and sufficient ground of happiness and maine pillar of happiness to his people, so that our spirit can find no adequate object of happiness but God only; who only can satisfy the spirit, and who hath a world to command. This God so sufficient yet made a world in time by the word of his power, by his holy Word Christ and by his Spirit moving on the waters to bring them to forme; wherein he hath shewn his endless power and bounty.

I also believe he governs the whole world by his Providence, so that no bird or hayre falls but by it.

The spirituall creatures are angels and men. Angels, some are good, and some are bad. Man also by the first temptation of Satan fell from God, and fell from the blessed image of God created in holiness and righteousness, and believing Satan did receive the character and image of Satan on his soule; and in our naturall state they have communion with the deuill [and] cannot be subject unto the law. Man thus fallinge, God in his mercy comes to seeke man, and when man appeares before his Creator, though first convinced of his guilt, God [imparteth?] out of his mercy, the gospell that the woman's seed shall break the serpent's head; so that God, pityinge our estate, hath sent us a Saviour having 2 natures, one divine, begotten of [the] father before all worlds, the other manly nature because he tooke body and soule, and so are united in one individuall person. God – else he could not satisfy, nor be a sufficient head for the church, to shed his Spirit for the building of [his] kingdom. And man because man had sinned, and they that sinned must dy and suffer; hath sanctified our nature in the manhood, and in his person hath perfectly fulfilled [the] law of God and satisfied wrath,

⁴³ The record of Dunster's conversion from his own pen can be found in the "Appendix II: Confession of Faith and Christian Experience" in Chaplin, *Life of Dunster*, 257-265. We can thank Thomas Shepard for this account as he kept a record of the faith and religious experience of the members of his church. Other selections from Shepard's *Confessions* can be found in *God's Plot: Puritan Spirituality in Thomas Shepard's Cambridge*. Michael McGiffert, ed., Revised and Expanded (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1994).

and so hath wrought for us full salvation. I need not speake of his judgment, all of which I believe as tis in [the] gospell.

Concerning our union to Christ – how we come to Christ. 1. Every man is not partaker of Christ in the visible way in churches many perish all have not lively fayth many shall seeke to enter in and shall not be able though they pretend Christ and fayth; though I hope better in such churches where we are made partakers of Christ by fayth only, which fayth is not [the] foundation, every persuasion is not Christ, but lively sticklinge to God and Christ for life, and is ordinarily wrought by the word of fayth, and hence let those who do not believe attend on [the] word of fayth. This fayth which God worketh in men's hearts, he doth dayly strengthen by those ordinances in his church, especially by [the] word – hence not as some erringe ones cast off the word of fayth to receive suggestions and revelations without limit, which is provoking God to take away all the Spirit: The Spirit teacheth only ordinarily in God's ordinances; hence give not care to them that looke only to be fed by heaven casting off ordinances

As [the] word, so Prayer is another means to confirm fayth. Pray to the Lord, and when ye do pray, believe, and so this will strengthen fayth.

As prayer, so the Lord hath given 2 sacraments.

1. Baptisme, by which we have our initation, and concerning it I believe that only believers and their seed ought to be received into the church by that sacrament. Hence prophane unbelievers are not to be received into the church; and then their seed are [not] to be received. That of Paul is cleare. Else your children were unholy – hence if holy, let them be offered to God. Let children come to me, and as children, so those that come to mature age ought to be received into the church by baptisme. And concerning the outward elements something there is concerning sprinkling in the Scriptures – hence not offended when [it] is used.

You that have been baptized and have made a covenant in baptisme to forsake the devil, away then with pride, [the] world, and lust of [the] flesh, hence live not in licentiousness &c: and your covenant is to believe in Christ for life – hence give up yourselves to Christ – so for obedience.

2. The other sacrament is the Lord's Supper – the outward elements bread and wine. And 'tis not the quantity of the elements which our soules neede, but fayth in which we receive. Outward elements may be given when Christ is not, and grace may be given when sacraments are not; for though we have not sacraments every day, yet we may have communion with Christ, and let those that be kept out humble themselves, so that it be not contemmed. And let me protest against the wickedness of Papists, who thinke Christ is bodily present. Now altars & tables have no fayth. But we receive Christ spiritually. 3 Holy Conferences. 4 Dayly reading the Scriptures 5 The private ordinances of soliloquys and meditations. 6 Discipline in the church. [The] Lord hath commanded there should be a difference between [the] precious and the vile. Hence 2 sorts should be held out 1 unbelievers 2 disobedient, for all Christian religion contayneth fayth and obedience, the soule and body of the church. Hence if he sayth he hath fayth and hath no obedience, ought to be kept out. If obedient without fayth, i.e. walks civilly only, he ought to be kept out, and hence this keeping forth is holy, just and good, and [I] shall labour to my power to maintayne. Nay, if those that do believe and obey, yet if they walk

ill, are to be admonished. If they reforme, blesse God; but if they do not reforme, the [take] two or three more, and so, at last cast out, and afterwards to be received if they repent – hence I blesse God to see this.

7 There are also extraordinary helps to help the fayth and obedience and [for] your sins – as Fasting and Prayer in case of general calamity; and so with any speciall thanksgiving to feast in God's presence with all moderation and if the Lord do pursue our spirits with some speciall benefits, a Christian may vow part of his substance or indearment [indeavor?] to God, which ought to be performed.

2. Obedience to God which follows from fayth; for fayth being in the heart is not concealed, but its effectuall to cleanse the heart from sin, and to advance his soule with grace, so that he desires to be holy as Christ is holy. Now here they fall from fayth who hold they believe, but they may live dissolutely. These are worse than the devils; for the Christian takes Christ's righteousness and holiness to kill the old man – sanctify as well as justify, to save you from the guilt of sin on your conscience, and power of sin in your heart. Papists, the contrary, thinke to be saved by their own doings and labor for sanctification. With this last I hope we shall not be pestered, because [the] Lord is bruising his power, but let us in this country looke to the other.

The guide of their holiness, or touchstone by which 'tis tried is generally by [the] word, particularly by Law, which Law we receive not from Moses out of Christ, but from Christ writing those Laws on our hearts by the finger of the Holy Ghost. Now this Law is administered either in the letter, and so convinceth of grosse sins, - and in the spirit; and so he is convicted of idolatry when he loves the creature, he is convicted of Sabbath [breaking?] and disobedience to parents, and when he hath any rebellious thoughts – and so far breaking the commandments; the thought is against the commandments.

A Christian having led his life in Christian obedience, I believe the Lord at death will take him to himself at death and judgment, when all Christ's enemys shall be trod under his feet; when God [shall say] Ye cursed; and when he cometh our bodies and soules shall be made like unto him.

Concerninge the Lord's personall dealings with my soule. David saith, I will declare thy truth to the greate congregation – hence I do speake.

There was a servant of God, Mr. Hubbard, powerfull. I was not past 4 or 5 yeare old: I heard many scoff at his preachinge, at this great flocking after him, and I asked why men did so. They said, to heare the word, and I said then, if it be the word, why do men speake against; if it be not, why do men heare it? but I went no further. But about 12 years old, [the] Lord gave us a minister, and the Lord gave me an attentive eare, and heart to understand preachinge out of Revela[tion]. Repent, else they could not be saved. And whereof they should repent, of the sins shewn out of the Law. This word was more sweet to me than anything in the world, and hence some tooke notice of me, and labored to set on the word by confirmation. The Lord shewed me my sins, and reconciliation by Christ, and to believe, and when I heare and to obey. But with many faylings in the schoole. I remembered this worke well. After this I went to Cambridge where, growing more careless, I lost my comfort. But I came to Trinity to heare Dr. Preston by which I was quickened and revived, so that the word did follow. But

especially Mr. Goodwin out of Ps 85,⁴⁴ I was convinced I had departed from God by folly in dissolute living, and hence I thought if [I] lived unto God, the Lord would speake peace; if not, e contra. A moneth [month] after, my heart did fall off to folly; and the greatest thing which separated my soule from God was [an] inordinate love of humane learning. Take heed of this least desiring to be as gods, we become as devils. When I came from [the] University to teache schoole, the Lord wounded my soule with temptations f [5?] years together. One in this country seeing me fall in such weakness spoke peaceably. But in everything the Lord showed me my faylings, so that reading Rom 1 and Gal 5, I saw all the abominations of [the] Gentiles, even to kill parents; I [was] showed I did steale; in stealing from parents; so that the Lord showed me how I did so live in every sin, and I saw I did leave a steyne on every ordinance of God. The more I did strive to keep the Law, the more vile I felt myself. And hence I thought, thou hast returned to folly, and hence I speake everlasting wrath to thee. I saw nothing but doleful horror in [the] conscience, and looked when lightnings should kill me – ear open and mind apt to all errors – memory could retayne no good, and so in [the] affections, and the heart unthinkably and inconceivably hard. And at last the Lord showed me where the fault was, that is, that I sought righteousness by the Law. In my judgment I sought salvation by Christ, but indeed did not; but Rom 10, beginning, the Lord shewed [me] the Jews fell on the stumbling-stone. And here the Lord 1 informed 2 persuaded my mind, that I could never have my reconciliation and cleansing but by [the] righteousness and spirit of his Son.

But here I found another obstacle – will the Lord have mercy on such an enemy; Hence the Lord, Rom 5:8,9,10. The Lord shewed me that while enemys Christ dyed for the ungodly; and hence I saw there was not only righteousness in Christ, but even for those that were sinners, and saw themselves as enemys & in feares here I read the Psalm 40, where every verse tooke an impression on my soule; I waited patiently, do so, and I in [the] miry pit, and set me on rock. So I saw [the] Lord could do so for me, and when I saw no offering was required but boring the eare, I saw the Lord must enable me to heare, whereupon I come; as Christ, and of David, and so might be verified of Christ. And I desired [the] Lord would write his Lawes; and I saw innumerable evils had compassed me about, yet as David thought, Now is time, I was enabled to gather sure 'tis a time for me to call upon the Lord. And herein the Lord answered me, Looke up to the Lord to be reconciled, and change my nature. I believe the word, [the] Lord would receive an enemy; but I did not discourse, Am I such an enemy as feels it? Because I did really feele it. Hence I thought, he that is such an enemy [the] Lord might receive. Hence I cast my soule on [the] Lord's grace & then I bid adeu to all [self] righteousness. When thus I let go my hold of all that, and took hold on Christ [the] Lord I did believe, and hence love [the] Lord.

⁴⁴ Dunster mentions specifically Goodwin's preaching on Psalm 85 which can be read today. Thomas Goodwin. "The Folly of Relapsing After Peace Spoken" in *The Works of Thomas Goodwin*, vol. 3 Reprint (Eureka, CA: Tanski Publications, 1996) 413-29.

A man may not only see he is a sinner, and so thinke Christ will receive such a one, but here may be a deceipt, for a man must hold on waitinge till [the] Lord speake peace. Hence in such cases, stay and waite on the Lord, and though you do believe the promise, stay for the Spirit till he seales the promise &c. [The] Lord hath made me bid adieu to all worldly treasures; and as corruptions in the church came 1 I began to suspect them, then to hate them. But here was my falseness that I was loath to read such books as might make me see such truths, but the Lord helped me among all.

So after 10 years troubles I came hither: and the Lord gives me peace to see the order of his people. And I blesse God for keepinge me out, but I desire you to be carefull what schollers enter to your churches, and pray for humility of spirit.⁴⁵

LETTER FROM DUNSTER TO SYMMES

Reverend and dear Sir

The 23d of this 10th [December 23, 1653] One from Charlstown (but I saw him not) brought to my family your lines houlding out (as all your life) the spirit of Loue and peace, your kindness towards mee and all gods servants the Lord requite to you and yours yea in part hee hath rewarded, and dayly more and more will. your motion in itself acceptable the season of the year intercepts. My present suspension to act in the case, I desire may not offend any, for if they knew my grounds, men would at least excuse tho haply not justify my way. I am not utterly unacquainted with the Levity and temerity of my spirit. But slender and feeble reasons they are not, or at least seem not to mee, That enforce mee to expose myself (thats the least) my family and all the comforts and concernments of us both . . .⁴⁶

LETTER FROM MAGISTRATES TO OVERSEERS ABOUT DUNSTER

Reverend Sirs

The magistrates beinge informed that Mr. Dunster president of the Colledge hath by his practice and opinion against infant baptisme rendered himselfe offensiuie to this government and acknowledgeinge it their duty in respect of his relation and the trust committed to us rightly to understand the truth of what we haue heard that accordingly wee might discharge our selues And conceiuinge your selus not a little concerned in this busines as overseers together with us wherein we are assured you will not be wanting in emproving your endeauours for the preventing or remouing of that which may tend to the prejudice of the colledge and scandall of the Country: Thinke it meet to Commend it to

⁴⁵ According to Chaplin in whose book this record is found "from a MS. Volume in the Library of the Historic Genealogical Society, by Rev. Thomas Shepard, entitled *The Confessions of Diverse propounded to be received, and were entertained as members.*" – Chaplin, *Life of Dunster*, 257-265.

⁴⁶ Dunster's copy, laid into his ms. Notebook (M.H.S.), p 57. The last two sentences are lightly overscored with ink. As cited in Samuel Eliot Morison. *Harvard College in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1936), 307.

your care so to deale in this business that we may at our next meeting be thoroughly enformed how the matter stands with him in respect of his opinion and be thereby enabled to understand what may be expected of us, wherein not doubting of your readiness we Commend you to god and rest

Your very Lovinge friends.⁴⁷

1644 LAW AGAINST THE ANABAPTISTS BY THE GENERAL COURT

Forasmuch as experience hath plentifully and often proved, that since the first rising of the Anabaptists, about one hundred years since, they have been the incendiaries of commonwealths, and the infectors of persons in main matters of religion, and the troublers of churches in all places where they have been, and that they who have held the baptizing of infants unlawful, have usually held other errors or heresies together therewith, though they have (as other heretics use to do) concealed the same till they spied out a fit advantage and opportunity to vent them, by way of question or scruple; and whereas divers of this kind have since our coming into New England appeared amongst ourselves, some whereof (as others before them) denied the ordinance of magistracy, and the lawfulness of making war, and others the lawfulness of magistrates, and their inspection into any breach of the first table; which opinions, if they should be connived at by us, are like to be increased amongst us, so must necessarily bring guilt upon us, infection and trouble to the churches, and hazard to the whole commonwealth; it is ordered that if any person or persons, within this jurisdiction, shall either openly condemn or oppose the baptizing of infants, or go about secretly to seduce others from the approbation or use thereof, or shall purposely depart the congregation at the ministration of the ordinance, or shall deny the ordinance of magistracy, or their lawful right and authority to make war, or to punish the outward breaches of the first table, and shall appear to the Court willfully and obstinately to continue therein after due time and means of conviction, every such person or persons shall be sentenced to banishment.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Massachusetts Archives, LVII. 27. Printed with insinuating italics in Chaplin, *Dunster*, pp. 119-20. The date is probably in January 1653/54. As cited in Morison, *Harvard College in the Seventeenth Century*, 307-08. Here also we see an example of the use of the same source material which has been very common in this research of Dunster's life.

⁴⁸ Col. Rec. II. 85. As cited by Chaplin, *Life of Dunster*, 189-90.

APPENDIX B

The Conference in Boston (February 2, 1653/54 to February 3, 1653/54)⁴⁹

Participants

Name	Birth/Death	Age*	Church	Position	Education
John Allen (Allin)	1596-1671	58	Dedham	Pastor	Caius College Cambridge, B.A. 1615-16, M.A. 1619
Samuel Danforth	1626-1674	28	Roxbury	Teacher	Harvard, B.A. 1643
Henry Dunster	1609-1659	45	Harvard	President	Magdalene College Cambridge B.A. 1630-31 M.A. 1634
John Elliot	1604-1690	50	Roxbury	Pastor	Jesus College Cambridge B.A. 1622
Richard Mather	1596-1670	58	Dorchester	Pastor	Brasenose College Oxford After one year left for ministry
Jonathan Mitchell	1624-1668	30	Cambridge	Pastor	Harvard, B.A. 1647
John Norton	1606-1663	48	Boston	Teacher	Peterhouse Cambridge B.A. 1623-24 M.A. 1627
Zechariah Symmes	1599-1672 Born Apr 5	55	Charlestown	Pastor	Emmanuel College Cambridge, B.A. 1620-21, M.A. 1624
William Tompson	1598- 1666	56	Braintree	Pastor	Brasenose College Oxford B.A 1621-22
John Wilson	1588-1667	66	Boston	Pastor	Kings College, Cambridge B.A. 1609-10 M.A. 1613
Colebon			Boston	Elder	
James Penn			Boston	Elder	

* Age at time of Conference

Boldface – indicates members of the original Board of Overseers, 1642

⁴⁹ The Puritan's of Early New England used a different calendar than we do today. Their year started with March as the first month. Thus the conference opened according to their calendar 12-2-1653. Our calendar date would be 02-2-1654. Their January and February would be in our previous year's date.

APPENDIX C



Map of New England in Dunster's Day

APPENDIX D

Distances from Towns on the Map (using Google Maps – approximate mileage)

Cambridge the site of Harvard & the six towns originally on the Board of Overseers - 1642

	Boston	Braintree	Cambridge	Charlestown	Dedham	Dorchester	Lynn	Roxbury	Salem	Scituate	Plymouth	Watertown
Boston	0	12	3	3	10	6	14	4	19	26	40	8
Braintree	12	0	15	15	12	8	24	12	28	17	29	19
Cambridge	3	15	0	3	12	8	13	5	18	29	43	5
Charlestown	3	15	3	0	15	8	13	6	17	29	42	10
Dedham	10	12	12	15	0	9	23	9	34	30	41	9
Dorchester	6	8	8	8	9	0	17	3	20	22	36	11
Lynn	14	24	13	13	23	17	0	15	5	37	51	17
Roxbury	4	12	5	6	9	3	15	0	19	26	40	7
Salem	19	28	18	17	34	20	5	19	0	47	61	27
Scituate	26	17	29	29	30	22	37	26	47	0	22	32
Plymouth	40	29	43	42	41	36	51	40	61	22	0	49
Watertown	8	19	5	10	9	11	17	7	27	32	49	0

Scituate (Dunster's post Harvard residence in Plymouth Colony) would place him far away from Harvard and the surrounding towns.

To determine how long it would take to walk from town to town. Divide the distance between towns by 3 [3 mph].

Formula: $\frac{\text{Distance}}{3} = \text{Number of hours it would take}$

APPENDIX E

Dunster's Life	New England	England
1609 Birth of Henry Dunster Bury, England		1603 Death of Queen Elizabeth, James 1 becomes king
1609 Baptism (Nov 26)		1609 John Smyth founds Baptist church in Holland
	1620 Pilgrims land at Plymouth	1611 Thomas Helwys – first Baptist church on English soil
	1626 Salem founded	1625 Death of James I Charles I becomes king
	1628 John Endicott sent as governor of Salem	
	1629 Massachusetts Bay Company chartered	1629 Charles I dismisses Parliament
1630 B.A. - Magdalene College, Cambridge University	1630 Great migration – Massachusetts Bay Colony	
	1631 Roger Williams arrives	
	1633 John Cotton & Thomas Hooker arrive	
1634 M.A. – Magdalene College, Cambridge University	1634 Anne Hutchinson arrives	
	1635 Thomas Shepard arrived	
	1635 Connecticut settled	
	1636 Roger Williams flees, settles in Providence	
	1636 Harvard started	
	1636 /38 Antinomian Controversy (Ann Hutchinson banished)	1638 John Spilsbury formed the first Particular Baptist church in England from the Jacob / Lathrop / Jesse church
	1639 Roger Williams founds First Baptist Church	
1640 Immigrates to New England		1640 Charles I calls Parliament to raise funds to wage war against the Scots ⁵⁰
1640 President, Harvard College (Aug 27)		
1641 Member of Cambridge Church. (Thomas Shepard, Pastor)	1641 <i>Body of Liberties</i> adopted (drafted by Nathaniel Ward)	
1641 Married Elizabeth Harris Glover, widow, w/ 5 children (Jun 27)		
1641 Bay Psalm Book published Only printing press in New World in Dunster's house		

⁵⁰ Francis J. Bremer, *The Puritan Experiment: New England Society from Bradford to Edwards* Revised ed. (Lebanon, NH: University Press of New England, 1995), xvii.

Timeline (Continued)

Dunster's Life	New England	England
1642 First graduating class of Harvard	1642 Economic depression	1642 English Civil War breaks out
1643 Death of wife, Elizabeth (Aug 23)	1643 New England Confederation formed (Massachusetts, Connecticut, New Haven, Plymouth)	1643 Parliament aligns themselves with the Scots ⁵¹
1644 Married Elizabeth Atkinson	1644 Law against Anabaptists	1643 Westminster Assembly in session
1645 David Dunster born (1st child)	1644 William Brewster, Pilgrim elder dies	1644 Spilt between Independents and Presbyterians in Westminster Assembly
1647 Went w/ Eliot to Indian lectures	1646 Robert Child's <i>Remonstrance</i>	1644 Parliament replaces <i>Book of Common Prayer</i> w/ <i>Directory for Public Worship</i>
1648 Dorothy Dunster born (2d child)	1647 Thomas Hooker dies	1646 Charles I surrenders. End of first phase of Civil War
1649 Henry supplies Cambridge church as interim at death of Thomas Shepard	1648 <i>Book of Laws and Liberties</i> (a detailed law code adopted)	1646 Quaker movement begins under Fox
1650 Secures charter for Harvard (May 30)	1648 <i>The Cambridge Platform</i> (delineates the Congregational Way)	1647 <i>Westminster Confession of Faith</i>
1650 Henry Dunster born (3d child)	1649 John Winthrop dies	1648 Charles I escapes, wins support of the Scots, who are angered by Parliament's failure to establish the Presbyterian church in England. Defeated by Cromwell. ⁵²
1651 Present at the trial of the Baptists: Clarke, Holmes, & Crandell (July 31)	1651 Holmes beaten w/ 30 lashes (Sept 6)	1649 Charles I executed
1653 Jonathan Dunster born (4th child). Henry refused to baptize him (Fall)	1652 John Cotton dies	

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, xviii.

⁵² *Ibid.*, xix.

Timeline (Continued)

Dunster's Life	New England	England
1653 Dunster preaches on baptism in Cambridge church		1653 Cromwell becomes lord protector of England ⁵³
1653 Dunster writes response to Symmes' Letter (Dec 23)		
1653 Mitchell's private conference w/ Dunster (Dec 24)		
1654 Magistrates write Ministers of Board of Overseers urging them to meet w/ Dunster		
1654 Conference w/ Ministers – stalemate (Feb 2-3)		
1654 General Court prohibits unsound in faith from teaching youth (May 3)		
1654 Dunster resigns, Overseers ask him to stay (Jun 10)		
1654 Dunster speaks up in Cambridge church on errors of infant baptism after baptismal service (July 30)		
1654 Dunster presides over his last Harvard commencement (Aug)		
1654 Dunster's second letter of resignation (Oct 24) - accepted		
1654 Requests permission to stay in home – denied (Nov 4)		
1654 Charles Chauncy inaugurated President of Harvard College (Nov 10)		
1654 Requests a second time to winter in home – approved (Nov 10)		
1655 Dunster in Court over Cambridge outburst of July 30, 1654. Guilty of disturbing the peace.		
1655 Henry and family move to Scituate, Plymouth Colony		
1656 Received letter from Baptist church in Dublin, Ireland to be pastor. Dunster does not go. (July 10)		
1656 Elizabeth Dunster born (5th child)		

⁵³ It is interesting that Dunster expresses his views on baptism the year Cromwell becomes Lord protectorate. Cromwell was for tolerance in contrast to the Presbyterians, Anglicans, and New England .

Timeline (Continued)

Dunster's Life	New England	England
	1656 First Quakers arrive in Massachusetts	
1657 Dunster summoned to Cambridge for not baptizing daughter (Apr 7) for breach of 1644 Anabaptist law ⁵⁴	1657 Ministerial assembly to discuss membership & baptism, recommends half-way membership	1658 <i>Savoy Declaration of Faith and Order</i> adopted
		1658 Death of Oliver Cromwell
1659 Death of Henry Dunster (Feb 27)		1660 Restoration of crown – Charles II becomes king
	1661 Charles II orders the halting of execution of Quakers	1662 The Act of Uniformity – Puritan ministers displaced from pulpits
	1662 Michael Wigglesworth's <i>Day of Doom</i> published	
	1662 Synod of 1662 endorses Half-Way Covenant	
	1665 First Baptist Church of Boston founded	1667 John Milton's <i>Paradise Lost</i>
	1675 King Philip's War (Indian War)	1678 John Bunyan's <i>Pilgrim's Progress</i>
	1679 Reforming Synod – adopts <i>Savoy Declaration</i> and Stoddard's recommendations on membership	
	1692 Witchcraft in Salem	
	1701 Yale founded	
	1702 Cotton Mather's <i>Magnalia Christi Americana</i>	
	1734 Revival under Jonathan Edwards	

⁵⁴ Ellis, *The Puritan Age and Rule in the Colony of Massachusetts Bay 1629-1685*, 402

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