

A HISTORY OF THE BAPTISTS

By Thomas Armitage

THE AMERICAN BAPTISTS

III. SETTLEMENT OF RHODE ISLAND

Salem was filled with excitement and grief when Williams was banished, and asked what its good pastor had done to merit this cruelty at the hands of his fellow-disciples in Christ? John Cotton, snugly housed in his Boston home, severely discarded on Williams's exile as any thing but 'banishment.' In that dreary New England winter, as his brother plunged into the depths of the forests, he spoke of it as a 'large and fruitful' land, in which he enjoyed simple 'enlargement.' But Cotton was careful not to break the command by coveting that 'enlargement' for himself, nor did he so hanker after the delicious fruits of the wilderness as to follow his brother, to rejoice with him in his tribulation. Indeed, he queries whether it was a 'punishment at all,' and one would rather catch the impression from his showing, that the Court had simply sent him on a restful excursion, in absolute dereliction of its duty to punish crime. The illustrious hero himself thought that Cotton might have seen the matter in another light, 'Had his soul been in my soul's case, exposed to the miseries, poverties, necessities, debts and hardships,' which he endured. The weak people of Salem also wept as if their hearts would break, that he was driven they knew not where, 'for they were much taken with the apprehension of his godliness.' Neal says, that the whole town was in an uproar, that they raised the 'cry of persecution,' and 'that he would have carried off the greater part of the inhabitants of the town, if the ministers of Boston had not interfered.' These admonished the Church at Salem for sympathizing with one who had been driven out of civilization as a felon.

Upham, the careful historian of the Salem Church, says: 'They adhered to him long and faithfully, and sheltered him from all assaults. And when at last he was sentenced by the General Court to banishment from the colony on account of his principles, we cannot but admire the fidelity of that friendship which prompted many of his congregation to accompany him in his exile, and partake of his fortunes when an outcast upon the earth.' Thanks to Salem, its loss was the world's gain. That day, out of the weak came forth strength, and out of the bitter came forth sweetness. Good old Puritan city of witchcraft and halts, out of thee, as from Salem of old, went forth an illustrious exile: the first to redeem the souls of men, and the other to give fifty millions of them soul liberty. Men intended only evil in both cases, but God overruled their aims for good. His eye rested on this wanderer in the New World, and his voice told him what to do and where to go.

We now follow Roger Williams into those wild tracts of nature where the wolf, the bear and the panther roamed in all their voracity. Perpetual hardships had given the wild tribes of that region compact and well-knit bodies, which could subsist for days on a handful of corn. Aside from this, with their fish and game, they had little

food in the depth of winter, knowing nothing of salted meats, and often they were sorely pinched with hunger. So far as appears, Williams entered the desert without a weapon, bow or arrow, spear or club, hatchet or gun, to hunt for bird or beast, and every esculent root was frozen in the ground and buried in the snow. That winter was signally bitter and he felt its keen severity. It seems to have haunted his mind in 1652, when he dedicated his 'Hireling Ministry' to Charles II, in the epistle to which, he calls New England a 'miserable, cold, howling wilderness.' Without bread or bed for fourteen weeks, and the first white man who had ever wandered in those mazes, he regarded himself cared for of God as miraculously as was Elijah, and he sang this song in his desolate pilgrimage: 'God's Providence is rich to his, Let some distrustful be; In wilderness in great distress, These ravens have fed me!'

The bronzed barbarians through whose lands he passed were superstitious, ferocious and often treacherous. He would not have been safe for an hour, had not his kind acts toward them been noised through their tribes. While at Plymouth he had gone forth amongst them, had visited their wigwams, learned their language and preached to them the good news of the kingdom; and now his love governed the wild element in their bosoms when he had no power over fierce winter storms. He knew their chiefs or sachems, and on reaching their settlements on Narraganset Bay, his sufferings touched the savage heart. They remembered his former kindness, welcomed him to Indian hospitality, and Massasoit took him to his cabin as he would a brother. Here he bought a tract of land, pitched his tent, and with the opening spring began to plant and build on the east bank of the Seekonk River. Immediately, however, he received a friendly letter from Winslow, Governor of Plymouth, advising him to cross the river and push farther into the wilderness, as he was too near the boundary line of that colony. Seeking and pursuing peace, he and his companions took a canoe, shot into the stream and made their way down to a little cove near India Point, when a company of Indians hailed them with a friendly salutation which they had caught from the English: 'What cheer?' There they tarried for a time, but kept on round the Point to the mouth of the Moshassuck River, where a delicious spring of water invited them to land.

Casting around for a resting-place in the dense forest, where wild beasts and savages hemmed them in from their Christian brethren, and where they were far enough from persecuting Christians to give Christianity fair play, they stood on holy ground. Under a bright June sky, with a soil around them which was unpolluted by the foot of oppression and a virgin fountain laughing at their feet, for the first time in life their bosoms swelled full free to worship God.

There he said of his harsh brethren: 'I had the country before me, and might be as free as themselves, and we should be loving neighbors together.' He built an altar there, and called the name of that place Providence; for he said, 'God has been merciful to me in my distress!' There he bought land of the Indians for the Providence plantations, and in June, 1636, laid the foundation-stone of the freest city and State on earth; a republic of true liberty, a perpetual memorial to the unseen Finger that pointed out the hallowed spot. To this day that virgin stream

remains unmingled with a tear drawn from the eye by Christian cruelty, nor has religious despotism yet forced a drop of blood there from the veins of God's elect. The first concern of its illustrious founder was, that this new home should be 'a shelter to persons distressed for conscience.' The compact drawn reads thus: 'We whose names are here underwritten, being desirous to inhabit in the town of Providence, do promise to submit ourselves in active and passive obedience, to all such orders or agencies as shall be made for public good of the body in an orderly way, by the major consent of the present inhabitants, masters of families, incorporated together into a township, and such others whom they shall admit into the same, only in civil things.' Here we find the first germ of that great modern doctrine which he afterward avowed in his 'Bloody Tenet' in these words: 'The sovereign power of all civil authority is founded in the consent of the people.' Also, this simple compact sweeps away at a stroke every allegation that he was banished for civil wrongs, and that the religious aspects of his case were an after-thought.

Those who make that allegation are bound by self-respect as well as historic justice to show on what line of human motive Williams, exiled for faction and sedition, should, in organizing a new government, first exact the bond that no man under that government should ever be 'molested for his conscience.' How do the antecedents of such alleged civil crime express themselves in such a sequence? No; here, as elsewhere, human nature was true to itself. That which had been cruelly denied in Massachusetts and for which he had suffered the loss of all things, should now be secured at all hazard. Each man reserved to himself the rights of conscience, which no number of the 'major' part might touch, and that at once was made an inalienable right; all else in 'civil things' could be risked as of minor consequence.

We have already seen that from the Swiss Baptists of 1527, the Dutch Baptists, the Confessions of 1611 and others, this doctrine had gone forth to do its work and had been a cardinal principle with all Baptists. Also, that William of Orange was the first of rulers in the old governments who embodied it in an existing constitution ; but the honor was reserved for Roger Williams of making it the foundation-stone on which human government should stand; because conscience is the regnant power to which all obligation appeals in the individual man. This demanded from Bancroft, our great historian, that memorable utterance which has been sneered at as 'rhetoric,' by men who are unworthy to untie the latchet of his shoe; although as an honest chronicler he could not withhold this testimony concerning Roger Williams:

'He was the first person in modern Christendom to assert in its plenitude the doctrine of the liberty of conscience, the equality of opinions before the law. . . . Williams would permit persecution of no opinion, no religion, leaving heresy unharmed by law, and orthodoxy unprotected by the terrors of penal statutes. . . . We praise the man who first analyzed the air, or resolved water into its elements, or drew the lightning from the clouds, even though the discoveries may have been as much the fruits of time as of genius. A moral principle has a much wider and nearer influence on human happiness; nor can any discovery of truth be of more

direct benefit of society, than that which establishes a perpetual religious peace, and spreads tranquillity through every community and every bosom. If Copernicus is held in perpetual reverence, because, on his death-bed, he published to the world that the sun is the center of our system; if the name of Kepler is preserved in the annals of human excellence for his sagacity in detecting the laws of the planetary motion; if the genius of Newton has been almost adored for dissecting a ray of light and weighing heavenly bodies in a balance--let there be for the name of Roger Williams at least some humble place among those who have advanced moral science and made themselves the benefactors of mankind.'

In 1872 the Congress of the United States had placed a memorial of Roger Williams in the National Capitol, and Senator Anthony, January 9, delivered a eulogy of great justice and beauty, in which he paid the following tribute to the immortal defender of soul liberty: 'In all our history no name shines with a purer light than his whose memorial we have lately placed in the Capitol. In the history of all the world there is no more striking example of a man grasping a grand idea, at once, in its full proportions, in all its completeness, and carrying it out, unflinchingly, to its remotest legitimate results. Roger Williams did not merely lay the foundations of religious freedom, he constructed the whole edifice, in all its impregnable strength, and in all its imperishable beauty. Those who have followed him in the same spirit have not been able to add any thing to the grand and simple words in which he enunciated the principle, nor to surpass him in the exact fidelity with which he reduced it to the practical business of government. Religious freedom, which now, by general consent, underlies the foundation principles of civilized government, was, at that time, looked upon as a wilder theory than any proposition, moral, political, or religious, that has since engaged the serious attention of mankind. It was regarded as impracticable, disorganizing, impious, and, if not utterly subversive of social order, it was not so only because its manifest absurdity would prevent any serious effort to enforce it. The lightest punishment deemed due to its confessor was to drive him out into the howling wilderness. Had he not met with more Christian treatment from the savage children of the forest than he had found from "the Lord's anointed," he would have perished in the beginning of his experiment. . . . Such a man was Roger Williams. No thought of himself, no idea of recompense or of praise, interfered to sully the perfect purity of his motives, the perfect disinterestedness of his conduct. Laboring for the highest benefit of his fellow-men, he was entirely indifferent to their praises. He knew (for God, whose prophet he was, revealed it to him) that the great principle for which he contended, and for which he suffered, founded in the eternal fitness of things, would endure forever. He did not inquire if his name would survive a generation. In his vision of the future, he saw mankind emancipated from the thralldom of priestcraft, from the blindness of bigotry, from the cruelties of intolerance. He saw the nations walking forth in the liberty wherewith Christ had made them free.'

Yet this statement expresses no more than the general conviction of the American public. Recently, a leading New York daily of weighty influence said: 'Baptists have solved a great problem. They combine the most resolute conviction, the most

stubborn belief in their own special doctrines, with the most admirable tolerance of the faith of other Christians. And this combination of sturdy faith with graceful tolerance makes it easy to recognize them as the followers of Roger Williams.' Indeed, the best thinkers in Europe begin to unite in this sentiment. Long since Gervinus, the profound German, said of Williams, that he founded a 'New society in Rhode Island upon the principles of entire liberty of conscience and the uncontrolled power of the majority in secular concerns, . . . which principles have not only maintained themselves here, but have spread over the whole Union . . . and given laws to one quarter of the globe, and, dreaded for their moral influence, they stand in the background of every democratic struggle in Europe.' Williams had the choice before him of direct hostility between the Church and State, as in the pagan days of early Christianity; an alliance between them as in Constantine's day; a supremacy of the Church over the State, as in the Middle Ages; or entire independence of each other, earnest, friendly, helpful in the common weal. Cavour wished for 'Free Churches in a free State,' having borrowed the ideal of Roger Williams. The first publicists of our age are the most ready to credit him and his coadjutors with linking liberty to law, and with proving that a voluntary religion is the determined foe of license on the one hand and of tyranny on the other, when they exercise their free life independently of each other.

This point he set forth fully not only in its practical bearings, but he defined and defended it unmistakably in his works. When in London, in 1644, he published his 'Bloody Tenet of Persecution for Cause of Conscience;' in 1647 John Cotton replied in his 'Bloody Tenet Washed and Made White;' and Williams rejoined in his 'Bloody Tenet yet more Bloody,' in 1652.

Williams took the broad ground throughout that no man can be held responsible to his fellowman for his religious belief. Cotton attempted to take new ground, but failed, and was obliged to fall back upon the old Catholic view. He denied the right to persecute men 'for conscience rightly informed.' But if a man's conscience is 'erroneous and blind in fundamental and weighty matters,' then the magistrate may admonish him on the subject; and if he remains 'willfully blind and criminally obstinate,' then the magistrate may punish him. This makes the civil power the sole judge of fundamental error, willful blindness and cruel obstinacy, and covers all that the Catholic powers ever claimed on the subject. When the principles of Williams were distorted and he was charged with sustaining anarchy to the destruction of civil government, he wrote his immortal letter on the question, which has been denominated a 'classic,' and will scarcely perish for ages. Amongst other things he said:

'There goes many a ship to sea, with many hundred souls on one ship, whose weal or woe is common, and is a true picture of a commonwealth, or a human combination or society. It hath fallen out sometimes that both Papists and Protestants, Jews and Turks, may be embarked in one ship; upon which supposal I affirm, that all the liberty of conscience, that ever I pleaded for, turns upon these two binges: that none of the Papists, Protestants, Jews or Turks be forced to come

to the ship's prayers or worship, nor compelled from their own particular prayers or worship if they practice any. I further add, that I never denied, that notwithstanding this liberty, the commander of this ship ought to command the ship's course, yea, and also command that justice, peace and sobriety be kept and practiced both among the seamen and all the passengers. If any of the seamen refuse to perform their service, or passengers to pay their freight; if any refuse to help, in person or purse, toward the common charges or defense; if any refuse to obey the common laws and order of the ship concerning their common peace or preservation; if any shall mutiny and rise up against their commanders and officers; if any should preach or write that there ought to be no commanders or officers because all are equal Christ, therefore, no masters or officers, no laws or orders, no corrections or punishments; I say, I never denied, but in such cases, whatever is pretended, the commander or commanders may judge, resist, compel and punish such transgressors, according to their deserts and merits. This, if seriously and honestly minded, may, if it please the Father of lights, let in some light to such as willingly shut not their eyes.'

It would be interesting to trace the further history of his life and of Rhode Island in their defense and application of the liberty of conscience, but it must suffice to say, that during the rest of his days Williams remained its faithful exponent and defender, he had followed his convictions on that subject from the Episcopalians to the Congregationalists, from them to the Baptists, and from them to the Seekers.

But in these changes his personal religious character remained without a spot; he gave the same large liberty to all others which he took for himself, he respected their motives and convictions, and in his controversies with them left no trace of acerbity. His personal services to all the New England colonies, by skillful negotiations with the Indians, which twice saved them from a general war that might have exterminated them, can hardly be overestimated. Bancroft justly characterizes his exertions in breaking the Pequod league as 'a most intrepid and successful achievement,' 'an action as perilous in its execution as it was fortunate in its issue.'

The youthful reader will be grateful for a fuller detail of these facts, which is here attempted in brief. In the fall of 1636, only six months after the flight of Williams into the wilderness, he found that the Indian tribes were forming a league for the destruction of the English, and at once informed the Governor of Massachusetts of the plot in order to save them. Passion ran high on the part of that colony and on the part of the red men, and the Massachusetts government asked him to step in as mediator between them. This was the exile's prompt reply:

'The Lord helped me immediately to put my life into my hand, and, scarce acquainting my wife, to ship myself alone, in a poor canoe, and to cut through a stormy wind, with great seas, every minute in hazard of life, to the sachems' house. Three days and nights my business forced me to lodge and mix with the bloody Pequod ambassadors, whose hands and arms, me thought, reeked with the

blood of my countrymen, murdered and massacred by them on Connecticut River, and from whom I could not but nightly look for their bloody knives at my own throat also. God wonderously preserved me, and helped me to break to pieces the Pequods' negotiation and design; and to make and finish, by many travels and charges, the English league with the Narragansetts and Mohegans against the Pequods.'

This resulted in a lasting treaty of peace, which was written in English, which language the Indians could not understand, and a copy was sent by Massachusetts to Williams, with the request that he would interpret it to them. Thus, the illustrious exile served and saved the country from whence he was banished, while his bones were yet aching with the hardships of his journey, in beautiful illustration of his Master's words, Luke 6:22,23,27,28. With the artless simplicity of a child, he tells Winthrop of his interview with Canonicus, the great chief, in the interests of Massachusetts.

He says of this warrior that he 'was very sour, and accused the English and myself for sending the plague amongst them, and threatening to kill him especially. Such tidings it seems were lately brought to his ears by some of his flatterers and our ill-willers. I discerned cause of bestirring myself and stayed the longer, and at last, through the mercy of the Most High, I not only sweetened his spirit, but possessed him, that the plague and other sicknesses were alone in the hand of the one God, who made him and us, who being displeased with the English for lying, stealing, idleness and uncleanness, the natives' epidemical sins, smote many thousands of us ourselves with general and late mortalities.' And how did Massachusetts treat him, when he heaped these glowing coals of Christian love on her head? Let us see. He went to England to procure a charter, being obliged to take a ship from the Dutch settlement, and when he returned, in 1644, with the instrument which gave his people an independent government, in order that he might land in Boston, several nobles and Parliament men gave him a gracious letter commending him to the authorities of Massachusetts, but they treated him rudely and as still a banished man. Hubbard says, in their defense (p. 349), that 'They saw no reason to condemn themselves for any former proceedings against Mr. Williams; but for any offices of Christian love and duties of humanity they were willing to maintain a mutual correspondence with him. But as to his dangerous principles of separation, unless he can be brought to lay them down, they see no reason why to concede to him, or any so persuaded, free liberty of ingress and egress lest any of their people should be drawn away from his erroneous principles.' Well may John Callender, 'that disciple whom Jesus loved,' say of him in his own manly manner: 'Mr. Williams appears, by the whole course and tenor of his life and conduct here, to have been one of the most disinterested men that ever lived, a most pious and heavenly-minded soul.' (Hist. Dis., p. 17.) And this judgment of his wisdom, magnanimity and goodness, is shared by the great everywhere. Southey called him the 'best and greatest of the Welshmen,' and Archbishop Whately, who venerated his memory as a great benefactor of mankind, paid him well-merited praise, for he never corrupted any man by pen or tongue, but devoted his long life to the blessing of his race.

The exact date of his death is not known; it was early in 1683, when about eighty-four years of age, and he was buried with all the honors that the colony could show. In 1860 his dust was exhumed by one of his descendants and removed from the orchard, where it had reposed so long, to the North Burial Ground, Providence. Dr. A. J. Gordon, of Boston, a graduate of Brown University, says: 'While a student in that goodly city I saw the bones of Roger Williams disinterred, and, strange to relate, it was discovered that the tap-root of an apple-tree had struck down and followed the whole length of the stubborn Baptist's spinal column, appropriating and absorbing its substance till not a vestige of the vertebrae remained. And thus, that invincible backbone of Roger Williams, whom a critical Massachusetts statesman stigmatized as "contentiously conscientious," was "spread throughout the world dispersed" in the fruit of the tree that grew above his grave. Blessed are they who are so fortunate as to have their theology enriched by such strong phosphites.' The late Dr. W. R. Williams, alluding to the heavy burden of fruit which Roger Williams's apple-tree had produced year by year and scattered by its seed, says of the 'curious fidelity' of this root in following the outline of the skeleton: 'It was as if to say, that the righteous are fruitful of good even in the dust of their moldering. And over a broad republic--every day widening its territory and the sweep of its influence, political, literary and religious--it seems today impossible to say how much of the national order and happiness is traceable to the memory and example of the man there entombed; is the fruitage, under God's benediction, of the sufferings and sacrifices of the weary pilgrim and exile who there found repose.'

The works of Roger Williams have been collected and reprinted in six quarto volumes, under the care of the Narragansett Club, making about 2,000 pages. Of these Professor Tyler says: 'Roger Williams, never in any thing addicted to concealments, has put himself, without reserve, into his writings. There he still remains. There, if anywhere, we may get well acquainted with him. Searching for him along the two thousand printed pages upon which he has stamped his own portrait, we seem to see a very human and fallible man, with a large head, a warm heart, a healthy body, an eloquent and imprudent tongue; not a symmetrical person, poised, cool, accurate, circumspect; a man very anxious to be genuine and to get at the truth, but impatient of slow methods, trusting gallantly to his own intuitions, easily deluded by his own hopes; an imaginative, sympathetic, affluent, impulsive man; an optimist; his master-passion benevolence, . . . lovely in his carriage, . . . of a hearty and sociable turn, . . . in truth a clubbable person; a man whose dignity would not have petrified us, nor his saintliness have given us a chill . . . from early manhood even down to late old age, . . . in New England a mighty and benignant form, always pleading for some magnanimous idea, some tender charity, the rectification of some wrong, the exercise of some sort of forbearance toward men's bodies or souls.'

As to his person, no genuine portrait of him is known to exist, or it would have appeared in this volume. Some years ago one was supposed to have been found, but Dr. Guild, the librarian of Brown University, and others pronounce it spurious. A monument, twenty-seven feet high, crowned by a statue seven and a half feet in

height, was erected to his memory in 1877 in Roger Williams Park, Providence, but as a likeness of the great apostle it is purely ideal.

Most sacredly has Rhode Island guarded the hallowed trust committed to her charge, for no man has ever been persecuted in that sovereignty for his religious opinions and practices from its first settlement in 1636. Williams obtained the first charter in 1643-44, and the first body of laws was drawn under it in 1647. Under the town legislation of the several towns, which had sprung up before the charter was granted, absolute religious liberty was secured to each inhabitant; in 1647, at the close of the civil enactments made under this charter, these words were added: 'And otherwise than this what is herein, forbidden, all men may walk as their consciences persuade them, every one in the name of his God. And let the lambs of the Most High walk in this colony without molestation in the name of Jehovah their God forever.' At the first, all the functions of government were exercised by the whole body of citizens in town-meeting. Two deputies were chosen to preserve the peace, call the meeting and execute its decisions.

The same spirit animated the two colonies of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations. In fact, the first declaration of democracy formulated in America dates from the island of Rhode Island, March 16, 1641, when 'It was ordered and unanimously agreed upon, that the government which this body politic doth attend unto in this island and the jurisdiction thereof, in favor of our prince, is a DEMOCRACY, or popular government; that is to say, it is in the power of the body of freemen, orderly assembled, or major part of them, to make or constitute just laws, by which they will be regulated, and to depute from among themselves such ministers as shall see them faithfully executed between man and man.' And the following acts secured religious liberty there: 'It was further ordered, by the authority of this present Court, that none be accounted a delinquent for doctrine, provided, it be not directly repugnant to the government or laws established.' On September, 1641, it was ordered, 'That the law of the last Court, made concerning liberty of conscience in point of doctrine, be perpetuated.' It was decreed at Providence in 1647 that since 'Our charter gives us power to govern ourselves, and such other as come among us; and by such a form of civil government as by the voluntary consent, etc., shall be found most suitable to our estate and condition; It is agreed by this present Assembly thus incorporate, and by this present act declared, that the form of government established in Providence Plantations is DEMOCRATICAL; that is to say, a government held by the free and voluntary consent of all or the greater part of the free inhabitants.'

At Providence, May, 1638, a citizen who had molested the rights of his wife's conscience by refusing to let her attend public worship, when she desired to do so, was disfranchised, in these words: 'Joshua Verin, for breach of covenant in restraining liberty of conscience, shall be withheld the liberty of voting, till he declare the contrary.' Arnold, another citizen, attempted to hoodwink the freemen of the plantation, by pretending that Verin restrained her 'out of the free exercise of

his conscience' as her husband. But the freemen saw through the wool with which he attempted to veil their eyes. Williams states the case thus to Winthrop:

'Sir, we have been long afflicted by a young man, boisterous and desperate, Philip Verin's son, of Salem, who, as he hath refused to hear the word with us (which we molested him not for) this twelve month, so because he could not draw his wife, a gracious and modest woman, to the same ungodliness with him, he hath trodden her underfoot tyrannically and brutishly; which she and we long bearing, though with his furious blows she went in danger of life, at last the major vote of us discard him from our civil freedom, or disfranchise, etc.: he will have justice, as he clamors, in other courts, etc.'

This blustering wife-beater had come from Salem, and because he could not thrash his wife at pleasure, and continue to put her life 'in danger,' and tread 'her underfoot tyrannically and brutishly' in deference to his own sweetly 'seared' conscience, he was 'dissatisfied with his position' and 'returned to Salem.' Possibly, as Hooker said to Shephard, he concluded that that 'coast was most meet for his opinion and practice,' as well as for his sort of conscience. So, because conscientious wife-whipping was not popular at Providence, Joshua shook off the dust of his feet against that plantation, and being mindful of the country from whence he came out, its freemen, as it seems, gave him opportunity to return thither, fists, conscience and all.

In 1745 there was printed a revision or compilation of all the laws of the colony since its first charter, which was called the 'Revision of 1745.' This makes reference to a law said to have been passed in 1663-64 to the effect, that 'All men professing Christianity, and of competent estates and civil conversation (Roman Catholics only excepted), shall be admitted freemen, or may choose or be chosen colonial officers.' This alleged act is referred to by Chalmers, an English author, in his 'Political Annals,' London (1780). Judge Samuel Eddy, a man of great learning and scrupulous veracity, who was Secretary of State in Rhode Island from 1797 to 1819, and had all the records at command, says that he carefully investigated all the laws of the colony from the first Charter (1643-44) to 1719, and that 'there is not a word on record of the act referred to by Chalmers' and contained in the 'Revision of 1745' prior to that year. This he shows conclusively, 1. By citing the First Charter, in which liberty is granted the colonists to make their own laws, and the consequent passage in 1647 of a body of colonial laws, providing that 'All men may walk as their consciences persuade them, every one in the name of his God.' 2. He cites the Second Charter (1663), which provides that 'No person within said colony at any time hereafter shall be any wise molested, punished, disquieted, or called in question for any differences in opinion in matters of religion.' That they may 'freely and fully have and enjoy their own judgments and consciences in matters of religious concernments.' 3. He cites an expression of the Assembly, of May, 1665 that 'It hath been a principle held forth and maintained in this colony from the beginning thereof, so it is much in their hearts to procure the same liberty to all persons within this colony forever as to the worship of God therein.' A military

law, passed May, 1677, is to the same effect. 4. In 1680, the Assembly said: 'We leave every man to walk as God shall persuade their hearts and do actively and passively yield obedience to the civil magistrate.' Judge Eddy says: 'Thus you have positive and indubitable evidence that the law excluding Roman Catholics from the privileges of freemen was not passed in 1663-64, but that at that time and long after they were entitled to all the privileges of other citizens.' He adds, that his search was had 'with a particular view to this law excluding Roman Catholics from the privileges of freemen, and can find nothing that has any reference to it, nor any thing that gives any preference or privileges to men of one set of religious opinions over those of another till the Revision of 1745.' Roger Williams was a member of the Upper House, 1664, 1670-71, and of the Lower House in 1667, and died 1683. Eddy says: 'That such a law could have been passed in the lifetime of the first settlers is hardly credible,' and that the statement in the Revision of 1745 is plainly an error.

It was twenty years after the appointment of the Committee on Revision that their report was printed, 1745, there being no printing-press in the colony till that year, and no newspaper till 1758. The existence of this law against Catholics in 1745 does not necessarily show that the law was passed at that time, but Eddy does show that it must have been enacted between 1719 and 1745, the Revision being the only record of the law. Exactly in what year it passed does not anywhere appear, but it existed as an unrepealed statute in 1745, amongst the laws then officially printed by the colony, while Eddy proves that the date 1663-64 is plainly a mistake. The universal reputation of Rhode Island in the neighboring colonies, for the largest freedom in religion, is well sustained by these laws, which completely deny that any were persecuted therefor, much less Roman Catholics. Cotton Mather says, that there were no Roman Catholics in the colony in 1695, and Chalmers says the same of 1680. Seeing, then, that this anticatholic, parenthetic clause is not to be found in any manuscript law of the colony either before 1663-64, or after, and so long as no date can be fixed upon for its enactment, the fair presumption follows that it is an interpolation. This presumption is strengthened also by the additional facts, that although 'all men' had from the founding of the colony walked 'as their consciences persuade' them, yet, for twenty-seven years no Roman Catholic had come to the colony, or been notified that he could not come, nor has any Catholic ever been refused his full rights there to this day.

The law of May 19th, 1647, made express provision for the liberty of all to walk unmolested in the name of his God, and yet, according to Chalmers, it was thirty-three years after that enactment, namely, in 1680, before any Catholic availed himself of this freedom. So, then, there was nothing in 1663-64 to call for the legislative insertion of such a clause changing the law from what it had been since the founding of the colony. The general supposition of the best historians of Rhode Island is, that it was introduced into a mixed and irregular digest of the laws of that colony, which appeared in England, by some timid person, who feared that the English Protestants would complain that Rhode Island gave too much liberty to Catholics, and so that her charter would be revoked, hence, he ventured to make

the interpolation to save difficulty. In 1676 England was thrown into an intense excitement by the general belief in a 'Popish plot' for the assassination of William III. The popular idea was that the Protestants were to be given over to a British St. Bartholomew; the Duke of York, a bigoted Catholic, was to usurp the throne, and all were ready for a bloody civil war. Some friend of Rhode Island may have shared in this panic, but there is not the slightest evidence that its legislators did, especially as they repealed the smuggled clause on discovery. The following appears as the law in 1798: 'Whereas a principal object of our venerable ancestors, in their migration to this country and settlement in this State, was, as they expressed it, to hold forth a lively experiment, that a most flourishing civil State may stand and be best maintained with a full liberty in religious concernments: Be it therefore enacted by the General Assembly, and by the authority thereof it is enacted, that no man shall be compelled to frequent or support any religious worship, place or ministry whatsoever, nor shall he be enforced, restrained or burdened in his body or goods, nor shall otherwise suffer on account of his religions opinions or belief, but that all men shall be free to profess and by argument to maintain their opinions in matters of religion, and that the same shall in nowise diminish, enlarge or affect their civil capacities.'

This whole legal presentation is found in Robert Walsh's 'Appeal,' an octavo, published in Philadelphia, 1819, pp. 429-435. Religious liberty for Jews in Rhode Island must be referred to here. At the opening of the seventeenth century, Holland was the only country where they enjoyed this blessing. Their largest European congregation was in Amsterdam, also their Talmud Tora, or school for Hebrew youth. Leonard Busher made the first plea for their liberty in England, in 1614, saying: 'The king and Parliament may please to permit all Christians, yea, Jews, Turks and pagans, so long as they are peaceable and no malefactors.' A second plea was made by Roger Williams, in three passages of his 'Bloody Tenet,' published in London, 1644, one of which reads thus, and the others are of the same tenor: 'It is the will and command of God, that since the coming of his Son, the Lord Jesus, a permission of the most paganish, Jewish, Turkish or antichristian consciences and worships, be granted to men in all nations and all countries. That civil States with their officers of justice are not governors or defenders of the spiritual and Christian state and worship.' Drs. Featley, Baillie and others charged him with the most shocking blasphemy for this doctrine, and popular indignation was so savage that his book was burned. Samuel Richardson demands, in his work on the 'Necessity of Toleration,' published 1647 (p. 270): 'Whether the priests were not the cause of the burning of the book entitled "The Bloody Tenet," because it was against persecution? And whether their consciences would not have dispensed with the burning of the author of it?' Baillie himself said: 'Liberty of conscience, and toleration of all or any religion, is so prodigious an impiety, that this religious Parliament cannot but abhor the very naming of it. Whatever may be the opinions of John Goodwin, Mr. Williams and some of that stamp, . . . yet Mr. Burroughs explodes that abomination.'

The Jews had been driven from England in 1290, and after banishment for 364 years, they petitioned Cromwell and Parliament for permission to return, that they might trade in the realm and follow their religion. What influence Williams's book had exerted in favor of their return does not appear, but about six years after its publication their request was granted, and in 1665 they built their first synagogue in King Street, London. This controversy was soon transferred to America. Edward Winslow wrote to Winthrop, under date of November 24th, 1645, saying that at a late session of the Legislature they had had a violent contest over the proposition: 'To allow and maintain full and free toleration of religion to all men that would preserve the civil peace, and submit unto government, and there was no limitation or exception against Turk, Jew, Papist, Arian, Socinian, Nicholayton, Familist, or any other, etc.' Mr. Winslow says that the mover submitted it to him, and 'having read it, I told him I utterly abhorred it as such as would make us odious to all Christian commonweals. . . . But our governor and divers of us having expressed that sad consequences would follow, especially myself and Mr. Prence, yet, notwithstanding, it was required according to order to be voted. But the governor would not suffer it to come to vote, as being that indeed would eat out the power of godliness, etc. . . . By this you may see that all the troubles of New England are not at the Massachusetts. The Lord in mercy look upon us and allay this spirit of division that is creeping in amongst us.' In direct opposition to this teaching and in harmony with the teaching of Roger Williams, the General Assembly of Rhode Island decreed, in 1647, three years after his publication of the 'Bloody Tenet,' and three years before England permitted Jews to return to the realm, that in this colony, 'ALL men may walk as their consciences persuade them, every one in the name of his God.' In 1649 Edward Winslow published his 'Danger of Tolerating Levelers in a Civil State,' and in 1652 Roger Williams published his letter to Endicott, Governor of Massachusetts, with an Appendix addressed to four classes of the clergy, 'Popish, Prelatical, Presbyterian and Independent,' in which he says of those who refuse to be Christians: 'Yea, if they refuse, deny, oppose the doctrine of Jesus Christ, whether Jews or Gentiles, why should you call for fire from heaven, which suits not with Jesus Christ, his Spirit and ends. Why should you compel them to come in, with any other sword but that of the Spirit of God?'

At that time there was no organized Jewish congregation in Great Britain or any of her American Colonies. As early as 1650 a few Portuguese Jews from Holland had found their way to New York against the protest of Peter Stuyvesant, made to the West India Company at Amsterdam in 1654; but as the Jews were large stockholders in that company, they insisted on certain privileges being granted to their co-religionists. The citizens of New Amsterdam would not train with them in the Burgher Company, and the Jews were exempted from military duty on condition of paying sixty-five stivers per month. In 1655 a special Act permitted them to live and trade there, provided that they would support their own poor. On the 27th of July, 1655, they petitioned for a burying ground, but were refused on the pretext that they had 'no need of it yet;' one of their number dying, on the 14th of February, 1656, they were granted a lot 'for a place of interment,' outside the city. On the 13th of March, 1656, Stuyvesant; director of the Company, was instructed

that they should enjoy the same civil and political privileges that they enjoyed in Holland, but that 'they should not presume to exercise religious worship in synagogues or meetings, and when they requested that privilege,' he was 'to refer the petition to his superiors.'

Still they were not allowed' to exercise any handicraft or to keep any open retail store,' but they were at liberty to 'exercise their religious worship in all quietness within their houses. To which end they will, doubtless, seek to build their dwellings together in a more convenient place, on the one or the other side of New Amsterdam.' In the spring of 1657 they were admitted to the right of citizenship, but the learned Rabbi Lyons, possibly the highest Hebrew authority on the subject, says in his 'Jewish Calendar' (page 160), that their 'first minutes of congregational affairs, written in Spanish and English, are dated Tishree 20th, 5489-1728,' and that these refer to 'rules and regulations adopted, 5466-1706, twenty years previous.' Their first synagogue was not dedicated 'till 1696, when Samuel Brown was their rabbi.

On the same high authority we find that the Jewish congregation, Teshuat Israel, was organized in Newport, Rhode Island, in 1658, under the broad provision of 1647, that 'ALL MEN,' in that Colony 'may walk as their consciences persuade them, every one in the name of his God.' Such liberty they had not elsewhere on this globe at that time, Holland not excepted, for even there they were forbidden to 'speak or to write disparagingly of the Christian religion; to make converts to their own faith; to exercise any handicraft or carry on retail trade; and marriages between Christians and Jews were strictly prohibited.' They labored under none of these restrictions in Rhode Island, but in all these respects stood upon a perfect equality with Baptists, Quakers and other religionists, and that congregation has remained undisturbed to this day, a period of two hundred and twenty-eight years, and is but fourteen years younger than the first Baptist Church of that city. Arnold says that they did much to build up the commercial interests of Newport. Some of them rose in public favor for their services to the State, and on August 20th, 1750, 'Moses Lopez, of Newport, was excused at his own request from all other civil duties, on account of his gratuitous services to the government in translating Spanish documents.' This indicates that he had done all the civil duties of a freeman up to that time. By the year 1763, the little Jewish congregation at Newport had increased to sixty families, their necessities demanding the erection of a synagogue, which they began to build in 1762, and which their rabbi, Isaac Touro, dedicated to Jehovah in 1763, with 'great pomp and ceremony.' This large increase in their number was due chiefly to the great earthquake of 1755, the center of which was in Spain and Portugal; it swallowed up fifty thousand inhabitants of Lisbon alone. Many of the Jews, who fled for safety from more cruel foes than the yawning earth, came to Rhode Island, where their own brethren had worshiped God in peace and safety for one hundred and eight years. These facts entirely disprove the alleged fact that in 1663-64 Rhode Island passed a law restricting religious liberty to those 'professing Christianity.'

Some writers have fallen into singular confusion in treating of this subject, making Roger Williams and Rhode Island identical on the one hand, by holding them responsible for each other's acts. and on the other by confounding the civil and religious liberties of that Colony as if they were one. A noted case cited under this groundless assumption is that of Aaron Lopez and Isaac Elizur. These two Hebrews petitioned the Superior Court of Rhode Island, at its March term, in 1762, for naturalization under an Act of Parliament, and were rejected on the ground, that to naturalize them would violate the spirit of the charter; that none could be made citizens but Christians; and that the Colony was too full of people already. The last of these reasons throws suspicion on the other two given for the decision, as it was simply ridiculous; yet it serves to show that the Court was moved by other considerations than those of guarding high chartered rights. But, whatever its motive might have been, the question before it was a purely civil question. involving only the naturalization of a foreigner, and not his right to religious liberty under the laws of Rhode Island. There are millions of people in the United States today who enjoy all the religious rights of its native-born citizens, but not being citizens they seek naturalization, at the courts; which, as in the case of Chinamen, is often denied. So these two men were, without doubt, members of the Jewish congregation which at that moment was building a synagogue under the protection of Rhode Island law, and now they wished to add citizenship to religious right. Mr. Charles Deane has written with a discriminating pen on this point. He complains of a misapprehension on this question of refusing to admit to the franchise those who were not Christians, and says:

'The charter of Rhode Island declared that no one should be "molested" . . . or called in question for any difference of opinion in matters of religion. The law in question does not relate to religious liberty, but to the franchise. Rhode Island has always granted liberty to persons of every religious opinion, but has placed a hedge about the franchise; and this clause does it. Was it not natural for the founders of Rhode Island to keep the government in the hands of its friends, while working out their experiment, rather than to put it into the hands of the enemies of religious liberty? How many ship-loads of Roman Catholics would it have taken to swamp the little Colony in the days of its weakness?' The 'clause' to which he refers is the so-called 'Catholic exclusion,' which has already been considered, but this distinction between the civil and religious questions involved here is precisely as clear in the case of the Jews as of the Catholics.

Arnold well says: 'The right to be admitted a freeman, or even to be naturalized, was purely a civil one, dependent upon the view that the town councils might take of the merits of each individual case. The right to reject was absolute,' as well in the case of a Baptist as a Jew. 'Freemen,' he continues, 'were admitted into the Colony by the Assembly, to whom the application should have been made, if freemanship was what these Jews wanted. . . . Naturalization was granted properly by the Courts, but usually by the Assembly, who exercised judicial prerogatives in this matter as in many others. . . . The decision in the case of Lopez appears to be irregular in every respect. It subverts an Act of Parliament, violates the spirit of the

charter, enunciates principles never acted upon in the Colony, and finally dismisses the case on a false issue. . . . The reasons assigned for the rejection, in the decree above given, were false. . . . If that had been the fundamental law from the beginning, no one could have been admitted a freeman who was not a Christian; but Jews were admitted to freemanship again and again by the Assembly. . . . The charter of Rhode Island guaranteed, and the action of the Colony uniformly secured, to all people perfect religious freedom. It did not confer civil privileges as a part of that right upon any one, such only were entitled to those whom the freemen saw fit to admit.' At the time that the Superior Court gave this decision, Rhode Island was passing through a scene of high political excitement, and Arnold attributes its decision to 'the strife then existing between Chief-Justice Ward and Governor Hopkins. . . . For many years prior to that time there was scarcely a session of the Assembly, when one or more cases of the kind (naturalization) did not occur, in which the names and nationalities of the parties show them to be either Roman Catholics or Jews.' Amongst these, he mentions the case of Stephen Decatur (1753), a Genoese, the father of the celebrated Commodore, and that of Lucerna, a Portuguese Jew, in 1761.

No class of people more earnestly and gratefully recognize Roger Williams as the apostle of their liberties than do the American Jews. One of their ablest writers says in a recent work: 'The earliest champion of religious freedom, or "soul liberty," as he designated that most precious jewel of all liberties, was Roger Williams. . . . To him rightfully belongs the immortal fame of having been the first person in modern times to assert and maintain in its fullest plenitude the absolute right of every man to "a full liberty in religious concerns," and to found a State wherein this doctrine was the key-stone of its organic laws. . . . Roger Williams, the first pure type of an American freeman, proclaimed the laws of civil and religious liberty, that "the people were the origin of all free power in government," that God has given to men no power over conscience, nor can men grant this power to each other; that the regulation of the conscience is not one of the purposes for which men combine in civil society. For uttering such heresies; this great founder of our liberties was banished out of the jurisdiction of the Puritans in America. . . . In grateful remembrance of God's merciful providence to him in his distress, he gave to it (the new town) the name of Providence. "I desired," said he, "it might be a shelter for persons distressed for conscience." . . . The infant community at Providence at once set about to frame laws for government, in strict accord with the spirit of the settlement. "Masters of families incorporated together into a township, and such others as they shall admit into the same, only in civil things." This simple instrument is the earliest constitution of government whereof we have any record, which not only tolerated all religions, but recognized as a right, absolute liberty of conscience.'