A STUDY
OF
ROGER WILLIAMS' RELIGIOUS THOUGHT
WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO HIS CONCEPTION OF RELIGIOUS LIBERTY

by
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'Tis liberty alone that gives the flower
Of fleeting life its lustre and perfume;
And we are weeds without it. All constraint
Except what wisdom lays on evil men,
Is evil.

William Cowper.
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PREFACE

No doubt there are those who would question the relevance and the importance of a study such as the one before us. The average British or American citizen if informed of the prospect of such a study would probably reply with some such comment as, "Religious liberty—well, we have it, don't we?", implying that the whole question is a completely settled issue, and a privilege mankind can assume as secure and forget.

This attitude demonstrates the universal human tendency to take a heritage for granted and forget the sacrifice entailed in securing it. It also suggests an ignorance of the widespread religious tyranny in the twentieth century. Men must be forever reminded that the price of freedom is eternal vigilence and that all men do not enjoy the privileges which those who possess them take for granted.

Perhaps a summary of the status of religious liberty in the various political units of our world would be surprising to the average individual. Men generally were aware of the denial of the basic human freedoms in Germany under the Nazis before the last Great War. This tyranny was brought into sharp relief by the suffering of German Christians in concentration camps and elsewhere. The extent of liberty of belief and worship granted in Soviet Russia is a matter of debate. However, there is no question about the fact that

the rapprochement of the war period between state and church has not altered the legal position of religious associations, and active religious propaganda outside the life of the church is not permitted.¹

It is thought by many that the Soviet dictatorship has merely altered its

¹ Northcott, C., Religious Liberty, 12.
policy to one of using the church as a propaganda agency. At any rate, its policy is far from fully guaranteeing religious liberty. At best it is only a very restricted freedom granted at the pleasure of the state and can be withdrawn at any time.

In Italy by the Concordat of 1929 (re-affirmed by the Republic in 1947) the first article recognizes 'the Catholic religion as the religion of the state' and although 'admitted cults' (including the Salvation Army and Pentecostalists) are also recognized in practice, their public preaching and any share in school education is made as difficult as possible. These facts compel all citizens, Roman Catholic and non-Roman Catholic alike, to pay towards the maintenance of the Roman church, including priests' salaries, and to have their children taught Roman Catholic doctrine in the public schools.²

In Spain religious liberty, except for Roman Catholics, scarcely exists.³ The lands of Islam by and large present the most formidable examples of the denial of religious liberty as the Western democracies understand it. Japan from 1940-1945 came very near demanding pagan acts of Christian believers as a demonstration of allegiance to the state.⁴ In Mexico and Latin American countries evangelical churches have been accustomed for years to enduring inequalities and injustices in varying degrees imposed on them either directly or indirectly by the established and privileged church.⁵ While tremendous progress has been made since Roger Williams founded the settlement of Providence as a haven for those oppressed

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1. Ibid., 113.
2. Ibid., 12
3. Ibid., 12
4. Ibid., 12.
5. Ibid., 109.
for conscience's sake, there are yet vast areas of the world where men are not actually free to believe and worship as they see fit.

This question takes on added significance when we recognize the fact that certain trends in our modern life pose strong challenges to complete religious liberty. As federal governments assume an ever-enlarging share of men's economic and social responsibilities with subsequent restrictions of individual liberties all freedoms become more difficult to safeguard.

The problem is how to secure acknowledgment of the unique position of the state as the bond which holds the community together, as the representative of the whole society, as the guardian of the law and as responsible for fostering the good life of the community in all its aspects, and at the same time to bring it about that the authority of the state will be used not to suppress and limit, but to serve, promote and multiply freedom.1

There is also the challenge posed by the fact that modern life is increasingly controlled by the secular mind. As this occurs, men become less and less conscious of the importance of this liberty and less and less able to understand and defend it.

When we add to these dangers the fact that the largest single denomination in the Christian communion, the Roman Catholic Church, has never advocated a policy of religious liberty except when in the minority we have further incentive for a restudy of this vital question.

Of course, such a project presupposes at least to some degree a human will that is free. Otherwise, such a study would be a delusion. Conscious of this, James Mackinnon has written:

1 Oldham, J. H., Church, Community and State, 25.
Liberty in the general sense I take to be free development of man, subject of course to the limits of such development inseparable from human life. Absolute liberty is the prerogative of no mortal. Man is subject to the conditions of his being... In whatever relation we regard him—material, moral, political, social—limitation, subjection is the law of his life. So much granted as a matter of course, it is nevertheless true that liberty, within certain limits, is also a law of human life.1

A brief explanation concerning the approach used in this study will be in order at this point. Chapter I endeavors to define the terms and give a brief answer to the question, "What is religious liberty?" It should be noted that because of the scope of this study and the limitation of time and space, it is impossible to give more than the briefest outline of the history of the development of the idea of religious liberty up to the time of Roger Williams in Chapter II. This, of course, would be a full study in itself and the brief treatment here is presented to demonstrate that Williams' ideas were not novel and that he had drawn heavily on those who had gone before him.

In much the same sense it must be borne in mind that Chapter VI in no way makes claim to an exhaustive analysis of John Milton's thought concerning religious and political liberty. This again would be a special study within itself—and incidentally an important one for extensive research. This chapter has been incorporated in the thesis for the purpose of bringing Williams' conception of religious and political liberty into sharper focus by comparing and contrasting it with that of Milton.

Practically all of the quotations from Roger Williams' writings cited in this work are taken from the publications of all of the

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then-known works of Williams by the Narragansett Club in Providence. The author of this work was fortunate in securing copies of volumes one through five of the first series of these publications, when the Rhode Island Historical Society decided to sell their duplicate materials. This set consists of Volume I, which was published in 1866 and contains in addition to a biographical introduction by Reuben A. Build, Williams' *Key into the Language of America*, and Mr. Cotton's Letter Examined and Answered, and a copy of the Letter of Mr. John Cotton. Volume II, which was published in 1867, contains John Cotton's Answer to Roger Williams and Queries of Highest Consideration. Volume III, which was published in 1867, contains The Blandy Tenant of Persecution. Volume IV was published in 1870 and contains The Blandy Tenant Yet More Blandy. Volume V was published in 1872 and contains George Fox Dism'd out of his Burrones. The author was again fortunate in locating a copy of Volume VI of the Narragansett Club Publication which contains Roger Williams' letters in the Edinburgh Public Library. This copy was published in 1874 in Providence and edited by James Russell Bartlett. It is the only volume of the series that the local library possesses. A copy of The Hirlinge Ministry None of Christ's was located in the library of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky, and a Sidney S. Rider reprint of Experiments of Spiritual Life and Health and their Preservatives, published in 1863, was located in Providence and purchased by the author. Two works attributed to Williams (first editions), The Fourth Paper presented by Major Butler to the Honourable Committee of Parliament for the Propagating of the Gospel of Christ Jesus, London, 1652, and A Paracentick, or Humble Address to Parliament and Assembly for (not loose but) Christian Liberty, 1644, were located in the New York City Public Library. Two Letters of Williams to
Joan, Lady Barrington, n. d., 2 May, 1629, and a number of first editions of published works were located in the British Museum.

The abbreviation, N. C. P., is used throughout the thesis to refer to the Narragansett Club Publications. American spelling and grammatical construction are used. An effort has been made to modernize the spelling in quotations from Williams' writings, but otherwise they appear as first published. The original spelling has been used in the titles to Williams' works.

The author wishes to express his deep appreciation to the Very Rev. Principal Charles S. Duthie of the Scottish Congregational College for his helpful guidance, advice and criticism in connection with the preparation of this work, and the Very Rev. Principal Emeritus Hugh Watt for his assistance in the selection of the subject and advice relating to an outline, etc. Rev. J. A. Lamb, Curator of New College Library, and Miss E. R. Leslie have contributed valuable time in their assistance in the library. He is also grateful to Professor J. H. S. Burleigh, who in the absence of Principal Emeritus Watt, gave helpful advice on Chapter II.

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Luther Joe Thompson
A DEFINITION OF TERMS; WHAT IS RELIGIOUS LIBERTY?

At the very outset of a project such as the one before us perhaps it will be wise to pause to define the term, religious liberty. What do we mean when we speak of religious liberty? This term is often used quite loosely, and to refer to things differing widely from each other. For example, it is sometimes used as the equivalent of liberty of thought, "to indicate the emancipation of the human mind from all dogmatic preconceptions, from all the shackles of religious faith."

At the other extreme there are those who think of religious liberty as the equivalent of ecclesiastical liberty.

And for them it indicates the privilege conceded, or rather, to be conceded, to the members of a particular church to bring all the acts not only of their private but also of their public life into the fullest conformity with the precepts of that church, and in such a manner as to have the state entirely and supinely subjected to demands of a religious character.

Aware of the wide range of popular interpretations given the term religious liberty, Dr. Searle Bates points out that:

to some it is an utter individualism; to others the unhindered power of a mighty ecclesiastical system.
To some it implies open competition of religious bodies; to others unity protected and undisturbed.
To some it means the right to challenge a traditional religion which is the sanction for moral and social standards among a large majority of the members of a nation; to others it is the right to protect a cherished religion against modernism or foreign doctrine or atheism.

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2 Ibid., 2.
It has been pointed out that

religious liberty takes sides neither with faith nor with disbelief... It consists in creating and maintaining in society such a condition of things that each individual may be able to pursue and in time reach those two supreme ends, without other men, either separately or grouped in associations, as the State, being able to offer him the least impediment in pursuing those ends, or cause him the least damage on their account.1

The term, religious liberty, is not synonymous with either liberty of thought or ecclesiastical liberty as herein defined. Neither is it synonymous with religious tolerance.

In modern times it has been proposed that religious toleration has come about not because of a better understanding of the mind of Jesus Christ but because of scepticism and indifference. And it is certainly true that when men are uncertain as to the validity of their faith, or are indifferent to religion in general, they are not likely to be guilty of religious persecution. Yet it needs to be pointed out that tolerance and indifference are not synonymous terms. An entirely neutral person does not know the meaning of being tolerant of another's religious conviction; he is simply indifferent toward them.2 Religious tolerance is more than the absence of compulsion, a negative matter. Real tolerance presupposes a mind that has definite religious convictions yet one that is willing for others to hold and practice contrary religious beliefs.

Since Christianity is what it is, an essentially missionary faith believing that all men who do not hold a certain body of truth are lost, it

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1 Ruffini, 4.
has been no easy matter for the serious Christian to be tolerant.

Religious toleration falls considerably short of religious liberty, for it presumes an authority which has the right to coerce, and is superior to the one tolerated. A voluntary inaction on the part of the dominant is implied. On the legal side it simply refers to refraining from persecution. Mirabeau was right in protesting in the National Assembly: "The word toleration seems to me to be in a certain measure tyrannical, since the authority which tolerates could also not tolerate."¹ Lord Stanhope was speaking as a prophet when he warned the House of Lords that, "There was a time when the dissenters begged for toleration as a grace; now they ask for it as a right; but a day will come when they will scorn it as an insult."² It was Thomas Paine who put it so pointedly:

Toleration is not the opposite of intolerance, but it is the counterfeit of it. Both are despotisms: the one assumes to itself the right of withholding liberty of conscience, the other of granting it.³

Implicit in the idea of toleration is the conception that the state is making a gracious concession which it has the authority to withhold.

Gracious concessions are incompatible with liberty of religion which is not something that a state, or an absolutist church, offers, but that which the citizen claims and the law protects.⁴

On the other hand religious liberty denies that the state possesses the prerogative of granting or withholding religious toleration as it sees fit. Religious liberty is a natural, inalienable right that is

¹ Quoted by Ruffini, 9.
² Ibid.
³ Rights of Man, 58.
⁴ Northcott, 18.
God-given and no state has the authority to deny it to any citizen. The state's duty is rather to safeguard and secure this right to all citizens. Religious toleration is something conceded; religious liberty is something claimed. Hence it is evident that religious liberty is closely related to the theory that the state exists to serve man and not man to serve the state.

Bishop Whately has defined religious liberty as follows: "We maintain that a man has a right, a civil right, to worship God according to his own conscience, without suffering any hardships at the hands of his neighbors for so doing." Another has said, "Soul-freedom is the freedom to think and act in religious matters without human dictation or control." J. S. Mill expresses it in a rather well-known definition:

"The only freedom which deserves the name is that of pursuing our own good in our own way; so long as we do not attempt to deprive others of theirs, or impede their efforts to obtain it."

It was Lord Acton who wrote:

"By liberty I mean the assurance that every man shall be protected in doing what he believes his duty against the influence of authority and majorities, custom and opinion."

William Penn calls attention to the "natural right of conscience" element in religious liberty when he says:

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2 Cobb, Sanford S., Rise of Religious Liberty in America, 8f
3 Ibid.
4 Quoted by Northcott, 14.
5 Ibid., 14
I ever understood an impartial liberty of conscience to be the natural right of all men, and that he that had a religion without it, his religion was none of his own. For what is not the religion of a man's choice is the religion of him that imposes it; so that liberty of conscience is the first step to have a religion. 1

Religious liberty manifests itself in several different relationships. In the first place, it has to do with certain rights for the citizen as an individual. He must be free to choose his own religion. This freedom includes choosing whatever faith he pleases or, if he prefers, no faith at all. The state is not to interfere with his choices unless they lead to acts repugnant to natural law and the security of the state. This freedom includes liberty of conscience, faith, and worship.

Since men are social and live in communities the liberty must extend to a community or social relationship. It was to this social aspect of religious liberty that Gladstone was referring when he wrote:

When I speak of a lover of religious freedom I mean one who, desiring full enjoyment of it for his own communion, is not willing only, but anxious, as he prizes the sacred principle of justice, to accord to all other religious bodies precisely the same measure, and to guard against all secular interference in their concerns, so long as they do not trespass upon the sphere of secular affairs...As the rights of each man are the rights of his neighbour; he that defends one is the defender of all and he that trespasses one one assails all. 2

If religious liberty is to be a reality it must include freedom of assembly, exercise, and propagation of religious belief in so far as these practices do not restrict or interfere with the freedoms of others or jeopardize the common welfare.

These two areas of freedom cannot be realized without the safeguard—

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1 Ibid., 15.
2 Ibid., 16.
ing of a third. This refers to the equality or parity of all religions. The state must treat all religions in an equal and identical manner. There must be no partiality or favoritism and certainly no enforced uniformity.¹

Religious liberty

is primarily a demand on the state to secure to the individual citizen and to organized religious groups certain rights. In a genuinely democratic state, the government is asked to protect the responsible adult citizen in holding and professing whatever ultimate beliefs commend themselves to his conscience and reason. He should be at liberty to change his beliefs if his convictions alter, and so far as government can affect it, he should not be placed at any social, economic or political disadvantage because of such change of belief. His religious liberty is infringed if the government either compels or forbids him to join a particular religious association. In a fully tolerant state, the individual citizen would not be asked to carry out public duties which he could not conscientiously undertake.²

The scope of religious liberty is far more inclusive than simply freedom of worship. To be complete it must include:

- Freedom of the press.
- Freedom to propagate the faith.
- Freedom to educate in the faith.
- Freedom to express the faith in deeds, in social activities and organization.
- Freedom to organize and control the life of the religious association and to define its faith.
- Economic independence through the ownership of property, and the right to keep in effective touch with fellow-believers in every land.³

The elements essential to genuine religious liberty are well summarized in the Charter of Religious Freedom contained in Human Rights and Religious Freedom:

1. Freedom of religion is an essential and integral

¹ Ruffini, Chapter II, 7-17, for a fuller discussion.
³ Ibid., 5.
aspect of human freedom. It includes the freedom of all human beings to choose for themselves their religious belief and adherence, and to change them if they so desire.

2. The rights which guarantee the full development of human beings, in the integrity and dignity of their human personality, include the religious rights not only of freedom to worship according to conscience, but also of freedom to educate, to propagate and to persuade, and to conduct social and charitable activities.

3. The rights of meeting guaranteed by a community to its members include the right of meeting for the purpose of worship according to conscience.

4. The rights of association guaranteed by a community to its members include the right of association for religious purposes...that is to say, not only for the purpose of worship according to conscience, but also for the purposes of religious education, propagation and persuasion, and of social and charitable activities. Religious associations are accordingly free, on the same basis as other associations and subject to the same limits imposed by the necessities of public order, security and morality, to acquire and hold property, and to act generally for the fulfilment of their purposes.

5. The rights of freedom of expression of thought (by speech, writing, printing and publishing) guaranteed by a community to its members include the rights of expression of religious thought, of the propagation of religious belief, and of religious persuasion, subject to the same limits as are imposed on the general freedom of expression of thought by the necessities of public order, security and morality.

6. The rights of children to receive instruction and education with a due regard to their freedom included the right to receive religious instruction and education when such instruction and education is desired by their parents.

7. The rights of religious freedom—in meeting for worship, in association, in the expression of thought, and in instruction, education and persuasion—include the right of persons and groups to be guaranteed against legal provisions and administrative acts which are calculated to impose disabilities on the grounds of religion.

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1 Statement issued by the Joint Committee on Religious Liberty under the auspices of the British Council of Churches and the Conference of Missionary Societies of Great Britain and Ireland, March, 1947, (Pamphlet).
To clearly understand the question before us it is helpful to point out that in the struggle for religious liberty two different concepts of the relationship between church and state have been advocated, each considered the best means of attaining the desired goal. One is referred to as Separatism and the other is often called Jurisdictionalism. Separatism, of course, refers to the complete separation of the ecclesiastical and civil and Jurisdictionalism to some supervision by the state, that is, one established church with toleration exercised toward all others.

England is a good example of the second; France and the United States of America are the most pronounced examples of the first. Lord Acton, Ruffini, and others,

believed that religious liberty was best secured in a state where there was a 'limited' toleration, as for instance in England where the state itself has some 'religious character', rather than in a state without any definite religious character where, (they) believed, no genuine ecclesiastical authority could exist and, therefore, no true understanding of all that is meant by religious liberty.

This was the position that Roger Williams opposed. To him, an established church of any type was built contrary to New Testament principles, and by its very position of prestige and influence, would stigmatize other and smaller groups. He demanded complete separation of the church and state for the welfare of both.

It is well to bear in mind that neither system is without its problems, and in the countries of its adoption each has secured a large measure of religious liberty.

1 Northcott, 16.
2 Ibid., 16.
CHAPTER II

A BRIEF SURVEY OF THE HISTORY OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE IDEA OF RELIGIOUS LIBERTY UP TO ROGER WILLIAMS

It is well to remember that neither the concept of soul liberty nor the practical idea of religious toleration were new when Roger Williams so forcibly declared them in his writings. His conception of religious liberty was certainly not entirely novel or original. The assertion for toleration and the protest against ecclesiastical conformity were well known in the seventeenth century.

The settlers in Massachusetts Bay were not unaware of these movements, but, like so many of their contemporaries, feared and even hated the consequences of a practical application of them. Dr. George E. Ellis of Boston stated the case accurately:

To assume, as some carelessly do, that when Roger Williams and others asserted the right and safety of liberty of conscience, they announced a novelty that was alarming, because it was a novelty, to the authorities of Massachusetts, is a great error. Our fathers were fully informed as to what it was, what it meant; and they were familiar with such results as it wrought in their day...They did not mean to live where it was indulged; and in the full exercise of their intelligence and prudence, they resolved not to tolerate it among them.3

Since this is true, it will be of value to sketch the history of the conception of religious liberty. Obviously this must be done briefly, due to the purpose of this study and to the limit of space.

Persecution for matters of religion, by and large, arose with the

1 Wroth, Lawrence C., Excerpts from Roger Williams, 13.
2 Ibid., 14.
development of Christianity. The classical world, in general, was reasonably tolerant in the religious realm. It had been primarily because of Christianity's exclusivism and refusal to conform that Rome had persecuted Christians. The early Christians, being distinctly a minority, had no thought of persecuting anyone. It was when the church yielded to union with the state that a course of coercion was inaugurated.

Themistius of Paphlagonia, a non-Christian, in an address to Emperor Valens, 364-378 A.D., indicates the generally tolerant attitude of the Roman classical world in an era when Christianity was rapidly becoming dominant. Fighting for the abrogation of measures against the orthodox Christians, he said:

The religious beliefs of individuals are a field in which the authority of government cannot be effective; compliance can only lead to hypocritical professions. Every faith should be allowed; the civil government should govern orthodox and heterodox to the common good. God himself plainly shows that he wishes various forms of worship; there are many roads by which one can reach him.

While the final persecution of Christians had been launched by Diocletian in 303 A.D., by 380 A.D. Theodosius had established Christianity as the official and exclusive religion of the empire. It is ironic to note that during the two centuries in which the Christians had been a forbidden sect they had contended for toleration on the ground that religious belief is entirely voluntary and cannot be forced, and yet when their faith became the predominant creed, with the power of the state behind it, they seemed to completely reverse their position. Of course in all fairness,

1 Bury, J. B., A History of Freedom of Thought, 55.
2 Van Dusen, Henry P., Church and State in the Modern World, 21.
it must be admitted that this policy which prevailed among rulers was to some degree based upon political grounds. They were convinced that religious divisions were dangerous to the unity and safety of the state. However, undoubtedly the overwhelming conviction of the church that she had the absolute truth and that it was her duty to impose on men, peaceably or by force, this only true doctrine, contributed in no small degree to this practice. Heretics were considered far worse than ordinary criminals because their errors could do eternal and spiritual damage.

Under Constantine the Great and his successors, edict after edict was enacted against the worship of pagan gods and against heretical Christians sects. The first recorded instance of the infliction of the death sentence came under the usurper Maximus in the West in A. D. 385 against Priscillian and six of his followers in Spain. Shocked by this severity, Ambrose of Milan, Martin of Tours and Siricus, Bishop of Rome, vigorously registered their protest.

The Catholic theory of persecution was formulated by St. Augustine (died 430 A. D.). In his early years, while others held the preponderant position, he invoked the aid of the principle of liberty of conscience. It was in later life under the pressure of the Donatist controversy that he came to question his earlier conviction that constraint was ineffective and improper. He based his theory on Christian love and concern for the welfare of the person coerced. His reasoning has been clearly stated:

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If there is salvation only in the Catholic Church and if constraint can remove obstacles to genuine conversion, then to employ it is an act of kindness. Surely a father may properly hold back a child from playing with a snake and a son may restrain a crazed father from throwing himself over a cliff. A horticulturist prunes a rotten branch to save a tree and a doctor amputates a diseased limb to conserve a life. Even so may the erring be constrained.1

These analogies did not appear dangerous to him because he did not personify society and did not admit of the death penalty. However, when the body to be saved should be identified with the church or the state, then the diseased limb would become an individual to be destroyed. This further step in his chain of logic would be taken in the centuries that followed.

It was Augustine who first used Luke 14:23, "compelle intrare", and he also formulated the question, "Quae est enim peior mors animae quam libertas erroris?" Both of these have been the directive and justification of subsequent persecutors. Bluntschli summarized his theory as follows:

"When error prevails it is right to invoke liberty of conscience; but when, on the contrary, the truth predominates, it is just to use coercion." 2

Augustine exhorted against the use of the death penalty yet every later persecutor purported to use Augustine's authority to sanction his actions. 3

In the fifth and early sixth century, Chrysostom and Jerome elaborated the views of Ambrose that capital punishment is not to be inflicted, but freedom of assembly may be denied. 4

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1 Bainton, Roland H., The Travail of Religious Liberty, 39.
2 Ruffini, 27.
3 Ibid.
The principle of enforced conformity dominated the whole of the Middle Ages. The Code of Justinian collected and co-ordinated the various imperial decrees against heretics, pagans and Jews, and provided an accepted authority for the intervention of rulers in the defence of their faith. Later Councils legalized the Augustinian theory and made it the duty of princes to punish heretics.

In the thirteenth century persecution reached its zenith. The further step in Augustine's logic, to which reference has already been made, was taken at this time. Love was shifted from the heretic as an individual to the society which he menaced. It was argued that the individual could be destroyed to save society. The Augustinian theory was enlarged through magnifying the enormity of heresy, especially as compared with crimes which were punishable by death. Augustine had declared that heresy, which destroys the soul, is worse than murder, which destroys the body only.

St. Thomas Aquinas (1225?-1274), who related the theory to the great body of scholastic philosophy, added that the counterfeiting of divine truth is worse than treason because it is more serious to betray the eternal than the temporal Ruler.

About A.D. 1223, Pope Gregory IX organized the system of searching out heretics which became known as the Inquisition. In a papal bull, Innocent IV (A.D. 1252), regulated the machinery of persecution as a part

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1 Ruffini, 36.
3 Lyon, T., Religious Liberty in England, 16.
4 Bainton, Introduction to Concerning Heretics, 29.
of the social edifice in every city and state. This system covered Western Christendom with the exception of England. But even there, from the age of Henry IV and Henry V, the government suppressed heresy by the stake (Statute enacted 1400; repealed 1533; revived under Mary; finally repealed in 1676). This certainly was typical of the pattern of thought in the middle ages and it prevailed without significant question until the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

The intellectual and social movement called the Renaissance, which had its beginning in Italy in the thirteenth century and was to spread to Northern Europe, was in many ways to prepare the way. It, and the Reformation which it presaged, created a situation in which toleration could arise. No doubt men were hardly aware they were entering a new era because the change was so gradual. But men were awakening to the consciousness of their own individuality as persons apart from the church or the nation. An intellectual atmosphere was being created in which the emancipation of reason could begin. A more tolerant secular mind was displacing the dogmatic theological mind which had dominated the middle ages.

One of the contributions to the idea of tolerance which came from this movement was Sir Thomas More's Utopia. In a statement which has been called the charter of religious toleration More, speaking through the mouth of King Utopus, is said to contend that

...in case that one religion were certainly true, and all the rest false, he reckoned that the native force of truth would break forth at last, and shine

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2 Lyon, footnote, 16.
bright, if it were managed only by the strength of argument, and with a winning gentleness;...therefore he left men wholly to their liberty in this matter, that they might be free to believe as they should see cause...1

However, this statement needs qualification. Foreseeing the advent of religious toleration in England, More did not welcome it because it would inevitably bring a division of Christendom. As a practical policy it was to be condoned only if England should fail to remain Roman Catholic. Yet it is true that in his section on religion in Utopia, people could think freely about religious matters and could use persuasion and argument in an endeavour to win adherents. 2

More also projects the idea that truth is many-sided in the following statement: "And (he) seemed to doubt whether those different forms of religion might not all come from God, who might inspire men differently, he being possibly pleased with a variety in it." 3 It was Milton who developed this conception in that he further suggested that those embracing different and apparently discrepant aspects of truth could yet both be right. 4 Though accused by historians of favoring the punishment of heretics, it is interesting to note that More considered himself personally tolerant and claimed that he had never persecuted any for heresy even "so much as a filip on the forehead." 5

Perhaps no voice raised against the medieval brand of intolerance was more effective than that of Erasmus. While a student at Oxford he came

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1 Utopia: or the Happy Republic, 174-175. (See n. 2)
2 Ibid., 174.
3 Ibid., 174.
5 More, Thomas, English Works, 901.
to know Sir Thomas More and Colet. Later he taught for a period at Cambridge. In his Praise of Folly, which was written at the suggestion of More during his third sojourn in Britain and published in Paris in 1511, he skillfully satirized the evils of his day and men in high places, including the Pope. His translation of the New Testament into Greek, daring by its critical method to suggest errors in the Vulgate, augmented the Reformation among the learned. Scattered throughout many of his works there are incidental pleas for tolerance. However, there is an explicit plea for tolerance in his De Immense Misericordia Dei, published in 1524. A number of expressions of the following spirit appear in the work:

And the soldiers, publicans, harlots, idolators, parricides, wizards, panders, and incestuous hasten. No one is excluded, the gates of mercy are open to all alike. A man's former life is not laid to his charge, if only he repents. Yet I do not think that this mercy of the Lord is withheld after baptism; although Montanus shuts the doors of the church to those who have fallen away from their baptismal vows, the Lord never shuts the portals of the heavenly kingdom.

Evidently Erasmus came by his conviction concerning tolerance through his deep sense of the inwardness of Christianity. He conceived of Christianity as consisting "not merely in ceremonies and articles, but in the heart and the whole of life". He was certainly affected by his deep and abiding devotion to the scriptures. However, the root of the matter

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1 Three years, 1511-1514.
2 Campbell, W. E., Erasmus, Tyndale, and More, 81.
3 Ibid., 53-54.
5 Sutro Library Project, Pamphlets on Religion and Democracy, 50.
probably lay in his theology. To him, God is above all merciful. He conceived God's mercy to extend to all, both inside and outside the church. In 1527 he succeeded in getting Basle to pass an ordinance, though temporary, to accept religions of all faiths. But the tragic thing is that, under the pressure of controversy, he recanted his opposition to capital punishment for heresy. In a letter evidently written late, he sanctioned the suppression of the Anabaptists, "The Anabaptists are by no means to be tolerated. For the apostles command us to obey the magistrates, and these men object to obeying Christian princes." His humanism influenced others, such as Zwingli and Capito, who were known for a somewhat more tolerant attitude. His ideas could not attain their full effectiveness until they were in the hands of men such as Franck and Castellio and others.

Paolo Sarpi, (1552-1623), backed by the position of a powerful anti-clerical state, attacked the claims of the ecclesiastics, maintaining that they are subject to the civil state. With the apparent theory that religion is a matter of the conscience only, he said that all public acts should be regulated by the civil government. Latent in his tracts, A History of Ecclesiastical Benefices, Treatise on the Inquisition, The Right of Sanctuary, and Immunity of the Clergy is the modern conception of the secular state. His rather biased History of the Council of Trent ably attacks papal tyranny and Jesuit casuistry. This tract was published in

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1 Ruffini, 61.
2 Cited by Preserved Smith in Erasmus, 324, from the London Edition of Erasmus' letters.
3 Ruffini, 61.
4 Bainton, Introduction to Concerning Heretics, 30.
5 Smith, Preserved, A History of Modern Culture, 264f.
6 Ibid., 265.
London in 1619. It was at his instigation that the University of Padua in 1587 waived the requirement of pledging fidelity to the Roman Catholic Church as a requisite for the conferring of the doctorate degree.

Another movement related to the Renaissance which definitely helped prepare the soil in which the seed of religious liberty could be planted, spring up, and grow was the Protestant Reformation. Laboulaye has pointed out that although the Reformers themselves did little for the cause of toleration it was from the principles which they enunciated that, at the opportune and favorable time, there sprang a triumphant religious liberty.

Actually, Protestantism had within itself the germ idea of toleration. Since its basic principle was justification by faith, in contrast with justification by works, faith is inward and only God can command it. The claim of the individual for private judgment could not long be denied by a critically minded theology which owed its existence to the triumph of that principle. At this point Williams was indeed a "son of the Reformation". T. Lyon points out that Protestantism was actually the first successful heresy and as it continued to define its beliefs, and further divide, some sort of toleration was inevitable.

Yet the sixteenth century was one of the most intolerant in European history. This was true because, by and large, the Protestant groups were no less guilty in the suppression of religious liberty and persecution for conscience sake than were the Catholics. Their primary concern

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1 Ruffini, 59.
was truth and not freedom.

Although he pled for religious liberty in the beginning, even Martin Luther later wavered and advocated a policy of rather intense persecution. He pronounced the famous dictum, "God desires to be alone in our consciences, and desires that His word alone should prevail", and "Haereticos comburi est contra voluntatem spiritus." In the beginning of the Reformation he wrote:

I first lay down these propositions, concerning liberty and servitude. A Christian man is the most free lord of all, and subject to none; a Christian man is the most dutiful servant of all, and subject to everyone.

And to his friend, Spalatin, in January, 1521, he wrote:

I would not have the gospel defended by violence and murder...By the Word the world was conquered; by the Word the church was preserved; by the Word she will be restored. Antichrist, as he began without violence, will be crushed without violence, by the Word.

At another time during this period he wrote:

Heresy can never be prevented by force...Heresy is a spiritual matter, which no iron can strike, no fire burn, no water drown. God's word alone avails here...Moreover, faith and heresy are never so strong as when men oppose them by sheer force, without God's word.

In 1518, he declared, "To burn heretics is against the will of the Holy

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1 Bury, 79.
2 Longacre, Charles Small, Roger Williams, His Life, Work, and Ideals, 282.
3 Ruffini, 56
5 Ibid., Vol. III, 204.
6 Beard's Hibbert Lecture quoted in Henry Barrow, Separatist by Fred J. Powicke, 171-172.
"Ghost", and in 1520, "We should vanquish heretics with books, not with burning..."

It has been pointed out that Luther's standpoint and doctrine as a whole essentially spelt not only "unfettered freedom of teaching but also entire freedom of worship." Yet as Luther's movement progressed and factions dangerous to its continuance arose, Luther's policy changed. Ruffini notes that he, like Augustine more than a thousand years before him, forgot that he had evoked the aid of the principle of liberty of conscience against persecution and abjured it as soon as he was able.

Luther sought to limit persecution by restricting it to blasphemy instead of heresy, but little distinction was made between the two, and little ground was gained. And so Luther's contribution to religious liberty came as a by-product through the great movement he inaugurated, rather than as a direct result.

Actually John Calvin brought Protestant persecution to a head. He began where Luther left off. He did not contend, as so many others had done, that heresy is punishable only when associated with blasphemy and sedition. He contended that Christian judges have a perfect right to punish heretics. He considered himself God's watchdog. "If Calvin ever wrote anything in favor of religious liberty it was a typographical error." In writing to the English boy-king, Edward VI, Calvin said:

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5. Bainton, Concerning Heretics, footnote, 23.
Under the cover of the Gospel, foolish people would throw everything into confusion, others cling to the superstitions of the Anti-christ at Rome. They all deserve to be repressed by the sword which is committed to you. 1

Calvin's most famous defense of persecution is connected with the burning of Servetus on October 23, 1553. Servetus was charged with the two heresies for which the Codex Justinian had proscribed the death penalty, the denial of the Trinity and the repetition of baptism. Calvin wrote Declaration to maintain the true faith...against the Detestable Errors of Michael Servetus, in which he sought to justify the execution of Servetus for heresy. In this work, Calvin asserts that when as dangerous and false a person as Servetus appears he must be put to death and that God has given the civil magistrate the power of the sword with which to execute it. 2

Although his action in regard to Servetus received the approbation of many prominent in the Protestant Church, there were those who objected. Zurkinden, Chancellor of Berne, was among those who early protested, stating that the death sentence should not have been used and that Calvin's proposal, if followed, would give the state too much authority in such matters, an authority which would assuredly be abused. 3

A more stinging rebuttal entitled simply, Concerning Heretics, soon made its appearance. This appeared in two simultaneous Latin editions as well as in French and German translations. Published under the pseudonym, 4

1 Jones, Rufus M., Spiritual Reformers in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century, footnote, 93.
2 Bainton, Travail of Religious Liberty, 91.
3 Carew, R. M. Hunt, Calvin, 218.
4 Ibid., 220.
Bellinianus, suspicion as to the author immediately and persistently attached itself to Sebastian Castellio, professor of Greek at Basel. Castellio, who had previously worked with Calvin in Geneva and had migrated to Basel because he could not conform to the dogmas exacted by Calvin, had already been branded as a liberal. In 1551, in the Preface to his Latin Bible, he had boldly insisted that the Reformation should champion the principle of free conscience; that it should wage its battles with spiritual weapons alone; that it should be spread by love and purity of heart, not by fierce controversy and external compulsions. The excerpts which appeared in Concerning Heretics were selected from the early fathers and from contemporaries. The material was sometimes from genuine liberals and sometimes from persecutors who were to be reminded of the more generous utterances of their youth. In its Preface, written by Castellio himself, there is an earnest plea for tolerance. "To burn a man is not to defend a doctrine, it is to burn a man." He advocated exercising forgiveness in viewing doctrinal dissent.

For certainly when I consider the ways of Christ, and his doctrine...for He has always pardoned iniquities and sin and has commanded we pardon them, even up to seven times seven...I do not know how we can retain the name of Christian if we do not follow Him in His clemency and forgiveness.  

This Preface has been called one of the mother documents on freedom of conscience. Castellio was one of those first fundamentalists who sought to

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1 Jones, 93.
2 Castellio, Contra libellum Calvini in Concerning Heretics, edited by Roland Bainton, 271.
3 Castellio, Traiter des Heretiques, 15.
4 Jones, 95.
distinguish between the essentials and non-essentials of Christianity, claiming room for the widest diversity of opinion within the limits set by the few indispensable tenets of Christianity.

Calvin published no reply to Castellio's book, though he was bitter against it in his letters. Theodore Beza, his colleague, joined battle in his behalf, and at his behest, and published On the Punishment of Heretics by the Civil Authorities. Sometime later Castellio wrote a work entitled Against the Book of Calvin, in which he replied to Calvin's defense of the execution of Servetus. He declared that Calvin's burning of Servetus was a bloody act. To Calvin's question as to how doctrine is to be guarded if heretics are not punished, Castellio replies,

Christ's doctrine means loving one's enemies, returning good for evil, having a pure heart and a hunger and thirst for righteousness. You may return to Moses if you will, but for us others Christ has come.

Castellio sent forth another clarion call for the complete liberation of mind and conscience in his Conseil a la France desolee. He pleads with both groups, Catholic and evangelical, to be more tolerant.

O France, France, my counsel is that thou cease to compel men's consciences, that thou cease to kill and to persecute, that thou grant to men who believe in Jesus Christ the privilege of serving God according to their own innermost faith and not according to some one else's faith.

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1 Bainton, Travail of Religious Liberty, 113.
3 Wroth, 15-16.
4 Jones, 96.
5 Ibid., 102.
A number of Roger Williams' precepts are reflections of Castellio's writings a century earlier. Williams who no doubt was familiar with Concerning Heretics, championed the principle of a free conscience and insisted that Christianity must use only spiritual weapons. As Castellio, he could not see how persecution could be justified in the light of the spirit of Jesus Christ. Williams' argument that constraint will engender hypocrisy and violate the free conscience, which he so often used to support his position, had been formulated by the Spaniard. Castellio anticipated Williams in charging Calvinism with resurrecting Moses from the grave and ignoring New Testament principles. In including under conscience the erroneous conscience, Castellio had stood almost alone in the sixteenth century. But his ideas spread far in the ensuing century. They reached England through the influence of his Anabaptist disciples in Holland and through the work of Acontius, Ochino, and Socinus. By the seventeenth century Williams' advocacy of these ideas was not nearly so unusual. Actually, John Cotton was almost an anachronism in arguing, as the earlier reformers, that a person who obstinately rejects the fundamentals, sins against his own conscience.

There were other contemporaries of Castellio who sought the liberation of man's spirit. In his Bloody Tenent, Roger Williams referred to the tolerant attitude of Maximilian II of Bohemia (1527-1576), who attempted to reconcile the two factions after the schism. Though out-

1 Haller, 195.
2 Bainton, The Travail of Liberty, 221.
wardly adhering to the Catholic Church, Maximilian favored toleration in thought and action and in 1586 verbally granted his nobility free exercise of the Lutheran faith.

Perhaps it would be well here to say a word about the reasoning of those who sought to justify persecution of heretics. To persecute conscientiously one must believe at least three things: First, that one is right; second, that the point in question is important, and third, that coercion is effective. The early church had no doubts about the first two.

Across the centuries, the Catholic Church has never admitted any uncertainty as to the cardinal affirmations of the church. This remains so now, toleration only being granted on the grounds of expediency. Yet it has been pointed out that it was Catholicism that nurtured three movements that, when separated from the parent, have brought tolerance: mysticism, humanism, and sectarianism. Protestantism has never had such certainty as to her doctrinal beliefs and thus has been more vulnerable to attack on this ground.

The second prerequisite for persecution was attacked by the Protestants on mystical and ethical grounds. Placing more importance upon moral integrity than upon dogmatic impeccability, the plea for a conscience, even a "wrong conscience", became relevant. Others, following Wessel Gansford, Erasmus, and Castellio, attempted to segregate the fundamentals of

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1. Ruffini, 389.
3. Ibid., 19.
4. Ibid., 20.
faith from the trivia, thus minimizing the importance of the points over which persecution raged.

Across the centuries there had been much discussion on the question of the effectiveness of coercion. The liberals had opposed persecution sometimes on rationalistic grounds—we do not know enough to separate the tares from the wheat, sometimes on eschatological grounds—God will burn the tares at the harvest, and sometimes on legalistic grounds—Christ has commanded us to leave the tares. The persecutors identified the tares with the moral offenders and the servants in the parable were equated with ministers, not with magistrates. They also contended that Christ’s concern was only with the wheat. When the separation could be made without danger or mistake why not destroy the tares? They transferred the Old Testament penalties for idolatry to heresy and then quoted Titus 3:10: “A man that is a heretic after the first and second admonition reject.” Thus they pled Old Testament and New Testament justification.

Yet it was upon this ground, namely, the ineffectiveness of coercion, that Protestants, even Calvinists, came to be a champions of liberty. The predestination theory, that man’s salvation depends wholly on God, hammered at the notion that persecution was effective. A more frequently employed attack was that there is a determinism of the intellect which constraint will not, or cannot, alter. Underlying this is the belief that humility and devotion to truth are the most persuasive to command assent,

1 Ibid., 21-22.
3 Bainton, Roland H., Church History, I, and The Tragedy of Religious Liberty, 244.
and that truth will conquer of its own power.

Of course it is not possible to determine all of the sources which may have contributed to the idea of religious liberty in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. As a speculative idea it was perhaps in many minds. There are those who contend that we owe the modern principles of toleration to the Italian group of reformers known as Socinians. The Reformation had spread to Italy, but the Catholics were successful in suppressing it. Many of the heretics fled to Switzerland but the intolerance of Calvin forced them to flee to Transylvania and Poland where they taught their doctrines, enjoying great favor and success for a time. This influential anti-Trinitarian group was known by the name, Socinianism, from the two leaders in the movement, Laelius Sozzini, (1525-1562), and his nephew, Fausto Sozzini. Laelius, or Lelio, interested by the burning of Servetus, delved into the problem of the Trinity. However, due to fear of reprisal from Calvinists, his conclusions were never made known during his lifetime.

Fausto Sozzini, influenced by the writings of his uncle, after fleeing with Biandrata and others to Poland in 1519, drew up the Unitarian Creed. This was known as the Racovian Catechism, and it was another landmark along the way toward religious liberty. While it denied the doctrine of the Trinity, the deity of Christ, and the atonement, it stood for separation of church and state and repudiated the use of force in religion and condemned persecution. It asserted man's essential freedom and rejected all authority of

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1 Bury, 93.
3 Ruffini, 67.
the church, contending the right of man to interpret the Scriptures. Of Socinus himself, Acton has said he "was the first who, on the ground that church and state ought to be separated, required universal toleration." It was perhaps under the influence of this group that Acontius, a friend of Castellio, produced his works. Many of the Socian school were noted for their tolerance. After flourishing in Poland for a few decades, the group was almost annihilated by the powerful Jesuits and the remnant fled to Germany and then to Holland. Evidently this sect influenced the Anabaptists and the Arminian section of the Reformed Church of Holland in their thinking upon religious toleration. And it was from this section of Europe that the toleration idea spread to England. Socinus did not advocate complete separation of church and state as did the Anabaptists, but envisaged a close union between the state and the prevailing church, combined with a complete toleration of other sects. He recognized the competence of the civil authority in everything which did not directly affect dogma.

In Basle, in 1565, there was published a remarkable book, Sataneae Stratagemata, followed by other books, notably Les Ruzes de Satan, by Jacopo Acontius, an Italian who lived in Basle for a time and was greatly influenced by Castellio. Subsequently he moved to England where he was employed as an engineer and enjoyed the patronage of the Queen.

Although not published in English until the seventeenth century, his book was well known among the learned circles of England in the six-

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1 History of Freedom, 51, quoted in McLachlan, 9.
2 Bury, 95.
3 Smith, 394-395.
4 McLachlan, 8.
teenth century. In this book, Acontius cries out against all forms of punishment against heretics. He denied that the state had any jurisdiction in spiritual matters. He denounced the punishment of error as being a species of brutal tyranny. He maintained that to put heretics to death was stupid, for to allow them to remain would purify the dominant ecclesiastical body, as their presence, acting as a sort of competitive stimulus, would awaken the church to an awareness of its spiritual duties. He further states:

Unhappy are you who have your eyes fixed only upon the dignity of your own reputations, holding yourselves as gods among men and condemning your brethren; usurping a certain tyranny over their consciences...5

He points out the incompetency and the impossibility of the magistrate to accurately determine heresy since the civil law cannot penetrate into the mind and conscience of man. He astutely argues that it is preposterous for the magistrate to determine points of doctrine and that the interference of the state in spiritual matters will eventuate in the determining of those matters by force and result in the suppression of truth. He rebuked the church for using the sword to fight evil, saying that truth would be its own victor and that Satan was put to rout by the Word, not by compulsion. External compulsion may work an external change in men but it

1 Ruffini, 83.
7 Ibid., 349.
is powerless against the mind or the heresy of the mind. He argues for the complete independence of private judgment and the right of freedom of enquiry. Acontius presented a systematic and reasoned theory of the complete separation of church and state and a pure and philosophical justification of religious liberty. In summary, his fundamental principles may be stated as two. First, nothing, whether learning, tradition, the church, or the claim of infallible authority, should be permitted to take precedence over the conscience, the voice of God in one's own soul. Second, no man is infallible. "No one person that is but mere man ought to be so confident as to persuade himself he cannot err." It has been said that "No writer in the century made a clearer distinction between the affairs of church and state than Acontius."

The number of points at which Williams' position coincides with that of Acontius is indeed striking. In a number of instances Williams is but re-emphasizing what the Italian had advocated earlier. The relationship between their thought in the following areas is immediately evident: opposition to all forms of punishment for heresy, separation of church and state, human limitations in judging heresy, the utter futility of a policy of persecution as a corrective agency in dealing with heresy and faith in the ability of truth to defend itself. The difference in the two lay in the fact that Acontius was a philosophical theorist whereas Williams was a practical exponent. It is certainly probable that Williams was influenced by Acontius, and he may have read Acontius' radical book in his youth.

1 Haller, 196.
2 Acontius, Satanae Stratagemae, 20.
Some writers have given to the Congregationalists the honor of being the first to advocate the separation of church and state in the English language. Their position was first clearly defined by Robert Browne. Browne was born about 1550, educated at Cambridge, entered the priesthood but, possibly through contact with Anabaptists, came to the view of complete separation of church and state. His preaching forced him to flee to Holland in 1572. After spending some years in enunciating this principle he returned to England and ended his life as a rector in Northamptonshire, seemingly in accord with the established authority. His position evidently came back at last to the conviction that it was impossible to separate the secular from the spiritual power.

Yet the movement which he inaugurated was to continue to grow. Browne's idea of the church was a voluntary organization of believers constituted without interference from the secular power. He maintained that the magistracy was incompetent to establish and maintain the true religion; that the rulers had no power in the church: "Yet have they no ecclesiastical authority at all, but only as any other Christian, ff so be they Christians". This autonomy of the spiritual community necessitated the separation of church and state. The Brownists insisted that the church may avail itself only of spiritual weapons in its struggle with evil; that physical compulsion has no place in the discipline of the church. "We leave it free

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to them to follow or not to follow our ways and doctrines, except they see it good and meet for them". These conceptions of the Brownists, particularly the thesis that the church could not be erected or coerced by the state, were convincing arguments for religious toleration.

Henry Jacob, who in 1604 formulated the first Congregational catechism, contended for the autonomy of the local congregation which he proposed should consist of members who joined together on a voluntary basis. He emphasized the voluntary and spiritual character of the church and maintained that dissensions had their basis in conscience which could not be coerced. However it was only gradually that he shook off the Puritan ideal of the church-state. Since he was pleading for the toleration of a sect which was considered dangerous by the state he gave to the magistrate as large powers in the church as he could without straining his ideal of a voluntary church too far. Jacob's repeated emphasis upon the necessity of repressing error demonstrates that he was not primarily interested in extending religious liberty. His contribution lies in the fact that he had indirectly questioned the underlying policy of enforced conformity and used arguments which would be enlarged by other men in the future.

Another contributor to Separatist thought, and a Congregationalist, was John Robinson. With calmness and poise Robinson pointed out that diversity and error will not destroy the church but that contention and strife between differing communions is her real foe. Toleration cannot hurt the

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church and persecution is ineffective "neither God is pleased with unwilling worshippers, nor Christian societies bettered, nor the persons themselves neither, but the plain contrary in all three."  

Jacob's mantle fell on such men as Greenwood, Barrow, and Penry. During the reign of Elizabeth the Barrowists approximated more nearly to the separatist idea of toleration than any other sect. Barrow's principal contribution to the idea of religious toleration lay in his theory of the church. In his *Brief Discovery of the False Church* he denies the authority of the magistrate in spiritual offices. The Barrowists' conception of the function of the magistrate in the church is more advanced and it is probable that the positions which they first advocated were to lead in the minds of the Baptists to the complete idea of religious liberty. The Barrowist contended that while men can not be forced into salvation, error should not be condoned because it is offensive to God and dangerous to man. While their contribution was far from the ultimate goal, and more theoretical than practical, it was of importance because it was from this position that certain Separatists were to adopt the principles of the Baptists, and with them the idea of religious liberty.

The softening and disintegration of the doctrine of predestination was an important contribution toward toleration.

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2 Followers of Henry Barrow who was hanged with Greenwood in 1593. A church reformer who early became interested in the writings of Thomas Browne. After his death his followers emigrated to Holland. His colleague, Penry, is said to be the first who advised going to America to escape persecution.
The name, Arminians, was given to the group in Holland who attacked the dogmatism of the doctrine of absolute predestination. Jacobus Arminius, (1560-1609), who as a minister in Amsterdam became interested in the writings of Coornhert, was led to Coornhert's position on predestination. This position gradually crystallized into a liberalism. He championed the religious toleration of dissenting sects. He said that dissensions cannot be prevented as long as each of the different groups regarded itself as having the infallible truth. After the death of Arminius in 1609, his mantle fell on Episcopius who, reminiscent of Acontius, developed still further the position that the authority in spiritual matters is seated in the individual conscience, and that those who infringe upon this authority by outward pressure persecute and blaspheme God. Grotius also contributed much to the development of the Arminian theory. In his De Jure Belli ac Pacis, written in exile in France, he proposes a rationalistic policy of toleration, emphasizing the spiritual character of religion and condemning the church's use of the power and prestige of the state.

The liberty which was attained in the sixteenth century was essentially a restricted toleration for dissenting religious bodies and not liberty for the individual. By the peace of Kappel, in 1531, the Zwinglians were granted a recognized position in the areas where they were already established. The Peace of Augsburg in 1555, gave assured territorial status to Lutheranism. The Pacification of Ghent in 1576, in the Netherlands, and the Edict of Nantes, in 1598, in France, obtained toleration for Calvinism in these two countries. Anglicanism became the partner of the state in Eng-

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land under Elizabeth. Thus several varieties of Protestantism achieved at least a recognized status and toleration. In Holland the last execution for heresy occurred in 1597. Only two instances of the death penalty being inflicted for heresy are known after 1600 in England. Generally, the punishment meted out for such crimes in the seventeenth century consisted of banishment and imprisonment rather than the death penalty.

No country contributed more to religious liberty for the individual during the seventeenth century than England. Bainton suggests several reasons for this. First, there was the fact that her island isolation freed her from fear that she might have to face foreign intervention, when weakened by dissension, should she grant religious toleration. This was particularly true now that the power of Spain had been broken. Then England was consolidated and not in danger of social anarchy as Germany had been in Luther's day. In the third place, the conflict between the religious groups in England was not so intense as on the continent inasmuch as she was virtually Protestant. On the continent, the struggle was between Protestant and Catholic, but in England the struggle was between Protestant and Protestant. The fact that the Anglican church was latitudinarian tended to remove some of the bitterness of doctrinal controversy. And then surely the literature against persecution was beginning to bear some influence.

It was out of suffering and persecution that the idea of religious liberty, as a practical and political notion, came to be most clearly

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2. Ibid., 180-181.
and emphatically presented. Each persecuted cause demanded at least
toleration for itself from the authorities and gradually developed a more
generous policy toward non-conformity. Thus the Church of England was more
tolerant than the church of Rome and the Scottish Presbyterian (in its early years) was more generous than the Church of England. Yet none of these groups had yet come to a comprehension of the complete principle of liberty of conscience. It was for the Independents, and especially the 

Baptists, to enunciate this principle with clarity.

The Baptist contribution goes back to the Anabaptists who as a sect could be identified in Holland as early as 1522. This group had denied the validity of infant baptism, taught that it was a sin to bear arms, to resist evil, to appeal to law, to take judicial oaths. It was from the teachings of this sect, notwithstanding some of their strange excesses during certain periods, that there came the germ root out of which grew the principle of resistance to ecclesiastical centralization.

Felix Mantz and Conrad Grebel, the founders of Anabaptism, had separated from Zwingli on October 28, 1523, on the issue of freedom of the church from state influence. It was a protest against the enforcement and abuses of the state church. They began by attacking infant baptism and advocating a church of believers only. They issued no confession of faith but laid down the Bible as the universal guide in matters of religion. Anabaptists were hated and persecuted by Rome, by the Lutherans of Germany, and by the Reformed Church of Switzerland. Their teachings were so revolution-

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2 Parrington, Vernon, Main Currents in American Thought, Chapter I, "The Colonial Mind", 41.
ary and their practices so unusual that for well over a century they were persecuted literally all over Protestant Europe.

The history of the origin of English Baptists is largely an account of the spiritual progress of John Smyth from Anglicanism to that of extreme separatism. His writings indicate this development. In a sermon, entitled, A Pattern of True Prayer, which was published in 1605, but preached much earlier, we find Smyth as a full conformist, expounding the theory of godly princes and condemning toleration. In Principles and Inferences Concerning the Visible Church, of 1607, when Smyth was wavering between Independency and Barrowism, his view of the magistrate represents a compromise between the two with an inclining toward Independency. Parallels, Censures and Observations, published in 1609, when Smyth had been a year in Amsterdam as a Barrowist, contains almost the same analysis of the magistrate's power. However, in The Character of the Beast, published later in the same year, Smyth defended his adoption of believer's baptism and expresses great indecision as to the power of the magistrate.

When he published the first Baptist Confession of twenty articles toward the end of 1609, he was still too uncertain of the position of the magistrate to include an article on that subject. But in 1610, he issued a Confession of a hundred articles, embodying the final results of his long spiritual progress. Here he contended that God permits the magistrate to preserve justice and civil peace among men, but he is not by virtue of his office to interfere with religion or matters of conscience, or to force men to any religion. This is one of the first full statements of religious toleration, implying full religious liberty, in the English language. It

2 Lyon, 109.
differs from the Mennonite position in emphasizing the importance of the magistrate as a civil servant and as an office in which a man can please God. It separates church and state in ends as well as in power.

In 1612, Smyth died in Amsterdam. By 1610, his congregation had divided into three main groups. The first group, being discontented with Smyth's se-baptism, united with the Mennonites. The second group, led by Thomas Helwys who had already seceded from Smyth's congregation, held to Smyth's se-baptism. The third group was led by Leonard Bushe.

In 1612, Helwys and his small congregation, having decided that flight from persecution was unlawful, returned to London, and, at Spitalfields, formed the first General or Arminian Baptist congregation in England. Helwys expanded the tolerant sentiments of Smyth. Jordan says that, with the exception of Acontius, he "gave to religious toleration the finest and fullest defence which it ever received in England". Helwys gave the magistrate complete power in civil matters, but none over spiritual matters. Helwys' predecessors in the realm of religious toleration had long argued that the magistracy had no power over truth (which truth the other minority groups usually claimed to possess). Helwys went to the ultimate, stating that the King possessed the power to persecute neither truth or error. He stated that there is no more hideous tyranny than the forcing of men in questions of faith. Influenced by the Arminian doctrine of freedom of the will,

2 Ibid., 275.
4 Ibid., 280.
the moral competency of the individual, he stated that it is beyond the ability of any human to order faith. Scorning legal toleration, he demanded complete religious liberty. This liberty was to be granted to every group, even to the Roman Catholics, whom he considered a false church. Truth, he said, will ultimately triumph of its own self.

In 1614, Leonard Busher brought out his tract, Religious Peace, and a Plea for Liberty of Conscience. It is the earliest known English publication in which full liberty of conscience is openly advocated. His words were revolutionary for the seventeenth century:

For all good shepherds will divide and separate, and not force, ally, and persecute...Kings and magistrates are to rule temporal affairs by the swords of their temporal kingdoms, and bishops and ministers are to rule spiritual affairs by the word and Spirit of God, the sword of Christ's spiritual kingdom, and not to meddle one with another's authority, office and function. And it is a great shame for the bishops and ministers not to be able to rule in their church without the assistance of the king and magistrate; yes, it is a great sign they are none of Christ's bishops and ministers. If they were, they would not be afraid nor ashamed of their faith; nor yet would they persuade princes and people to persecute, and force one another to believe them; but would use only the assistance of God's word and Spirit, and thereby suffer their faith and doctrine to be examined, proved, and disputed, both by word and writing.2

Contending that no power may coerce faith, "as kings and bishops cannot command the wind, so they cannot command faith", Busher presented a full and objective consideration of the idea of religious toleration. He condemned the concept of the national church and any coercion aiming at con-

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1 Ibid., 261.
2 Underhill, Edward Bean, Tracts on Liberty of Conscience and Persecution, 23.
3 Ibid., 17.
formity in matters of faith. With rare insight he analyzed the psychosis of a dominant church, pointing out that the predominant system did not allow free scope in private judgment because of a basic fear of survival. In arguing to justify complete religious liberty, Busher contends that diversity of religions will be no threat to the state or to the true church. He pled with the king "to permit all sorts of Christians; yea, Jews, Turks, and pagans, so long as they are peaceable."

Another Baptist, John Murton, in 1615, wrote a treatise first entitled Objections: Answered, and republished in 1662 as Persecution for Religion Judged and Condemned. Again and again, statements such as the following appear:

No man ought to be persecuted for his religion, be it true or false, so they testify their faithful allegiance to the king. What authority can any mortal man require more, than of body, goods, life, and all that appertaineth to the outward man: The heart God requireth.  

Another tract entitled, A Most Humble Supplication, followed in 1620, which may have been by Murton and is praised by Roger Williams in The Bloudy Tenent. Williams had heard that the author, while in prison, had written the treatise with milk on the paper which was used as stoppers for his milk bottles. The writing would become legible only when held before the fire. Williams wrote, "It was in milk, soft, meek, peaceable and gentle, tending both to the peace of souls, and the peace of states and kingdoms".  

This was the third in the group of notable contributions of Baptist writers in this period. Like the others, he condemned any degree of

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1 Ibid., 33.
2 Ibid., 108.
religious persecution as a crime against the human conscience; and stated that persecution is a mark of the false rather than the true church. Reiterating the Arminian principle of the doctrine of free will, which Helwys and Busher had enunciated, he declared religion is an intensely personal matter which no sect or church can prescribe for every individual. He also advocated complete religious liberty as the panacea for England's civil and spiritual strife.

Although the Baptists were the first and most thorough expounders of religious liberty, it should be pointed out that their pleas, so far as we can learn, really made little impression upon the general English public. They were a small and despised sect and in the minds of many often associated with fanaticism. Their influence was upon the few instead of the many. In the early years of the seventeenth century which was a period of beginnings in the development of religious toleration in England, Roger Williams was among the few. Indeed, it is altogether likely that the men most influenced by these pleas were those who were suffering for conscience sake, and Williams was certainly in that group.

While there is every indication that the Baptists' pleas for liberty of conscience did not bear widespread influence at the time they were first proclaimed, it is also evident that that influence did not entirely die with the generation in which it was first propounded. During the period of acute controversy over toleration at the time of the Civil War and the Commonwealth, Leonard Busher's Religious Peace was reprinted, in 1646, by

2 Whitley, W. T., A History of British Baptists, 74.
Further evidence of the continued influence and activity of this extreme Separatist group is indicated by their number and importance in Cromwell's army. Prominent army Baptists were Thomas Harrison, Robert Bennet, Robert Overton, Charles Howard, Robert Lilburne, John Hutchinson, Richard Deane, Henry Danvers, John Desborough, William Allen, Richard Lawrence. Ludlow alone at one time commanded twenty-five Baptist officers and soldiers. The army printer, Henry Hills, was a Baptist. The establishment of Baptist churches frequently followed the movements of preaching officers and soldiers. William Kiffin and Thomas Patience were Baptist friends of Lilburne, and Richard Overton may have been a friend of Thomas Halwys.

Richard Baxter has recorded a revealing account of the extensive influence of the Baptists and other extreme Separatist groups in Cromwell's army. Among other things he writes the following:

We that lived quietly in Coventry did keep to our old principles, and thought all others had done so too except a very few inconsiderable persons...And when the Court News-book told the world of the swarms of Anabaptists in our armies, we thought it had been a mere lie, because it was not so with us nor in any of the garrison or county forces about us. But when I came to the Army, among Cromwell's soldiers, I found a new face of things, which I never dreamed of. I heard the plotting heads very hot upon that which intimated their intention to subvert both church and state. Independency and Anabaptistry were most prevalent... Abundance of the common troopers, and many of the officers, I found to be honest, sober, orthodox men, and others tractable, ready to hear the truth, and of upright intentions. But a few proud, self-conceited, hot-headed sectaries had got into the highest places, and were Cromwell's chief favourites, and by their

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1 Ibid., 75.
very heat and activity bore down the rest, or carried
them along with them, and were the soul of the Army
though much fewer in number than the rest (being indeed
not one to twenty throughout the Army; their strength
being in the General's and Whalley's and Rich's regi-
ments of horse, and in the new-placed officers in many
of the rest).

I perceived that they took the King for a tyrant
and an enemy, and really intended absolutely to master
him or ruin him...Per fas aut nefas, by law or without
it, they were resolved to take down not only bishops
and liturgy and ceremonies, but all that did withstand
their way. They were far from thinking of a moderate
Episcopacy, or of any healing way between the Episcopal
and Presbyterians. But Cromwell and his Council took on
them to join themselves to no party, but to be for the
liberty of all...

I found that many honest men of weak judgments and
little acquaintance with such matters, had been seduced
into a disputing vein, and made it too much of their re-
ligion to talk for this opinion and for that. Sometimes
for state-democracy, and sometimes for church-democracy;
sometimes against forms of prayer and sometimes against
infant baptism...But their most frequent and vehement
disputes were for liberty of conscience, as they called
it; that is, that the civil magistrate had nothing to do
to determine of anything in matters in religion by con-
straint or restraint, but every man might not only hold,
but preach and do, in matters of religion what he pleas-
ed; that the civil magistrate hath nothing to do but
with civil things, to keep the peace, and protect the
churches' liberties, etc.¹

The army debates to which Baxter refers reveal the keen interest
at that time in the question of democracy and religious liberty. These de-
bates which began in the autumn of 1647 are evidence of the seriousness with
which the Puritan mind was wrestling with these problems. The parties of
the Left, consisting of the more extreme Separatist groups and Baptists,
composed a heterogeneous company which was agreed on little save a demand
for liberty of conscience and separation of church and state. They went
beyond the Independents on these matters, but it is interesting to note

¹ Reliquiae Baxterianae (1696), Part I, 77, 73.
that both tenets were logical developments of parts of the Independents' own creed.

The Baptists' emphasis upon religious liberty was consistent with the most central tenets of their theology. They taught even more consistently than other Separatist groups that the true church was a voluntary congregation of believers, and they were never confused by the Calvinistic teaching that it was the duty of the prince to encourage the true religion and to repress the false. The Baptists' emphasis on the right of private judgment and the priesthood of all believers further undergirded their concept of religious liberty. They regarded the Scriptures as God's own revelation but at the same time held that its interpretation was a subjective matter. They found firm ground for claiming liberty of conscience when they maintained "that conscience is the organ of an inner light which comes from God..." Men who were convinced that all necessary truth in religion would be revealed to any man who soberly and sincerely sought for it would view with the greatest disfavour any interference in the complete freedom of the relationship of man with his God. The sect rejected the Augustinian theology of the reformers and insisted upon complete freedom of the will and the moral responsibility of the individual for his conduct and salvation. All men have been given sufficient grace to achieve salvation if they will. Jordan has summed up the Baptists' contribution as

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2. Powicke, 214.
The great Baptist apologists had made profoundly important contributions to the theory of religious toleration. They had systematized the thought of their predecessors and had broken new ground in their examination of the forces which had for so many centuries made religious devotion synonymous with religious bigotry. They framed their theory of toleration in the light of seventeenth century political and religious conditions and displayed a disposition to defend toleration upon 'politique' grounds as well as upon the basis of moral right. In this particular they were sharply distinguished from the laymen and moderates, who undertook their investigations with a coolness and a dispassion which marked them as philosophers rather than as deeply pious men. The Baptists had demonstrated that it was possible for devout and intensely evangelical men to regard error and rival creeds tolerantly and charitably. This disposition was seated rather in the philosophy underlying Baptist thought than in the temperament of the Baptist apologists, and it consequently guaranteed that the sect which these leaders founded in England would not depart substantially from the principles which they had enunciated. The Baptists had reared in the welter of rival fanaticisms and bigotries which characterized the period in England a tolerant and reasonably religious theory which offered quite as much hope to England as the noble system of comprehension which Elizabeth had framed, which the great Anglican apologists of the preceding generation had defended, and which the laymen and moderates were about to reinterpret in the light of changed conditions.¹

The tract literature of this century in England, from which several publications have already been considered, was prolific and it is impossible, because of the limited space available for this discussion, to go into the matter extensively. Among other tracts which may have influenced Williams' thinking were: Robinson's (1575-1625), Liberty of Conscience, William Walwyn's Toleration Justified, Bastwick's (1593-1654) The Litany, John Lilburne's (1614-1657) Worke of the Beast, No Lyeides, and Brooke's (1554-1628) Discourse, not Reason of Church Government. And of course Williams was familiar with the thinking and at least some of the works of

John Milton. He was associated with Milton and Cromwell and other prominent Puritans on one of his visits to England. But this consideration will be dealt with in a later section of this thesis.

In this brief survey of the history of the idea of religious liberty, several factors significant for a clearer understanding of Roger Williams' thought have become apparent. Again and again we have seen verified the opening affirmation of the chapter, namely, that neither the concept of soul liberty nor the practical idea of religious toleration were new when Roger Williams declared them. At various points Williams' theory of religious and political liberty had been anticipated by Paolo Sarpi, Castellio, Fausto Sozzini, Jacopo Acontius, Jacobus Arminius, and the Congregational and Baptist apologists. Our study has revealed that his plea for religious liberty was not even the first that was published in the English language.

Masson has written:

I regard the arrival of Roger Williams in London about midsummer, 1643, as the importation into England of the very quintessence or last distillation of that notion of church Independency which England had originated, but Holland and America had worked out.¹

If he had used the word, "nurtured", instead of "originated" he would have been more nearly correct, for Williams, an English Puritan of the seventeenth century, was to give the fullest and most emphatic defense of religious liberty yet recorded in the English language. But in so doing he was simply expanding and applying principles which had been advocated earlier, both in England and elsewhere.

Because of lack of definite evidence, it is impossible to determine just how familiar he was with the works of those who had gone before him.

However, we can be certain that he was influenced by them and that he was probably familiar with at least some of the writings of Castellio, Sozzini, Acontius, and the Congregational and Baptist apologists. As to how familiar, perhaps we shall never know, but we can know that he was greatly influenced by the persecution which he had endured and a knowledge of others who had pled the cause of religious liberty by pen and blood prior and contemporary with his era.
CHAPTER III

ROGER WILLIAMS' DEVELOPING CONCEPT OF RELIGIOUS LIBERTY

AS REVEALED IN HIS LIFE STORY

The gods, it would seem, were pleased to have their jest with Roger Williams by sending him to earth before his time. In manner and speech a seventeenth century Puritan controversialist, in intellectual interests he was contemporary with successive generations of prophets from his own days to ours. His hospitable mind anticipated a surprising number of the idealisms of the future. As a transcendental mystic he was a forerunner of Emerson and the Concord school, discovering the hope of a more liberal society in the practice of the open mind; as a political philosopher he was a forerunner of Paine and the French romantic school, discovering the end of government in concern for the res publica, and the cohesive social tie in the principle of good will. Democrat and Christian, the generation to which he belongs is not yet born, and all his life he remained a stranger amongst men. Things natural and right to John Cotton were no better than anachronisms to him. He lived and dreamed in a future he was not to see, impatient to bring to men a heaven they were not ready for. And because they were not ready they could not understand the grounds of his hope, and not understanding they were puzzled and angry and cast him out to dream his dreams in the wilderness. 1

Perhaps it will never be possible to completely determine to what degree the "times" make the man on the one hand or, on the other, to what degree through force of personality and leadership, the man creates the "times." While Roger Williams was certainly ahead of his generation, at the same time, he was a product of his age. He was unquestionably the cause of many of the circumstances in which he found himself, yet he was undoubtedly to a large degree a product of the turbulent era in which he lived. As all men, he was influenced by his friends and associates and by the period of history into which he was born. Hence to understand him and his conception

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of religious liberty we must make some investigation, though briefly, of the seventeenth century background.

The hundred years from the middle of the sixteenth century to the middle of the seventeenth century represent one of the turning points in history. This period includes the final stage of the Renaissance, the Protestant Reformation, and the Catholic Counter-Reformation.¹

The Roman Catholic Church and the Holy Roman Empire were the two dominant institutions of the Middle Ages. Their influence was felt in practically every area of life.² The Pope was accepted as supreme in all matters of faith and morality, and his influence was an ever present reality in secular matters. Society was composed principally of three classes: priests, soldiers, and peasants. The decline of the power of the Pope in Europe, and the decay of the Holy Roman Empire with the growth of strong national monarchies in which secular interests dictated ecclesiastical policy, marked the beginning of a changed outlook and a new era.³

The Italian Renaissance (1340-1540) with the subsequent movements in the various countries of Europe had set to work a number of new forces. The lay mind, now fortified by the free use of the vernacular languages, and by the full recovery of Greek and Hebrew, was to come into its own. The study of nature, instead of the study of theology, was beginning to occupy the center of man's attention. Painters examined the human body and physicians dissected it. The discovery made by Copernicus (1473-1543) that the

² Smith, Preserved, A History of Modern Culture, 10.
³ Fisher, 440f.
earth revolved around the sun had its effect. A new culture was made available to the laity by the invention of printing.

The expanding geography was having a marked influence in many areas of men's thinking. At first it was simply their imaginations that were stirred, but soon they became conscious of the economic opportunities involved. The center of world culture and power gradually shifted from the Mediterranean to the Atlantic. The Portuguese conquest of Ceuta on the African coast in 1415 marked the beginning of many explorations leading to the circumnavigation of Africa by Vasco da Gama and the discovery of America by Christopher Columbus. In the sixteenth century Europeans were beginning to think more and more in terms of national loyalties, which were destined to displace the old loyalties to church and empire.

It was upon such a Europe, kindled by new knowledge and new aspirations and charged with the spirit of national pride and independence, that the spark of the Protestant Reformation fell. Of course a challenge to Roman authority was not new. It had been made by Wycliffe (1324-1384) in England and Hus (1369-1415) in Bohemia. Many serious minds had long been concerned about the general corruption of the church. The Protestant Reformation had arisen out of a passionate sense of contrast between the simplicity of the Apostolic age and the wealth and abuses of the Roman Church. However, had it not been for the decline of the Pope's power in Europe and the decay of the Holy Roman Empire, with the rising national state, it would not have succeeded. Its victory in northern Germany was due in no small measure to the secular

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1 Smith, 9.
2 Fisher, 440f.
interests of the princes, who profited by the confiscation of the lands held by the church. Authority and tradition were dealt a terrible blow by the success of Luther's revolt. After the bloody religious wars had ended a greater freedom could become evident.¹

Luther's rebellion initiated the beginning of a fierce struggle all over Europe. During the first half of the sixteenth century, the great Hapsburg-Valois rivalry absorbed the energies of the leading Catholic powers on the continent. Protestant belief spread far and fast. Protestantism conquered the greater part of Germany and Switzerland, had a good reception in the Scandinavian countries, penetrated into Italy and Spain, and carried all before it in Scotland and Bohemia. Then a reaction set in. In 1559, Henry II of France renounced his dream of Italian conquest, and decided to devote himself to dealing with heresy at home. The religious wars began. The religious war in France lasted, with intermissions, from 1560 until the Edict of Nantes in 1598. 1618 marked the beginning of the Thirty Years War in Germany. The Reformation in England came as an act of state, more a matter of political expediency than as a result of popular uprising as it had in Germany and elsewhere.² The break had occurred in 1534, and was finally established by the end of the century. The possibility of a successful Catholic reaction had practically vanished by 1588 when the Spanish Armada was destroyed.³

Evidently in 1534 when Henry VIII banished the authority of the Pope, he had little intention of changing the established religion either in

¹ Smith, S.
² Bury, J. B., A History of Freedom of Thought, 76.
³ Fisher, 451
belief or form. However, under the influence of men like Cranmer, Latimer, Sherbon, and Thomas Cromwell, a Protestant tendency became evident. During the reign of Edward VI (1547-1553), a determined effort was made to establish Protestantism. It was in this period that the Puritan influence began to be felt. From the beginning, there were those who thought the revolt went too far, and others who were convinced it did not go far enough.

The state church of Queen Elizabeth far from satisfied the forward religious spirits. There was objection by various individuals and groups to practically every phase of the establishment. Some objected to the very principle of a state church; others disliked the institution of episcopacy; and a large group objected to the use of the surplice, the eastern position of the altar, and the liturgy which too closely resembled that of the Roman Church. The question arose as to whether the church could be modified and enlarged to comprehend these widely varied ideas. Could there be toleration for Puritan scruples in the church?

This question was swiftly answered by James I, Laud, and the Anglican divines, in the negative. Of course it is to be regretted, but it is altogether possible, that it was primarily out of this crucible of intolerance that a few flaming revolutionaries were driven by persecution to arrive at a position of absolute religious liberty and to feel compelled to promulgate the same.

The idea of religious liberty was foreign to that age and only at the end of the century, and at the cost of a civil war and a change of dynasty, was it in part established in an Act of Parliament. Under the long rule of the Roman Church, Europe had received no lessons in religious liberty and the

1 Fisher, 656.
Protestants were slow to learn. Martin Luther, John Calvin, William Laud, John Knox were hardly more liberal in this respect than Ignatius Loyola and the Duke of Alva.

Germany, which had led in the Reformation, suffered a severe moral and economic decline. She was so utterly exhausted at the end of the Thirty Years War that it was to take a full century for her to make a real recovery. France had also suffered as a result of the religious wars of the last half of the fifteenth century but she recovered rapidly and under Louis XIV, in the seventeenth century, became one of the strongest states in the western world. Her military success and her literary achievement made French the international language of culture and diplomacy. But while France was rising, Spain was declining. With the annexation of Portugal and her colonial empire in 1580, she seemed quite strong. But with the defeat of the Armada by the English in 1588, and by the Dutch in 1639, the expulsion of the Moors, and the revolt of Portugal in 1643, her decline had arrived. Her sea power fell to the Dutch and English. The Italian states were rapidly losing the political significance they had enjoyed. The Netherlands enjoyed extraordinary significance because of her colonial commerce. After 1583, England made marked progress both in the development of her colonial empire and political liberty at home. The period from Shakespeare to Milton was one of her most glorious literary eras. She was rapidly becoming the center of vast international interests.¹

The Renaissance had had a marked influence upon England particularly in the political and ecclesiastical realm. While the literary results were

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¹ I am indebted to Preserved Smith, A History of Modern Culture, Ch. I, for much of this brief analysis.
not as marked in England as in other countries it should be noted that the intellectual soil was fertilized. It was in the Elizabethan era that this fertilized soil began to bear considerable fruit. "The general awakening of national life, the increase of wealth, of refinement and leisure that characterized the reign of Elizabeth, was accompanied by a quickening of intelligence." The impulse which sprang from national triumph, from deliverance from Spain, and the decline of fear of Catholic reaction resulted in a new sense of national energy and security and power.

In England, as in other countries of Europe, there was a rising middle class of business men. This class found support for their cause in widespread Calvinistic teachings, and they were looked upon favorably by a large section of the lower middle classes and by the liberal members of the aristocracy. The typical Elizabethan leader was a landed aristocrat, a lover of adventure, a man of much love of beauty and little interest in business. But the times were fashioning a new man, less appealing, more efficient.

This new citizen was a practical man, skilled in the art of trade and commerce. He distrusted the culture of the aristocracy and cared little for art and music. He wore plain clothes and cut his hair short. His person, his home, and his church were usually undecorated. He read the Bible diligently. His industry began to pay off economically. The customs income of 10,000 pounds in 1590 increased to 625,000 pounds in 1641. Someone has estimated the

2 Ibid., 454.
3 Ibid., 460
increase in trade in the period of a century at 2500%. With a deep conviction of personal righteousness and a confidence based upon his rising economic power this Puritan business man was to register more and more boldly his protest against royal interference in the economic life of the nation.

Thus emerged the Puritan business man, traveller, breaker of traditions, champion of free enterprise, resister of kings, supporter of Parliament, proponent of democratic ideas, protector of property interest. Roger Williams, the son of a London merchant tailor, evidently grew up in an environment dominated by such business men. It unquestionably left its imprint upon his thinking. When he came on the scene the Elizabethan era had ended and the era of Puritan independence had begun. The age of the Renaissance was passing into the age of Puritanism.

In our consideration of the seventeenth century background it is well to turn for a moment to the realm of thought and philosophy. Mr. Basil Willey has pointed out that the early seventeenth century was one of those periods in history when men felt the problem of truth and their own justification of it more pressing and more acute than previously. In this century, European thought first assumed that it was its appointed task to discover the true nature of things. The general demand for restatement and explanation of truth was perhaps never more marked. Perhaps one reason for this was the disillusionment among thinking men. The sixteenth century had been born with the hope of a new world—whether the Humanist world of the Renaissance, the Protestant

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1 Wolfe, 4.
2 Ibid., 8.
3 The Seventeenth Century, 1.
4 Ibid., 2.
world of the Reformer, or the Catholic world of the Counter-Reformation. However, by the opening of the seventeenth century, it was all too obvious that men had changed little. They were still foolish, confused, and sinful.

The philosophic system of the Schoolmen and St. Thomas had already been rejected by the Humanists and the Reformers. This system had not as yet been replaced by another and hence tended to make this era one of intellectual confusion and uncertainty. To a large degree men were acquiring a new attitude toward knowledge itself. They no longer assumed that tradition was right or true because it was tradition. There was a growing conviction that there was new truth to be discovered.

It is interesting to note this conviction in the address of John Robinson to the departing Pilgrims:

I am verily persuaded the Lord hath more truth yet to break forth out of his holy word...I beseech you remember it is an article of your church covenant that you be ready to receive whatever truth shall be made known to you from the written word of God...It is not possible that the Christian world should come so lately out of such thick Anti-Christian darkness and that perfection of knowledge should break forth at once.

Investigation and inquiry were becoming major interests of scholarship. For an inquisitive mind such as Roger Williams possessed, this was certainly a fertile soil. Perhaps no social order in the early seventeenth century offered a more fertile soil for the growth of the seed of religious liberty than that of England.

The seventeenth century background presents a period which may be considered the watershed between the medieval and the modern world. It was an

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2 Quoted in Preface, 45, Puritanism and Liberty, Woodhouse.
era of change, marked by new and revolutionary concepts, both political and religious. Yet at the same time it was an era of many contradictions. Although it witnessed a large number of publications advocating political and religious liberty, in practice it was also an epoch of some of the severest intolerance.

It is an error to assume, as many people do, that the Reformation established religious liberty and the right of private judgment. What it actually did was to bring about a new set of political and social conditions under which religious liberty would ultimately develop. The reformation contributed to the cause of liberty by substituting a number of theological authorities instead of one, and by defending the right of private judgment as a basis of Protestant rebellion.\(^1\) Luther himself was unable to get away from religious persecution and Calvin was even more intolerant. In England, from the time of Elizabeth on, Catholics and all Protestants who were not members of the established church were cruelly persecuted.\(^2\) Of course this persecution under Elizabeth and James had been motivated primarily by political considerations yet, none the less, it made religious liberty an impossibility. It remained for a fearless and revolutionary pioneer, whom some contended had a windmill in his head, to gather up and interpret the new ideas and translate them into a practical reality in a tiny settlement in the wilderness of a new land. We shall now turn our attention to that story.

We know very little about the beginning and the ending of the life of Roger Williams, and much of that little is in doubt. We are uncertain about the exact date and place of his birth. There is a tradition that he was born

\(^1\) Sutro Library Project, Pamphlets on Religion and Democracy, vii-viii of Introduction.

\(^2\) Sutro Library Project, Pamphlets on Religion and Democracy, vii-viii of Introduction.
in Wales in 1599. Dr. Reuben A. Guild, librarian of Brown University, Providence, and a careful student of Williams' life, contends that he was born in the town of Gwinear in Cornwall, the son of William and Alice Williams, on December 21, 1602. On the other hand, Mr. Henry F. Waters, a distinguished genealogist of Salem, concludes that Roger Williams was an Englishman born in London between 1599 and 1602, the son of James and Alice Williams. Mr. Waters bases his conclusion upon evidence found in the records of the wills of James Williams, a London tailor, and of his wife, Alice Williams, and of their son-in-law, Ralph Wightman. This later conclusion as to the place of his birth is now generally accepted.

On the basis of two of Williams' letters it would appear that he was born between 1600 and 1604. In a letter addressed to John Winthrop and dated 1632, Williams writes, "...and yet if I at present were, I should be in the day of my vanity nearer upwards of 30 than 25..." If Williams were between 28 and 29 in 1632, as this would imply, then he was born between 1603-1604. However, in a Testimony relating to Richard Smith, one of the early settlers in Narragansett Country, and dated July 21, 1679, he writes, "...being now

1 Knowles, James D., Memoir of Roger Williams, the Founder of the State of Rhode Island, Chapter I.

2 The wills referred to name as legatees their sons, Roger, Robert, and Sidrack. The will of Alice Williams, dated August 1, 1634, speaks of "my son Roger Williams now beyond the seas", and of his wife and daughter. At that time Roger Williams was married and had one daughter and was in New England. These wills also refer to another son, Sidrack. Roger in his writing addressed to George Fox refers to another brother as being a member of the Levant or Turkey Company of Merchants. He may have learned of the religious toleration in the Turkish empire from this brother. Attention is called to a discussion of this question in Chapter I of Roger Williams the Pioneer of Religious Liberty, by Oscar S. Straus, 3d.

near to four score years of age." This would seem to indicate that he was
born about 1600. Evidently there is some error in the dating of the letters,
or Williams is speaking in very general terms.

It is thought that the birth occurred in the parish of St. Sepulchres, without Newgate, London, probably in the parental home in Cow Lane, as the street is still called. Probably his boyhood was spent about the suburbs of London, within and without Newgate, on Snowhill, and at Smithfield. His father, James Williams, was a merchant tailor and died in 1621. The earliest contemporary reference to Roger Williams is a legacy of twenty shillings from Margery Pate, the parish of St. Sepulchres, dated 1617.

The most definite data we have concerning his early years comes from Mrs. Sadler, the daughter of Sir Edward Coke, who wrote in a note appended to one of Williams' letters addressed to her these words:

This Roger Williams when he was a youth, would, in a short-hand, take sermons and speeches in the Star Chamber, and present them to my dear father. He seeing so hopeful a youth, took such a liking to him that he sent him into Sutton's Hospital, and he was the second that was placed there.

Hence through the influence of Coke, Roger Williams enrolled at the Charter House School which was then known as Sutton's Hospital, June 25, 1621.

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1 Ibid., 399.
2 Ernst, James Emanuel, The Political Thought of Roger Williams, 1-2.
3 Easton, Emily, Roger Williams Prophet and Pioneer, 70.
5 It is interesting to note that the will of James Sutton, who provided for the foundation of this school, was contested by the testator's nephew and that the will was sustained through the argument of Sir Edward Coke, who was one of the governors of the hospital. Hence it would be natural for Coke to send a promising young man there.
This school was located not too far from Williams' home. By its rules it was provided that no scholar could be admitted under twelve years or over fourteen years of age. Every year a visitation of the school was made to determine which of the scholars between sixteen and eighteen years of age were fit to be presented to the universities. Those who were sent to the universities were allowed a yearly pension of sixteen pounds for eight years while pursuing their studies.  

Williams continued his studies at the Charter House School until 1623. On June 29, 1623, he registered at Pembroke College, Cambridge. He matriculated on July 7, 1624, signed the Subscription Book in 1626, and received the degree of B. A. in January, 1627. For two more years he continued as a graduate student at Cambridge, evidently preparing for the ministry.

There is a tradition that after leaving Cambridge he began a study of law under his patron, Sir Edward Coke, but, not finding it to his liking, turned to theology. We know that in 1626, or early in 1629, he became Chaplain to Sir William Masham of Otes in Essex. Evidently this was his first charge in the ministry.

Two of Roger Williams' letters addressed to Lady Harrington (a daughter of Sir Henry Cromwell who was an aunt of Oliver Cromwell and John Hampden, and was mother-in-law of Sir Thomas Masham), help to identify Williams and reveal his residence in May, 1629. In these letters he speaks of his aged mother, his financial circumstances and future prospects, his library, his sensitive conscience, his having been kept back from honor and preferment, a call to

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2 Ernst, 2.
3 Ernst, 11.
New England and several other offers of a "living" for one hundred pounds, and of his love for a member of the lady's family. 1

While serving as Chaplain to Sir William Masham at Otis he had met Jane Walley, Lady Masham's cousin, and he seems to have fallen deeply in love with her. Evidently he made frequent visits to Hatfield Priory where Jane lived with her aunt and guardian, Lady Barrington. Neighborhood gossip seems to have caused Lady Barrington to ask him to stop calling on her niece. He complied but sent a "paper deputie", asking for her niece's hand in marriage.Lady Barrington replied that he was altogether unsuitable for a member of her family. Williams was so upset that he wrote the lady on May 2, 1629, "We (Jane and Roger) hope to live together in the heavens though ye Lord have denied that union on earth." He further reminded her that she was growing old and should be looking out for her soul's salvation. 2

However, it appears that he soon forgot Jane, for he transferred his affections elsewhere. The disappointed lover was attracted by Mary Barnard, Lady-in-waiting to Jane's cousin, "Jug" Altham, Lady Masham's eldest daughter. This engagement is mentioned in a letter by Lady Masham in the autumn of 1629. They were married on December 15, 1629, at High Laver, Essex. 3

While serving at Otis, Williams became acquainted with several

1 These letters were originally in the collection of G. Alan Lawedes and reported by the Historical Manuscript Commission of England in their seventh report. Reprinted in the "New England Historical and Genealogical Register", July, 1889. They are now in the possession of the Department of Manuscripts, The British Museum, London (Egerton Ms. 2643, ff. 1, 3).


3 Ernst, 7.
individuals who were destined to play a vital part in the affairs of England in later years. There was Oliver Cromwell, "Ship-money" John Hampden, and Edward Whalley, who were Lady Masham's relatives, and who evidently often visited the Mashams. These contacts would be of great assistance to him later. Lady Masham's husband and her brother, Sir Thomas Barrington, later signed the famous letter giving Roger Williams free passage through Massachusetts when returning to Rhode Island from his visit to England.

It is probable that Williams gave up his Chaplaincy at Otes shortly after May, 1629, for it is unlikely that he would remain much longer after the tone of his second letter to Lady Barrington. He may have obtained a small parish church in Essex. High Laver, in Essex, where he was married in December, 1629, is not more than a dozen miles from Chelmsford, where Thomas Hooker lived and preached. From Williams' writings it is evident that they were neighbors and friends. He records a memorable ride which the two of them had with Rev. John Cotton, discussing the use of the Book of Common Prayer:

Possibly Master Cotton may call to mind that the discusser riding with himself and one other person of precious memory (Master Hooker) to and from Sempringham, presented his arguments from Scripture when he durst not join with them in their use of Common Prayer.¹

He continued to live in Essex long enough to get a reputation for being divinely mad.

At this point there are two conjectures as to Williams' history before sailing for the new world. Some think that he obtained a parish church in Lincolnshire, near Boston and Sempringham; and others, that after leaving Otes sometime after May, 1629, until his departure from Bristol for New England

late in 1630, Williams lived and preached for the most part in and around Essex.  

On December 1, 1630, Roger Williams and his wife set sail for New England on the ship, "Iyon, Captain Pierce". After a stormy voyage of sixty-five days, the "Iyon" anchored at Nantasket in Boston harbor on February 5, 1631. We have no definite statement of Roger Williams concerning his immediate reasons for emigrating to America. There is an allusion to what may have been the immediate cause in one of his letters to Mrs. Sadleir:

And truly it was as bitter as death to me when Bishop Laud pursued me out of this land, and my conscience was persuaded against the national Church, and ceremonies, and bishops, beyond the conscience of your dear father.

Of course it should be noted that 1631, the year in which Williams arrived in Boston, was marked in England by emphasis on a severely autocratic rule by Charles I. With zeal and severity Laud was seeking to blot out all sectarians by torture and imprisonment. Drastic measures were being taken to stem the tide of rebellion against uniformity. Williams was certainly keenly conscious of these measures and perhaps suffered personally because of them. When he arrived in Boston, Williams was a young man whom Bradford characterizes as "a young minister, godly and zealous having precious parts". He is one of the few persons whose arrival Governor Winthrop considered of enough importance to mention in his diary.

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1 Ernst, 7.
3 N. C. F., Vol. VI, 239.
After having fled England seeking religious liberty Williams was 
amazed to find that men, who like himself had suffered in Old England, were 
exercising similar outrages upon conscience and human rights. Artesas Ward, 
though facetious, revealed an ironic truth when he said that the Puritans came 
to this country "to worship God according to their own consciences, and to pre-
vent other people from worshiping him according to theirs."\(^1\) Williams' sur-
prise was soon transformed into indignation. Winthrop notes that he no sooner 
landed than he declared, "the magistrates might not punish a breach of the 
Sabbath, nor any other offense," if it were a breach of the first table, and 
that he also refused to hold communion with any group favorable to the Angli-
can impurities.\(^2\)

The church in Boston extended him a call but he refused it because 
its members, when in England, held communion with the Anglican Church. In a 
few weeks he left Boston and united with the church in Salem. Forty years 
thereafter, in a letter to John Cotton of Plymouth he says:

> Being unanimously chosen teacher at Boston, before your 
dear father came, divers years, I conscientiously re-
fused, and withdrew to Plymouth, because I durst not 
officiate to an unseparated people, as upon examination 
and conference, I found them to be.\(^3\)

He also later wrote of his separation:

> My own voluntary withdrawing from those churches re-
solved to continue in those evils, and persecuting the 
witnesses of the Lord presenting light unto them, I 
confess it was my own voluntary act; yea, I hope the act

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of the Lord Jesus, sounding forth in me...the blast, which shall, in his own holy season, cast down strength and confidence of those inventions of men.1

It is interesting to note that it was toward the close of this year that John Cotton arrived in Boston. On the third of September he made his appearance in company with Mr. Hooker and Mr. Stone of whom it was written that this

glorious triumvirate coming together, made the poor people in the wilderness to say, That the God of heaven had supplied them with what would in some sort answer their three great necessities. COTTON for their clothing, HOOKER for their fishing, and STONE for their building.2

For nineteen years John Cotton was destined to guide a stern theocracy in Massachusetts and in clashing so violently with Roger Williams he was to give assistance in crystallizing Williams' advanced views.

Williams' stay in Salem was of short duration. He began his ministry in April and on the 30th of that same month the General Court of the Boston Bay Colony sent its disapproval and asked the church to refuse to accept him.3 This was an infringement upon the rights of the independent congregation and community. Soon after Williams had landed he had entered his name to become a freeman. On May 12, he was made a freeman and on that very day the Court made a new ruling that "only church members within the limits of the colony are in the future to be admitted as freemen of the Body Politic."4

3 Strauss, 29.
The purpose was partly to avoid admission of men like Williams to the Body Politic and partly to establish the principle of government by the saints. By this law Williams claimed that the office of the magistrate was shut against natural and unregenerate men though excellently fitted for the civil offices, and also against the best servants of God unless they unite with the established church. He fondly called this ruling "Moses' Church Constitution", referring, of course, to its Old Testament origin.1

He left Salem in September, 1631, for Plymouth where he served the church as pastor for more than two years.2 Bradford speaks of his stay in Plymouth in the following manner:

(1633) Mr. Roger Williams (a man godly and zealous, having many precious parts, but very unsettled in judgment) came over first to the Massachusetts, but upon some discontent left that place, and came hither, (where he was friendly entertained, according to their poor ability) and exercised his gifts amongst them, and after some time was admitted a member of the church; and his teaching well approved, for the benefit whereof I still bless God, and am thankful to him, even for his sharpest admonitions and reproofs so far as they agreed with truth. He this year began to fall into some strange opinions, and from opinion to practise which caused some controversy between the church and him, and in the end some discontent on his part, by occasion whereof he left them some thing abruptly. Yet afterwards sued for his dismissal to the church of Salem, which was granted with some caution to them concerning him. But he soon fell into more things there, both to their and the governments trouble and disturbance. I shall not need to name particulars, they are too well known now to all, though for a time the church there went under some hard censure by his occasion, from

2 The Pilgrims who came over on the Mayflower and settled at Plymouth were more liberal than the Puritans who settled Boston Bay. Before embarking for the new world they had resided in Holland and had, unlike the Puritans, become entirely alienated from the Church of England. Hence it is probable that Williams' views were more in accord with those of the settlers at Plymouth.
some that afterwards smarted themselves. But he is to be pitted, and prayed for, and so I shall leave the matter, and desire the Lord to shew him his errors, and reduce him into the way of truth, and give him a settled judgment and constancies in the same; for I hope he belongs to the Lord, and that he will shew him mercy...1

Leaving Plymouth in 1634, he returned to Salem where he was cordially received and called as assistant to Skelton, the pastor. His popularity in Plymouth is attested by the fact that a considerable number of the settlers there followed him to Salem. When Skelton's health failed and he died in August, Williams was made his successor.2 The authorities of the Massachusetts Bay colony protested but Salem would not be deterred. Complaints were soon raised against him for publicly preaching against the King's Patent, the use of the cross of St. George on the English flag, the right of the colony to Indian land, and the theocratic form of government.3

He received his first summons to Court on November 17, 1634. On April 30, 1635, a new accusation was made against him. In April, 1635, the court summoned Williams to appear at Boston. Winthrop gives an account of the proceeding in his Journal:

The occasion was, for that he had taught publickly that a magistrate ought not to tender an oath to an unregenerate man; for that we thereby have communion with a wicked man in the worship of God, and cause him to take the name of God in vain. He was heard before all the ministers and very clearly confuted. 4

In referring to the trial, Williams gives a slightly different version. In his Mr. Cotton's Letter Examined and Answered, he writes:

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2 Armitage, Thomas, A History of Baptists, 627 f.
4 Ibid., 157-158.
After my public trial and answers at the Court, one of the most eminent magistrates, whose name and speech may by others be remembered, stood up and spoke: 'Mr. Williams', said he, 'holds forth these four particulars: First, that we have not our land by patent from the King, but that the natives are the true owners of it, and that we ought to repent of such a receiving it by patent; Secondly, that it is not lawful to call a wicked person to swear or to pray, as being actions of God's worship; Thirdly, that it is not lawful to hear any of the ministers of the parish assemblies in England; Fourthly, that the civil magistrate's power extends only to bodies, and goods, and outward state of men, etc.' I acknowledged the particulars were rightly summed up, and I also hope, that, as I then maintained the rocky strength of them to my own and other consciences' satisfaction, so, through the Lord's assistance, I shall be ready for the same ground not only to be bound and banished, but to die also in New England, as for most holy truths of God in Christ Jesus.

From Williams' writings it is apparent that he considered taking an oath an act of worship and that his peculiar views were formed evidently before he left England. He objected to the light manner in which they were administered to the pious and profane alike. It is likely that Williams was not so much opposed to the taking of oaths as such as he was to the "Freeman's Oath". He opposed this oath as being contrary to the charter and it definitely conflicted with his fundamental principle of religious liberty.

In July, 1635, he was served with new and more dangerous charges. He was charged with holding:

First, that the magistrate ought not to punish the breach of the first table, otherwise than in such cases as did not disturb the civil peace. Secondly, that he ought not to tender an oath to an unregenerate man. Thirdly, that a man ought not to give thanks after sacrament, not after meat, etc.

2 Vide appendix, Hirling Ministry None of Christ's.
Williams contended that it was not right and lawful for a wicked person to swear, or to pray, for to him these were actions of God's worship. The charge was also made that the church at Salem had persisted in calling him against the advice of the Court. For this last fault the Court punished Salem by denying her certain lands in Marblehead Neck which legally belonged to her. Whereupon Williams wrote, and led the Salem congregation to write, letters to the other churches asking them to oppose the action of the Court as contrary to their congregational and community rights.\(^1\) Coercion was further brought by depriving the deputies of Salem of their seats until apologies were made. The principal deputy, Mr. Endicott, was imprisoned for justifying the letter of Williams. The majority of the people forsook Williams to avoid losing the land.

Further incensed, Williams threatened to withdraw from all of the churches of the Bay and shortly thereafter he did renounce church communion with them. This decision was followed by another summons from the Court. At this session of the Court which was held in October, 1635, the ministers in the Bay were present and Williams' letters were read. Master Hooker was chosen to set him straight in his errors but neither Hooker nor Cotton could convince him.\(^2\) Instead of recanting he grew stronger in his convictions.\(^3\)

The result was an act of banishment on September 3, which stated that he was to depart within six weeks out of the jurisdiction of the Bay. The Act of Banishment reads:

*Whereas Mr. Roger Williams, one of the elders of the Church of Salem, hath broached and divulged new and...*  

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1. Ibid., 164.
dangerous opinions against the authority of magistrates; has also writ letter of defamation, both of magistrates and churches here, and that before any conviction, and yet maintaineth the same without any retraction; it is, therefore, ordered that the said Mr. Williams shall depart out of this jurisdiction, not to return any more without license from the court.¹

Later the order was modified permitting him to remain until spring. But when he continued to propagate his ideas the Court decided to send him to England by a ship that was then lying in the harbor. Williams ignored this Court summons of January 11, 1636. Whereupon the Court immediately sent a sloop under the command of Captain John Underhill to take him by force but he, having been warned by Governor Winthrop, had departed with his servant, Thomas Angell, three days earlier.² Thirty-five years later in a letter to Major Mason he describes his wanderings through the wilderness and his subsequent settlement:

When I was unkindly and unchristianly, as I believe, driven from my house, and land and wife and children; in midst of a New England winter, now about thirty-five years past, at Salem, that ever honored Governor, Mr. Winthrop, privately wrote to me to steer my course to the Narragansett Bay and Indians, for many high and heavenly and public ends encouraging me, from the free¬ness of the place from any English claims or patents. I took his prudent motion as a hint and voice from God, and, waiving all other thoughts and motions, I steered my course from Salem—though in winter snow, which I feel yet—unto these parts, wherein I may say Peniel, that is, I have seen the face of God...I first pitched, and began to build and plant at Seekonk, now Rehoboth; but I received a letter from my ancient friend, Mr. Winslow, then Governor of Plymouth, professing his own and others' love and respect to me, yet lovingly advising me, since I was fallen into the edge of their bounds, and they were loth to displease the Bay, to remove but to the other side of the water; and then he said I had the country free before

me, and might be as free as themselves, and we should be loving neighbors together. These were the joint understandings of these two eminently wise and Christian Governors, and others, in their day, together with their counsel and advice as to the freedom and vacancy of this place, which in this respect and many other providences of the Most Holy and Only Wise, I called Providence...

Sometime after, the Plymouth great Sachem, Quassamaquin (Massachusett), upon occasion, affirming that Providence was his land, and therefore Plymouth's land, and none resenting it, the then prudent and godly Governor, Mr. Bradford, and others of his godly council, answered, that if, after due examination, it should yet having, to my loss of a harvest that year been now—though by their gentle advice—as good as banished from Plymouth as from Massachusetts, and I had quietly and patiently departed from them, at their motion, to the place where now I was, I should not be molested and tossed up and down again while they had breath in their bodies. And surely between those, my friends of the Bay and Plymouth, I was sorely tossed, for one fourteen weeks, in a bitter winter season, not knowing what bread or bed did mean, beside the yearly loss of no small matter in my trading with English and natives, being debarred from Boston, the chief mart and port of New England. God knows that many thousand pounds cannot repay the very temporary losses I have sustained. It lies upon the Massachusetts and me, yea, and other colonies joining with them, to examine with fear and trembling, before the eyes of flaming fire, the true cause of all my sorrows and sufferings. It pleased the Father of Spirits to touch many hearts dear to him with some relentings amongst which that great and pious soul, Mr. Winslow, melted and kindly visited me, at Providence, and put a piece of gold into the hands of my wife for our supply.1

Evidently it was in the latter part of June, 1636, that Williams, and the four companions who had joined him, embarked in his canoe at Seekonk to seek another spot beyond the jurisdiction of either the Massachusetts or Plymouth colonies.

According to tradition, he proceeded down the Seekonk River until he reached the "Slate Rock" where upon approaching the eastern bank he was greeted

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1 K. C. F. Vol. VI, 335-338.
by a company of Indians with the friends salutation, "What cheer, Metop?"

(Friend) After landing and exchanging friendly greetings with the Indians he again embarked. At the mouth of the Mohassuck River, near a spring, he landed and there, upon the slope of a hill, began the first settlement in Rhode Island.\(^1\) Williams, in gratitude to God whom he felt had led him to that place by His gracious hand of Providence, called the settlement, "Providence". The owners of the land were his friends, Canonicus, and his nephew, Miantonomo, the chiefs of the Narragansett tribe.

By a deed, dated in March, 1636, certain lands and meadows which had been previously purchased as the deed indicates were conveyed to him. The deed concludes,

in consideration of the many kindnesses and services he, Williams, hath continually done for us, both with our friends of Massachusetts, as also at Connecticut and Arcum or Plymouth, we do freely give unto him all that land from those rivers reaching to Pastuckot River.\(^2\)

The actual reasons behind the banishment of Roger Williams have been discussed to some degree by practically every student of Williams' life. James E. Ernst probably gets to the root of the matter when he suggests that his banishment was due not so much to the opinions that he held as it was to the violent assertion of those opinions. His opposition to the Patent and the Oath of Fidelity, in addition to leading the Salem church to join with him were the matters that hastened the action.\(^3\) Williams was finally driven out

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3 Staples, William R., Annals of the Town of Providence, 76.
4 Ernst, 13-14.
because the principles he so vigorously asserted, in the words of Cotton, "subverted the fundamental state, and the government of the country."¹

Williams' conviction could never be compatible with a theocracy. And Cotton correctly surmised that if they were accepted they would eventually completely frustrate the Massachusetts Calvinistic ideal. They meant the absolute separation of joint participation by the church and state. Williams not only questioned the methods of the Puritans in establishing their new Israel but actually denied their claim that they were Israelites at all. Ancient Israel, he contended, did constitute a national church but after Christ, the Jewish nation had ceased to exist as a chosen people. He challenged their fundamental principle.

Williams was not the only one to protest against the lack of religious liberty in the Boston settlement. It is interesting to note that some years later, Sir Richard Saltonstall, one of the magistrates of Massachusetts Bay, then in England, wrote to Rev. Messrs. Cotton and Wilson in Boston:

Reverend and dear friends, whom I unfeignedly love and respect,—It doth not a little grieve my spirit to hear what sad things are reported daily of your tyranny and persecution in New England, as that you fine, whip, and imprison men for their consciences. First you compell such to come into your assemblies as you know will not join you in your worship, and when they show their dislike thereof, or witness against it, then you stir up your magistrate to punish them for such—as you conceive—their public affronts. Truly, friends, this your practice of compelling any in matters of worship to do that whereof they are not fully persuaded, is to make them sin, for so the apostle (Romans 14:23) tells us, and many are made hypocrites thereby conforming in their outward men, for fear of punishment. We pray for you, and wish you prosperity every way, hoping the Lord would have given you so much light and love there, that you might have been eyes to God's people here, and

¹ Ibid., 15.
not to practice those courses in a wilderness, which you went so far to prevent. These rigid ways have laid you very low in the hearts of the saints.1

Lether, in defending the banishment, Cotton contended that there was a question as to whether it was "punishment at all," since Williams was driven into a "large and fruitful" land which was simply an "enlargement." 2 Of course Williams felt he might have viewed it differently, "Had his soul been in my soul's case, exposed to the miseries, poverty, necessities, debts, and hardships." 3

With the exception of two journeys to England, (1643-1644 and 1651-1654), Roger Williams spent the remainder of his life in Rhode Island. Henceforth, his abiding concern was the establishment of the colony as a refuge for those oppressed for liberty of conscience. Even the two trips to England were primarily for the purpose of securing charter rights, and to look after legal and trade affairs of the various members of the colony.

There were now twelve individuals in the group who had either accompanied him, or had joined him soon afterwards, and he divided the land equally among them. This generous action was contrary to general practice and was consistent with his belief in liberty. In a confirmatory deed made in 1661, he again indicated his purpose:

I desired it might be for a shelter for persons distressed for conscience. I then considering the condition of divers of my distressed country men, I communicated my said

1. Elton, Romeo, Life of Roger Williams, 76.
purchase unto my loving friends (whom he names) who then desired to take shelter with me.1

Roger Williams' wife, with their two small children, came to join him in the summer of 1636. In the course of two years a considerable number of settlers joined them both from Massachusetts and from Old England. It soon became necessary to set up a more stable basis of government. Every inhabitant was required to sign the following compact:

We whose names are hereunder-written, being desirous to inhabit in the town of Providence, do promise to submit ourselves, in active or passive obedience, to all such orders or agreements 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 unto the same, ONLY IN CIVIL THINGS.2

From the very first, Rhode Island was a democracy. March 16, 1641, marks the first declaration of democracy in America.

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...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.3

On September, 1641, it was ordered, "That that law of the last Court, made concerning liberty of conscience in point of doctrine, be perpetuated.4

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1 Staples, 39f.
2 Ibid.
3 Ibid.
4 Bartlett, Colonial Record, Vol. 1, 156.
5 Ibid.
The general assembly which met in Portsmouth in May, 1647, passed a resolution declaring 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.¹

This unusual code of laws concludes with these remarkable words:

These are the laws that concern all men, and these are the penalties for the transgression thereof, which by common consent are ratified and established throughout this whole colony; and otherwise than thus what is herein forbidden, all men may walk as their consciences persuade them, every one in the name of his God. And let the saints of the most high walk in this colony without molestation in the name of Jehovah, their God, forever and ever, etc., etc.²

The democratic policy of the little settlement was soon to be tested. This is not at all strange, for the most eccentric had naturally drifted into Providence. Who but Roger Williams had ever imagined that a community practicing absolute religious and political liberty would result in anything except bedlam and anarchy? Winthrop records an amusing incident in his Journal. The account is probably somewhat biased:

At Providence, also, the devil was not idle. For whereas at their first coming thither, Mr. Williams and the rest did make an order that no man should be molested for his conscience, now men’s wives, and children and servants, claiming liberty hereby to go to all religious meetings, though never so often or though private, upon the week days; and because one Verin refused to let his wife go to Mr. Williams’ so often as she was called for, they required to have him censured. But there stood up one Arnold, a witty man of their own company, and withstood it, telling them that, when he consented to that order, he never intended it should extend to the breach of any

¹ Ibid., 190.
² Ibid.
ordinance of God, such as the subjection of wives to their husbands, etc., and gave divers solid reasons against it. Then one Greene...replied that if they should restrain their wives, etc., all the women in the country would cry out of them, etc. Arnold answered him thus: Did you pretend to leave Massachusetts because you would not offend God to please men, and would you now break an ordinance and commandment of God to please women?...In conclusion when they would have censured Verin, Arnold told them that it was against their own order, for Verin did that he did out of conscience; and their order was that no man should be censured for his conscience.¹

Probably the correct account is that carried in the Providence record:

It was agreed that Josua Verin, upon the breach of a covenant for restraining of the liberty of conscience, shall be withheld from the liberty of voting till he shall declare the contrary.²

This incident is particularly interesting because it is the earliest account of a conflict between liberty and law in Providence. Much has been made of this incident to show that Roger Williams was inconsistent. However it appears that it would rather indicate how deeply ingrained in his thinking was the principle that, under God, every man possessed the inalienable right of religious liberty, and that this principle must be kept inviolate both in the religious and domestic realms.

Roger Williams' lack of personal resentment is indicated by his assistance in averting a general league of the Indians organized for the destruction of the New England colonies. At the request of the magistrates of Massachusetts Bay he mediated with the Narragansetts and succeeded in upsetting the efforts of the Pequots to form a coalition with the Narragansetts.³ He

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² Straus, 83.
³ Gammell, 81f.
prevailed upon Miantonomoh, the Narragansett sachem, together with two sons of Canonicous and a large number of attendants, to make a visit to Boston and confer with the authorities of the Bay. As a result, a treaty of perpetual peace and alliance was signed in October, 1636. The terms of the treaty were arranged by Williams. After failing to arrange an alliance with the Narragansetts, the Pequots proceeded alone with the war. Roger Williams entertained the troops of the Bay and served as a mediator between the Narragansett and Bay troops.

Since Williams divided his lands with the other settlers he had to work to earn a livelihood for himself and his family. "Time was spent day and night," he wrote, "at home and abroad, on land and water, at the hoe and at the oar, for bread." His eldest son was born in the autumn of 1638 and he named him, "Providence". It is also interesting to note that he had named his second child, "Freeborn", indicating how he was obsessed with the idea of religious liberty.

In March, 1638, a law was passed by the Boston Bay colony which practically excluded the inhabitants of Providence from coming within the limits of Boston. Since Boston was the chief port in the district for trading both with the Indians and England, this created a serious economic disadvantage. It was but one of a number of methods which were used from time to time to stigmatize the Providence settlement. In the light of these facts, Williams' lack of personal bitterness is all the more striking.

Toward the close of 1638 there was an immigration of Baptists (generally called Anabaptists), from Massachusetts to Providence. Prominent

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1 N. C. P., Vol. VI.
among them were Ezekial Holyman and Mrs. Scott, a sister-in-law of Mrs. Hutchinson. They were welcomed, and a short time later, early in 1639, Holyman baptized Williams who then administered the rite to ten others.\(^1\) This event has been considered as the organization of the first Baptist Church in America. Williams retained his connection with this group only three or four months after which he withdrew and became what was known in New England as a "Seeker".\(^2\) However, he remained on cordial terms with the church membership and continued to preach. His reasons for withdrawing lay in his doubting the apostolic authority of all ordinances of the church. This especially pertained to baptism which led to his doubting the validity of his own baptism. He seems to have objected to the limitations of specific creeds, feeling that they interfered with full liberty of conscience.

In 1643, a New England Confederacy composed of Massachusetts, Plymouth, Connecticut, and New Haven was organized. Its motive was protection against the Indians and the Dutch on the Hudson, as well as possible designs of the French colonies in the north under Jesuit guidance with their extensive Indian alliances. Rhode Island requested membership but was refused admission both in 1644 and 1648. The lack of a charter was given as the alleged reason but when in the following year a charter was obtained she was still excluded. Open hostility of the Confederacy, and the contention that the Rhode Island and the Providence settlements had no authority to set up a government induced these colonies to ally themselves and seek a charter from the mother country.

An assembly was held at Newport, September 19, 1642, and a committee

\(^1\) Ibid., Vol. I, 293.
was appointed with instruction to procure a charter. Williams was immediately entrusted with the responsibility. He proceeded to New York to embark for England. While in New York he was able to pacify the Indians who had been provoked by excessive cruelty.

In the latter part of June, or the first of July, 1643, he set sail for England. During this voyage he wrote his *Key into the Language of America*. This book was published soon after he arrived in England and was the first systematic attempt to translate the Indian language into a known tongue. It contained much interesting material on their customs, habits, religion, and government.

Williams arrived in England in the midst of the Civil War. Soon Parliament gained ascendancy and Charles I was sent to the scaffold. Since Parliament was uncertain of its position, it was willing to conciliate the favor of the colonies. Their affairs were entrusted to the Earl of Warwick as Governor General, with a council of five peers and twelve commons. Among the twelve commoners was Sir Henry Vane, whom Williams had come to know in New England and who was an advocate of religious liberty. This friendship assisted him in procuring the charter which was entitled, "The Incorporation of Providence Plantations in the Narragansett Bay in New England", and was granted March 14, 1644.

Shortly after Williams' arrival in London there appeared a little thirteen page pamphlet which John Cotton had written to him, attempting to juse-
tify his banishment. Some question arose between Williams and Cotton over who instigated the printing of the letter. Williams admits having received it but disclaims any connection with the publication of it. The following year he answered it in a little book entitled, *Mr. Cotton's Letter Lately Printed, Examined, and Answered*. He states his grievances and presents the principle of religious liberty supported by both scriptural and humanistic arguments. Stimulated by the Westminster Assembly and strong pressure to make Presbyterianism the established church, he addressed a letter to both Houses of Parliament. Entitled, *Queries of Highest Consideration*, it pleads for complete separation of church and state and seeks to show that to establish any form of religion will do violence to men's consciences.

During his stay in London he evidently was on intimate terms with Vane, and probably knew well the leading members of Parliament, many of the divines of the Westminster Assembly, and especially the five Independents, Goodwin, Bridge, Nye, Simpson, and Burroughs.

One of the representatives from Scotland, Robert Baillie, in his letters and journal, refers three times to Roger Williams. Once he wrote:

"One Mr. Williams has drawn a great number after him, to a singular Independencie, denying any true church in the world, and will have every man to serve God by himself alone, without any church at all. This man has made a great and bitter schisme lately among the Independents."

In a letter for Mr. D. D. (ickson), July 23d, 1644, he wrote:

"The sectaries of diverse sorts, Anabaptists chieflie, increase here. Very many are for a total libertie of

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1. Straus, 134.
all religions, and writes very plausible treatises for that end. Sundrie of the Independent partie are stepped out of the Church, and follow my good acquaintance, Mr. Roger Williams, who sayes, there is no church, no sacra-
ments, no pastors, no church-officers, or ordinances in the world, nor has been since a few years after the Apostles.  

And in a letter addressed to the Earl of Lauderdale, he wrote:

Mr. Williams, in his Bloodie Tenent, dedicated to the Parliament, prints, that false teachers corrupt and destroyes the soules of their followers, and that the destruction of a soul is a greater crime than to blow up Parliament, and to kill a whole nation of men."  

Milton by the publication of his Doctrine of Discipline of Divorce had marked himself as a radical. As such, he would have attracted Williams. Nason inferences that Roger Williams probably made an acquaintance with Milton at this time. In light of their association during Williams' second visit to England eight years later, this inference is probable. 

The question of toleration was in the air both in the Westminster Assembly and in Parliament. A number of pamphlets appeared advocating both sides of the question. Among them was The Bloody Tenent of Persecution which Parliament later ordered to be burned by the common hangmen. This writing is dedicated to both Houses of Parliament and is a dialogue between Truth and Peace which endeavors to destroy the bloody tenent of persecution. Eventually this book came into John Cotton's hands in Boston and brought forth a reply entitled, The Tenent Washed and Made White in the Blood of the Lamb, published.

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1 Ibid., 212.
2 Ibid., 397.
in London in 1647. To this book Williams wrote a rejoinder, *The Bloudy Tenant Yet More Bloudy by Mr. Cotton's Endeavor to Wash it White in the Blood of the Lamb*. This was published in London, April, 1652, shortly after Williams arrived there on his second visit.

Williams sailed from England in the autumn of 1644 and landed in Boston on the 17th of September. He ventured to come by Boston because of a letter from twelve leading members of the Parliamentary Party addressed to the Governor and Assistants of Massachusetts. However, the letter and the new charter did not serve to improve relations between the Bay colony and Providence Plantations. Williams, however, was received with joy by the inhabitants of Providence who met him in fourteen canoes at Seekonk.

Immediately upon his return his services as a peacemaker with the Indians was again needed. The Narragansett's favorite sachem, Miantonomo, had been murdered by the Mohagans with the sanction of the colonies. The Narragansetts had resolved to avenge his death. By Williams' mediation they were induced to go to Boston, where a treaty was concluded in August, 1644.

Williams' next endeavor was to put into effect the charter he had brought back from England. It was not until May, 1647, that all the differences could be worked out, a general assembly of the people of the Providence Plantations held at Portsmouth, and a form of government agreed upon. It provided for the annual election of a president and four assistants, in whom the executive power was vested and who also would serve as the general court. The legislative assembly, consisting of six commissioners for each town, had the responsibility of making the laws. A code of law in the main based upon the

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English statute law was drawn up. However, it was different from contemporary codes in two important aspects, namely: that an oath would not be required in courts of law, but that a declaration would be sufficient; and that there would be absolute liberty of conscience. The concluding words of the code indicate this:

These are the laws that concern all men, and these are the penalties for the transgressions thereof, which, by common consent, are ratified and established throughout the whole colony. And otherwise than thus, what is herein forbidden, all men may walk as their conscience persuade them, every one in the name of his God. And let the saints of the Most High walk in this colony without molestation, in the name of Jehovah their God, forever and ever.

In the year 1645, Williams moved twenty miles down the bay from Providence to a place called Wickford where he erected a trading house to do business with the Narragansetts. He now had six children and it is likely that the move was made to provide additional support for his family. It is also probable that the matter of doing missionary work among the Indians entered into his decision to settle in the Narragansett Country. He remained here the greater part of six years. However, he retained his citizenship in Providence. It appears that he had gradually laid aside the work of a minister in which he had first appeared in New England. Evidently he did not completely cease preaching but he did not engage again in the regular ministry as a teacher or pastor in a church.

From time to time Williams' philosophy of government was severely tested. If difficulties arose in the Bay colony where only one form of religion and political opinion was tolerated, how much more they would arise in

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a colony which was open to all settlers. The refugees who came were not all reformers; many were simply trouble makers and were opposed to any form of government. The amazing thing is that the colony was able to prevent anarchy, and at the same time grant absolute liberty of conscience to all. Again and again Williams pled for consideration of God's blessings in the past and for reason in planning for the future.

A serious dissension arose in 1648 after the election of Mr. William Coddington as President. A difference had arisen between Portsmouth and the three other towns. Williams endeavored to arbitrate the matter but without avail. It resulted in Coddington presenting a written request, signed by himself and two others alleged to be in behalf of the island of Rhode Island, to be received as a member of the New England Confederation. This was refused unless the petitioners would agree to subjecting themselves to the Plymouth patent. A Meeting of the General Assembly was called in the beginning of the following year to deal with the problem. In the meantime Coddington had gone to England.

From time to time Plymouth had claimed jurisdiction over parts of the Rhode Island settlement, especially Warwick and Pawtuxet. In 1650 the settlers of Pawtuxet sent a complaint against Rhode Island to the government of Massachusetts. The Court of Boston seized upon this opportunity and sent an order forbidding Rhode Island from prosecuting any suit against the so-called subjects of Massachusetts. The Courts also entered into negotiations with Plymouth for transfer of its right over Rhode Island to Massachusetts. As a result, Plymouth complied, making over its alleged right to Pawtuxet and

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1 Straus, 159ff.
Warwick to Massachusetts and these towns were incorporated and made a part of the county of Suffolk. Rhode Island protested strongly. A letter was addressed to Massachusetts stating that Rhode Island and Warwick now formed one colony, and would protect their rights.

During all this time, Coddington was in England working through the Council of State for the severance of the islands from the mainland. The means he used are not known, but he finally succeeded in obtaining from the Council of State a commission, signed by John Bradshaw, to govern the Island of Rhode Island and Connecticut the remainder of his life with a council of six to be named by the people and approved by himself. With this document he returned home in August, 1651.

At the General Assembly held in Portsmouth in October of 1650, Roger Williams was again urged to go to England to offset this agitation of Coddington. Finally, Mr. John Clarke, assistant from Newport and the pastor of the first Baptist Church there, and Williams decided to go to England. They sailed from Boston in November, 1651.

It is interesting to note in connection with Clarke that he, accompanied by John Crandall, a member of his church, and Obadiah Holmes, who had just fled from Plymouth, went to visit an aged Baptist residing near Lynn, who had requested an interview with some of the brethren. They had reached the town on Saturday and had stayed within doors on Sunday. While Clarke was preaching to a few friends who were present, the house was entered by two constables with a warrant for the arrest of the strangers. They were forcibly conducted to church after their arrest. At the end of the service Clarke asked

1 Ibid., 167f.
2 Ibid., 169
for permission to speak. He was immediately stopped and the next day they were taken to Boston and put into prison.

They were brought before John Endicott, the governor, for trial and were reviled as Anabaptists. Clarke replied that while he had baptized many, he had never re-baptised anyone. They were immediately sentenced. Clarke was fined twenty pounds; Holmes, thirty pounds; and Grindall, five pounds, in default of payment each was to be well whipped. Since paying their fines would have been an admission of guilt, they refused. Clarke’s was paid by someone without his knowledge and he was released. Holmes was cruelly whipped. Two of the spectators were sentenced to fines or whippings for shaking hands with him after he had been released.

This event brought forth a letter from Roger Williams to Endicott. In this letter he again clearly presents his conviction that the cause of Christ cannot be promoted by persecution.

Sir I must be humbly bold to say that 'tis impossible for any man or men to maintain their Christ by their sword and to worship a true Christ but to fight against all Consciences opposite theirs, and not to fight against God in some of them, and to hunt after the precious life of the true Lord Jesus Christ.1

Many changes had taken place in England since Williams’ last visit. The King had been beheaded and the Parliament in turn had been swept aside and the Commonwealth established. The supreme power was vested in a Council of State composed of forty-one persons with Cromwell as chairman. Williams’ friend, Sir Henry Vane, the younger, was a member of the first council and John Milton served in the post of Latin Secretary for the Foreign Tongues. The Episcopacy had been abolished and the Assembly of Presbyterian divines had held their

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last session with the result that their power and influence had waned.

Upon their arrival in England, Williams and Clarke presented a petition to the Council of State. This petition was referred to the committee on foreign affairs. At first their effort to have the charter renewed met with considerable opposition but in October, 1652, an order was issued by the council revoking Coddington's commission and directing the towns to reunite under the charter. William Dyre, who was returning to New England, bore the news while Williams and Clarke stayed on in England for a period.

Williams remained in England for about two and one half years. Cromwell had dissolved the Rump Parliament and dismissed the Council of State. The settlement of the matter of establishment fell to a committee of Parliament of which Cromwell was a member. The committee took into consideration certain proposals of some twenty leading divines. The matter narrowed down to the establishment of a state church with toleration within fixed limits, or complete toleration, or Voluntaryism. Among the papers presented was one by Charles Vane, the younger brother of Sir Henry Vane, Major Butler and others. This protest and proposal was accompanied by a comment signed, "R. W.", which was written by Roger Williams who was then living with Sir Henry Vane. He pleads for absolute religious liberty and against the exclusion of the Jews from England. His arguments evidently had some influence for in 1654 Cromwell unofficially permitted Jews to return. Masson calls attention to the fact that Williams could not be silent in such a controversy, and suggests that the controversy itself was in no small measure due to the ideas Williams had sown in *The Bloody Tenent of Persecution*, etc. during his first visit.

1 Straus, 174.
The matter of tithes was another strongly debated issue at this time. Williams entered this controversy by publishing a pamphlet, *The Hirling Ministry None of Christ'*s* in which he opposed the legal establishment of religion and the compulsory support of the clergy. About this time he also published another pamphlet, *Experiments of Spiritual Life and Health and their Preservatives*, which he dedicated to Lady Vane. It is in the form of a letter to his wife upon her convalescence from a dangerous illness. This writing is not controversial and is a delightful devotional guide to a deeper spiritual life.

Williams spent considerable time at Belleau, the country home of Sir Henry Vane, in Lincolnshire. Evidently Vane was his main help in getting the charter re-instated. He seems to indicate as much in writing home, "The sheet anchor of our ship is Sir Henry, who will do as the eye of God leads him." At Vane's home he must have had access to many of the leading members of Parliament. Cromwell and John Milton were among his associates. He refers to his association with Milton in a letter to Winthrop:

> It pleased the Lord to call me, for some time and with some persons to practice the Hebrew, the Greek, Latin, French, and Dutch. The Secretary of the Council, Mr. Milton, for my Dutch I read him, read me many more languages."

While in London Williams lodged in St. Martins near the Shambles. He often visited Hugh Peters at Lambeth and evidently knew him quite well. It is likely that he knew John Owen and Richard Baxter. He is known to have associated with Thomas Harrison, the regicide, Henry Laurence, another member of Cromwell's

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Council of State, and the eccentric Sir Thomas Urguhart.

Certainly Williams' thinking must have been influenced by his association with these leading political thinkers of his day, and even though we will perhaps never know to just what extent, we can certainly assume that at least some of them were influenced by him.

Williams was in England during two critical periods for religious liberty (1643-1644 and 1651-1654), and his most important works were written in the highly charged atmosphere of the English religious scene. His books were published in England and enjoyed a wider circulation and a more decisive contemporary influence in the mother country than in the colonies, where his notable experiment in religious liberty was testing the principles formulated by liberal thinkers. His courageous discussion of the perplexing questions of persecution and toleration was to exercise a considerable influence on the powerful body of opinion in England which had embraced the principles of religious toleration as the only solution to the bitter sectarian strife which engulfed the land.

A biographer has noted one hundred and thirty references to Williams and his books in the English writings of the Civil War and Commonwealth period. The esteem in which Williams was held by a number of prominent Englishmen is indicated in the fact that the letter to the government of Massachusetts, which he brought back when returning from his successful mission in 1644, refers to "his great industry and travail in his printed Indian labours...the like whereof we have not seen extent from any part of America." This work is especially mentioned as a consideration in granting the charter. He evidently

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3. Wroth, 17.
had established a reputation among a number of people.

In the early summer of 1654 he left the remaining business in Clarke's hands and returned to New England. He brought with him an order from the Lord Protector's Council requiring the government of Massachusetts to allow him to embark and land from their territory without molestation.

Upon his arrival in Providence, he found internal relations in the colony in a very confused condition. He addressed a letter to the citizens of Providence in which he pleads with them to show the world that a society where liberty of conscience is practiced can work in harmony.

It hath been told me that I labored for a licentious and contentious people...This, and ten times more I have been censured for, and at this present am called a traitor, by one party, against the State of England for not maintaining the charter and the colony...But, gentlemen...blessed be his name for his wonderful PROVIDENCES, by which alone this town and colony and that grand cause of TRUTH and FREEDOM OF CONSCIENCE, hath been upheld to this day.

On August 31, a meeting of the commissioners was held and the articles of union were agreed upon and the government was re-established upon its old foundation. The first general election after the reorganization was held at Warwick on September 12, 1654, at which time Williams was elected President.

War had broken out between the Narragansetts and the Indians on Long Island and there was an eminent possibility of war developing between them and the united colonies. He intervened and the war was averted.

Not long after Williams was elected President, a paper was circulated maintaining, "that it was blood-guiltiness and against the rule of the gospel,

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2 Straus, 189f.
to execute judgment upon transgressors against the public or private weal."

Williams could not remain silent with the implication abroad that religious liberty was incompatible with peace and order. He addressed the following letter to the town of Providence:

To prevent such mistakes, I shall at present only propose this case. There goes many a ship to sea with many hundred souls in one ship, whose weal and woe is common, and is a true picture of a commonwealth, or a human combination or society. It hath fallen out some times, 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 hinges—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 services, or passengers pay their freight; if any refuse to obey the common laws and orders of the ship, concerning their common peace or preservation; if any shall mutiny and rise against their commanders and officers, because all are equal in Christ, therefore no masters nor officers, no laws nor orders, nor corrections nor 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.

It was nearly a quarter of a century from the time of the publication of The Bloody Tenent Yet More Bloody until Williams brought out his final printed work. It appeared in the year, 1676, and was instigated by his controversy with the Quakers.

For some time the New England colonies had been gravely upset by the

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1. N. C. P., Vol. VI, 278.
Quaker settlers who were arriving on their shores. At their annual meeting in September, 1656, the commissioners of the United Colonies recommended to the several courts that adequate regulations be made to prohibit Quakers from entering and to remove them if they did enter. Each of the four colonies enacted laws in accord with this recommendation. After a period of about two years it became evident that these measures were not adequate, and the commissioners further recommended that laws be passed which would imprison and banish under pain of death Quakers who were formally convicted and punished, if they should return again. It was further suggested if they should presume to come even again they were obviously incorrigible, and should be immediately put to death. The Massachusetts Colony was the only one that actually put this recommendation into full practice. William Robinson, Marmaduke Stevenson, Mary Dyer, and William Leddra, under a statute passed by the Massachusetts Court in compliance with this request, were hanged on the Boston Common.

It was natural that Rhode Island would become a haven for the sect. The Commissioners for the United Colonies little more than a year after the arrival of the first Quakers addressed a letter to the Governor of Rhode Island urging that for the good of all the colonies measures be enacted to remove the Quakers who had already come, and to prohibit those who would come in the future. The General Assembly, meeting in Portsmouth, March 1657, sent this reply:

Whereas freedom of different consciences to be protected from enforcements, was the principal ground of our charter, both with respect to our humble suit for it, as also to the true intent of the honorable and renowned Parliament of England, in granting of the same to us, which

freedom we still prize, as the greatest happiness that men can possess in this world, therefore we shall, for the preservation of our civil peace and order, the more especially take notice that those people, and any others that are here, or shall come among us, be impartially required, and to our utmost constrained, to perform all civil duties requisite. And in case they refuse it, we resolve to make use of the first opportunity to inform our agent, residing in England.

Coercion by threat and by cutting off commercial privileges was tried. But Rhode Island refused to abandon her original principle of granting complete religious liberty to all. A committee appointed at the General Assembly at Warwick, November, 1658, again sent an answer to the Commissioners of the United Colonies. Among other things they pled:

Sir, this is our earnest and present request unto you in this matter, that as you may perceive in answer to the united colonies...so may it please you to have an eye and ear open, in case our adversaries should seek to undermine us in our privileges granted unto us, and to plead our case in such sort, as that we may not be compelled to exercise any civil power over men's consciences, so long as human orders in point of civility are not corrupted and violated, which our neighbors about us do frequently practise, whereof many of us have large experience, and judge it to be no less than a point of absolute cruelty.

In the light of several factors the generosity of the Rhode Island Colony to the Quakers is even more striking than it would at first appear. For one thing, it is evident from the reply of the Rhode Island group to the request of the Commissioners of the United Colonies that they joined in enacting measures against the Quakers, that there was considerable dislike of the Quakers' teachings and practices. It is also worth noting that many of

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1 Straus, 203.
2 ibid., 205-206.
the Quaker converts were from the Baptists who were numerous in the settlement. It is easy to understand why the Baptists who were not won over were bitter. There is some indication that Williams questioned whether the Quakers would conform to the requirements necessary for civil harmony and peace. In the work Williams speaks of his desire to vindicate the colony for accepting Quakers and to let men know they did not agree with their belief. But he dared not let anything cause them to forsake their primary principle.

Evidently the Quakers increased rapidly in Rhode Island. As early as 1665 such prominent men as Coddington and Easton had joined their ranks. From the first Roger Williams had watched Quakerism with a great deal of interest. He had long ago heard of George Fox, and had read his book in Folio. He indicates that he was familiar with other Quaker writers and that he had examined "above six score books and papers written by pious and able pens against them".

When Burnyeat, one of George Fox's associates, visited Newport in 1671, Williams attended the General Meeting and endeavored to hold a discussion with him but he was stopped by the praying of the Governor's wife, and by the action of Burnyeat in dismissing the group. After this experience Williams determined to try another way. Subsequently he drew up Fourteen Propositions which he sent to George Fox by way of the Deputy Governor, Captain Cranston. Williams also presented a copy of the Propositions to a neighbor whom he knew to be inclining to Quaker views. This copy was forthwith read at the public meetings, and evidently resulted in them detaining the delivery of the Propositions to Cranston until Fox had departed. Williams did

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1 Add., xii.
not hesitate in charging Fox with compliance in the matter. In the strongest language, Fox later denied that he purposely avoided Williams. However, Fox's departure did not interfere with the proposed discussion.

A few days after the Fourteen Propositions of Williams against the Quakers had been delivered, Burnyeat, Stubbs, and others came to Providence and arranged to meet Williams at Newport on the ninth of August. When it was found that some of Williams' neighbors were disappointed that the discussion was so far from Providence it was decided that after the first seven propositions had been discussed at Newport the remainder would be discussed at Providence.

Williams rowed all day the day before the debate and arrived in Newport toward midnight. For three days he debated with his three opponents, Edmondson, Stubbs, and Burrowes. Even though precautions had been taken to preserve order, several beside the regular champions entered the arguments and at times words were sharp and feelings high. After three days at Newport the group moved to Providence where the discussion continued through a fourth day.

It is interesting to note that both groups were confident that they had vanquished the other. Williams was greatly concerned about the matter being presented to the world, and not only was the manuscript prepared but it actually seems that the book was in print by the spring of 1673.

It is amusing to note the origin of the title, *George Fox Digg'd Out of his Burrowes*. During the first day's discussion at Newport, Edmondson reproved Williams for speaking of Fox and Burrowes in derision, evidently

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1. Ibid., xxvii-xxviii.
2. Ibid., xxviii.
thinking that he had referred to "Fox in his Burrows". At the time, Williams remonstrated that he had used no such language but later remembered the incident and decided that it was the finger of God leading him to a proper title.  

One could wish that the matter had never arisen. The whole affair certainly brings no credit to Williams. The writing resorts to invective in the place of argument, and often the language is in no sense becoming. The argument, so called, is often weak and quibbling and there is little dealing in a dispassionate manner with the real issues involved. However, the writing is of great interest in its local and personal coloring. Here we see in bold relief the intense struggles through which the little settlement passed, and the great difficulties involved in actually practicing the principle of religious liberty. Here we find revealed upon almost every page Williams' love of disputation. His tendencies to jump at erroneous conclusions, and his vehement and bitter charges are all too evident. Yet we must remember that the picture we get in this work is not the whole picture of the man.

We must keep in mind that probably a major element in Williams' initial interest in public debate with the Quakers was his great concern to defend the good name of the colony which was being stigmatized for allowing Quakers to settle there. He was anxious for the world to know that he did not agree with their teachings even though he would not dare deny them religious liberty.

There is something pathetic about the whole incident. Williams was an old man and it must have been a terribly strenuous endeavor for him. The second day of the discussion at Newport he was so ill that it was with
difficulty that he was present and he was so hoarse that he could hardly be heard. Williams' brother, Robert, school-master at Newport, complains about the rudeness of the Quaker debaters in referring to his brother in the discussion as "Old Man."\(^1\) Many of Roger Williams' neighbors and all the local Quakers were bitterly enraged. This bitterness is indicated in such statements as the following by Goddington, dated June 25, 1677:

He began with a Thunder, and had Three Days time to bewilder and befoul himself, and so ended in a great Eclipse of the Sun (which was taken notice of). I have known him about 50 years, a meer weather cock, Constant only in Unconstance; Poor Man! that doth not know, what should become of his soul, if this night it should be taken from him. He was for the Priests, and took up their principles to fight against the Truth, and to gratify them and bad Magistrates, that licked up his vomit, and wrote the said Scurriligious Book: and so hath transgressed for a Piece of Bread.\(^2\)

Charles II ascended the throne in 1660 and John Clarke, who had remained in England, was able on July 8, 1663, to secure from the King a new charter for the colony. It embodied principles of religious liberty most unusual for the period.

Until 1677, Williams continued to participate in the government of the colony, holding various offices. He was active in numerous community affairs. In a letter addressed to the citizens of Providence, upon a proposal to divide the common lands among the inhabitants, he pled with them to leave these lands common, for future settlers who might come seeking refuge from persecution for conscience sake.

For all experience tells us that public peace and love is better than abundance of corn and cattle. I have

\(^1\) Ibid., xxxv, 47, 65f, 115.
\(^2\) Ibid., footnote 1, p. Id.
one only motion and petition, which I earnestly pray the town to lay to heart, as ever they look for a blessing from God on the town, on your families, your corn and cattle, and your children after you; it is this, that after you have got over the black brook of some soul bondage yourselves, you tear not down the bridge after you, by leaving no small pittance for distressed souls that may come after you.  

In the summer of 1675 a bitter war, known as King Philip's War, broke out between the Indians and the colonies. The colonies were actually threatened with extermination. Out of the ninety towns, twelve were utterly destroyed and forty endured fire and slaughter. Williams accepted a commission as Captain in the militia and drilled companies in Providence. The war came to an end in August, 1676. A group of the captive Indians were shipped to Bermuda and sold into slavery and the remainder of the captives were brought to Providence, and distributed among the heads of the families to serve up to twenty-five years, according to their age. The distribution was done by a committee of five and it is disappointing to find that Roger Williams headed the list, and that he took his full quota of captives.

Roger Williams was again elected assistant in the colonial assembly in May, 1677, but he declined to serve, probably because of advanced age. He continued to visit Narragansett to preach to the English and Indians who lived there. There is an ironic sadness about the letter he wrote Governor Bradstreet of Massachusetts in May, 1682.

Sir, this enclosed tells you that being old and weak and bruised with rupture and colic, and lameness of both my feet, I am directed by the Father of our spirits to attend his infinite Majesty with a poor mite...By my fireside I have collected the discourses which by many

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2 Straus, 221.
tedious journeys I have had with the scattered English at Narragansett, before the war and since. I have reduced them into those twenty-two heads enclosed, which is near thirty sheets of my writings: I would send them to the Narragansetts and others: there is no controversy in them, only an endeavour of a particular match of each poor sinner with his Maker. For printing I am forced to write to my friends at Massachusetts, Connecticut, Plymouth and our colony, that he that hath a shilling and a heart to countenance and promote such a soul work, may trust the great paymaster who is beforehand with us already for an hundredth for one in this life.1

This letter indicates his poverty in the latter years. His economic status had suffered from the loss of time involved in his service to the government of the settlement particularly in connection with his trips to England and the heavy expense entailed in these trips. His expense for the first trip had not been refunded when he was urged to go the second time.2 As an incentive, they promised to pay one hundred pounds, which was in arrears, plus another one hundred pounds, if he would go. To raise the funds for the second journey he had to sell his trading post at Narragansett.3 His poverty in later life was undoubtedly due in a large degree to the fact that he shared his land equally with others, and to the heavy expense in public service. A letter from his son, Daniel, written in 1710, to those who claimed to be purchasers of lands in Providence from his father, indicates that his father gave away to those in want until in his old age, his children had to support their...
parents. He had never been overly concerned about his own physical welfare. It was typical of him to write:

and as to myself, in endeavoring after your temporal and spiritual peace, I humbly desire to say, if I perish, I perish. It is but a shadow vanished, a bubble broken, a dream finished. Eternity will pay for all.\(^2\)

His last public act of which we have any record was the signing of a document, dated January 16, 1633, dealing with the settlement of a boundary dispute. His death is mentioned in a letter written by John Thornton from Providence to the Rev. Samuel Hubbard, dated May 10, 1664. "The Lord hath arrested by death our ancient and approved friend, Mr. Roger Williams, with divers other here."\(^3\) Hence the death of Roger Williams must be placed somewhere between these dates.

In the foregoing biographical sketch of Roger Williams we have seen how by a process of gradual development he came to his concept of separation of church and state and of absolute religious liberty—a concept far in advance of the great majority of the men of his day. It will be of value to this study to summarize factors from this biographical sketch which may have contributed to his liberal thought and advanced position on the matter of religious liberty.

First, it is worth noting that he was evidently a child of middle

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1. Ibid., 222.
4. Straus points out in a footnote, p. 230, that a Mr. George T. Hart discovered in a deed of W. Carpenter, dated April 25, 1684, that he (Carpenter) was the last survivor of the original thirteen settlers. If this is true Williams was dead before that date. Then there is a note that on p. 64 of Vol. IV, a list of names with heading: "Here follow the list of ye lands on ye west side of ye seven mile line." Lot No. 7 was drawn to Roger Williams. Thus, if this is correct, Williams was living March 17, 1683-84, and died before April 25, 1684.
class London parents. Experience demonstrates that almost anything in the way of achievement may be expected from such a background. Most likely his father was a middle class business man. This middle class business man represented a new class in society which was rising all over Europe. This new individual was a practical man skilled in the arts and trades, who found support for his cause in the widespread Calvinistic teachings. His success in business gave him confidence and he was to become the champion of free enterprise, the advocate of democratic ideas, the supporter of Parliament and the resister of Kings. And such liberal thinking was likely to arise in a cosmopolitan center such as London. It is certainly conceivable that Roger Williams' parental and geographical background in the metropolitan area of London may have contributed in no small measure to his liberal thinking.

In the second place, we know he was influenced by his great supporter, Sir Edward Coke. Coke, a Puritan, and a great lawyer had defended Commons in the contest with the crown and framed the Bill of Rights. It was through Coke's influence that he went to Charter House School and subsequently to Pembroke College, Cambridge. Williams refers to Sir Edward Coke's influence on his life in a letter written to Coke's daughter, Mrs. Sadleir, while he was in London in 1653:

My much honored friend, that man of honor, and wisdom and pietie, your dear father, was often pleased to call me his son; and truly it was as bitter as death to me when Bishop Laud pursued me out of this land, and my conscience was persuaded against the national church and ceremonies, and bishops, beyond the conscience of your dear Father. I say it was as bitter as death to me, when I rode Windsor way, to take ship at Bristow, and saw Stoke House, where the blessed man was; and I then durst not acquaint him with my Conscience, and my flight. But how many thousand times since have I had honorable and precious remembrance of his person, and the life, the writings, the speeches, and the examples of that glorious light. And I say truly say, that beside my natural inclination to study and activity, his
example, instruction, and encouragement, have spurred me on to a more than ordinary, industrious and patient course in my whole course hitherto. 1

A third liberal influence must certainly have been his years of study spent at Cambridge University. The reform movement at Cambridge dated from the early years of the sixteenth century. The movement at Oxford under the influence of Colet, Erasmus, Wolsey, and More had passed from Oxford to Cambridge. The Cambridge movement, under Lutheran influence, was to go beyond the reform of manners of the bishops, clergy, and people, which had been advocated by the Oxford group, to the more basic things such as doctrine and dogma. William Tyndale, perhaps drawn by Erasmus, removed from Oxford to Cambridge. Thomas Bilney (burned at Stake in 1531), who attributes his conversion to the influence of Erasmus' New Testament, exerted a wide influence. There were many others whom he influenced but his most distinguished convert was Hugh Latimer who became one of the most popular preachers among the English reformers. George Stafford, divinity lecturer, Robert Barnes, a convert of Bilney, Miles Coverdale, and John Rogers, a friend of Tyndale, who edited the Bible known as Matthew Bible, and was the first to suffer for his convictions under Mary, were Cambridge men of this era. 2

In the latter part of the century Cambridge became a virtual nest of Puritanism. 3 John Smith the Se-Baptist, matriculated at Christ's College, Cambridge, in 1586. John Udall, who died in prison, condemned for writing The Demonstration of Discipline, was a member of Christ's College. In this

same college there were many others who became Puritan preachers such as Walter Travers, Laurence Chaderton and Williams Perkins, as well as the Separatist, 1 Francis Johnson. Henry Barrow, the leader of the Independents or Brownists, and John Greenwood, who was executed with him at Tyburn in 1593, and John Penry, who was the manager of a Puritan press and was also executed, were fellow collegians at Cambridge.

Masson points out that between 1580 and 1590 there were no fewer than 500 beneficed clergymen of the Church of England, most of them Cambridge men, all pledged to the general agreement in a revised form of the Wandsworth directory of Discipline, all in private intercommunication among themselves, and all meeting occasionally or at appointed times. 2

James Ernst speaks of Cambridge as being "permeated and agitated with ecclesiastical and political liberalism" when Williams went there to study.

It is certainly logical to assume that a young man with a questioning and vigorous mind such as Roger Williams would have found at Cambridge, the university which had felt the influence of Erasmus, Martin Bucer, and from whose halls had gone men such as Cranmer, Ridley, Latimer, Coke, Bacon, Newton, and Milton, much to develop liberal and revolutionary tendencies.

A fourth liberalizing element which is suggested by his biographical background is the influence of certain friends and associates. Williams in his Mr. Cotton's Letter Examined and Answered refers to those who have endured

1 Burgess, Walter H., Smith the Sa-Baptist and the Pilgrim Fathers, and Helveys, and Baptist Origins, Ch. II, 272.
4 Political Thought of Roger Williams, 5.
persecution, including
the worthy witness Mr. Udall, who was near unto death for
his witness against Bishops and Ceremonies: the gibbets
on their shoulders, and were hanged with him and for him,
in the way of separation. 1

This indicates that he at least knew of these Separatists and had heard of
their teachings and writings, whether he had been personally associated with
them or not. Williams had known Oliver Cromwell, Sir Henry Vane, and John
Hampden since his days as Chaplain for Sir William Masham at Otter. His asso-
ciation with John Milton has already been discussed in this chapter and will be
considered more fully in a later chapter. His acquaintance with Hugh Peters,
John Owen and Richard Baxter, Thomas Harrison, Henry Lawrence, and Sir Thomas
Urguhart, has also already been mentioned. How much Williams' thinking was in-
fluenced by these and others with whom he associated we can never fully ascer-
tain but we can be certain that he was influenced by them.

Another influence about which we have practically no historical evi-
dence is Williams' relation to the early Baptist (or Anabaptists) movement. It
is possible that he had learned Dutch because of interest in the Dutch reform-
ers and Separatists groups. We know that large groups of Dutch Anabaptists had
come to England during the Reformation Period. A large group came in 1528.
A group came from Antwerp to London in 1546. 3 By 1562 the exiles from Holland
numbered 30,000 and 1568 there were 5,225 in London alone. It is estimated
that by 1613 there were 50,000 in the country. Most of these exiles and refu-
gees remained in England and it is certainly unlikely that they held their
peace about their convictions. As early as 1534, nineteen Dutch men and six

2 Dosker, The Dutch Anabaptists, 45-46.
3 Ibid., 282.
women were being examined at St. Paul's, London, for propagating Anabaptist opinions. Proclamations were issued against them by Henry VIII, and Elizabeth. The fact that Barrow and Greenwood, as late as 1589, were charged with being of an "Anabaptistical order" indicates men could not forget them. The Roundheads of Cromwell's army sprung mainly from areas where Dutch Anabaptists had originally settled. Since there had been this Dutch Anabaptist influence it is not impossible that Roger Williams may have been personally familiar with either leaders or groups of this persuasion. The fact that he later became a Baptist himself, even though he only remained in that church for a few months, would seem to indicate that he had likely had some earlier association with them and their teachings. These groups must have been another liberalizing influence.

The story of Roger Williams' life demonstrates at least one other element which served perhaps not so much to influence his conception of religious liberty as to help crystallize it. The reference is to those who opposed him and the vigorous, often bitter, controversy in which he so frequently found himself. Perhaps we have Bishop Laud and John Cotton and others to thank for driving him to his ultimate concept.

Of course when all is said and done, it must be recognized that neither Williams, nor any other strong personality, is simply the sum total of past experiences. A knowledge of the life story is essential but there is always the inner individual element and this element was particularly dominant in Roger Williams. His depth of conviction, his steadfastness of courage, and his flaming missionary zeal, not only left an impression on the political and

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1 Lampkin, *The Local Baptist Confession*, 24-27.
religious life of the seventeenth century but increasingly has been appreciated by men who are cognizant of the blessings of liberty. His story stands as a noble epoch in the long narrative of man's struggle for religious liberty.
CHAPTER IV  

THE MORE GENERAL ELEMENTS OF ROGER WILLIAMS' RELIGIOUS THOUGHT WITH SPECIAL CONSIDERATION OF THE BASIS OF HIS CONCEPTION OF RELIGIOUS LIBERTY

A. EVALUATING HIS THOUGHT IN THE LIGHT OF A TRUE PICTURE OF THE MAN.

We shall now turn our attention to assessing the essential elements of Roger Williams' religious thought. To accurately determine the distinctive elements of this thought is no simple matter, as has been noted by a number of the students of Williams' era. It has been observed that Roger Williams and John Cotton debated the question of 'persecution' through several hundred pages; after they had finished...it is very doubtful whether Cotton had ever begun to see his adversary's point. And still today it is hard to clear the exact grounds upon which Roger Williams became the great apostle of religious liberty.¹

One difficulty lies in the fact that Williams became obsessed with destroying the tenet of persecution that he failed to formulate to any marked degree a positive defence of religious liberty. Another difficulty derives from the fact that so many of his published works are of a controversial nature. This means that it is likely that his real thought often lies concealed behind the facade of heated and extreme language of debate. Mr. Cotton's Letter, The Bloudy Tenent of Persecution, The Bloudy Tenent Yet More Bloudy, The Hireling Ministry None of Christ's, and George Fox Digg'd Out of His Burrowes are all controversial. These writings certainly reveal one side of Roger Williams' nature. He was never hesitant about entering a controversy; he was entirely free and frank with his opinions. It was from such a background that his conception of religious liberty developed.

However, when all of his writings are taken into account it is

¹Miller and Johnson, The Puritans, 186.
immediately apparent that it is in such works as his *A Key into the Language of America*, *Experiments in Spiritual Life and Health and Their Preservatives*, and his letters, that the most accurate picture of the man is gained. For example, the impression which comes from reading his George Fox *Diss'd Out of His Burrowes*, filled as it is with vigorous and even discourteous language, is entirely different from the impression acquired from reading his delightful little guide to a deeper spiritual life, entitled, *Experiments of Spiritual Life and Health and Their Preservatives*.

Referring to this aspect of Williams' thought, reflected in his non-controversial writings, and especially in his letters, Lowell says,

> Let me premise that there are two men above all others, for whom our respect is heightened by their letters,... the elder John Winthrop and Roger Williams...Charity and tolerance flow so noticeably from the pen of Williams that it is plain they were in his heart. He does not show himself a strong or a very wise man, but a thoroughly gentle and good one. His affection for the Winthrops is evidently of the warmest.¹

Williams wrote in the Epistle of Dedication of *Experiments of Spiritual Life and Health and their Preservatives*:

> It is true, I have been sometimes prest to engage in controversies, but I can really and uprightly say, my Witness is on High, how harsh and doleful the touch of those strings are, especially, against such Worthies both in old and new England, in whom I joyfully before the world acknowledge (in many heavenly respects) a lively character and image of the Son of God. This broken piece, is a breath of a still and gentle voice, none but the God of this world, and the men of this, can I lightly (at this turn) expect my opposites.²

² Ibid., iii.
These difficulties must be borne in mind as we endeavor to summarize the main elements of Roger Williams' religious thought.

B. A JUSTIFICATION FOR THE APPROACH USED IN THIS STUDY.

Vernon Parrington contends that Roger Williams has too long been obscured by ecclesiastical historians, who in emphasizing his defense of the principle of toleration have overlooked the fact that religious toleration was only a necessary deduction from the major principles of his political theory, and that he was concerned with matters far more fundamental than the negative virtue of non-interference in the domain of individual faith. He was primarily a political philosopher rather than a theologian...a free thinker more concerned with social commonwealths than theological dogmas.¹

Such an evaluation casts a false light on the depth of Williams' spiritual devotion, and minimizes the important place of the Christian faith in the early English settlements in America. While Williams could not be called an academic or systematic theologian, almost every page of his writings gives evidence of the fact that his thinking was basically theological. His very speech is the language of the authorized version of the Bible. He had been a lad at the time of the translation and evidently it was "the Book" of his home. In his last published work he seems to indicate as much.

The truth is...from my childhood (now above three-score years) the Father of Lights and Mercies touched my soul with a love to himself, to his only begotten, the true Lord Jesus, to his Holy Scriptures, etc.²

Always his reasoning was either directly, or by analogy, based upon or related in some way to the Scriptures.

¹ Main Currents in American Thought, Ch. I, "The Colonial Mind", 70.
³ George Fox Digg'd out of his Burrowes, N. C. P., Vol. V, lxxv.
Again and again throughout his writings he indicates that to him the most important thing in the world is the soul, and its relation to its Creator and Redeemer. He writes, "We are constantly told and we believe it, that Religion is our first care, and Reformation of that our greatest task". Later he adds,

For the broken bags of riches on eagle wings: For a dream of these, any or all of these which on our death bed vanish and leave tormenting stings behind them. Oh how much better is it for the love of truth, from the love of the Father of Lights, from whence it comes, from the love of the Son of God, who is the way and the truth, to say as he, John 18:37. For this end was I born, and for this end came I unto the World that I might bear witness to the Truth.\(^1\)

He does not hesitate to urge the importance of this matter even upon the members of Parliament.

To which purpose my third petition is, that in the midst of so many great negotiations of justice, of mercy to the bodies and estates, or spirits and consciences of so many thousands and ten thousands, you forget not to deal justly and to shew mercy to yourselves: Oh how lamentable and dreadful will it prove, if after all your high employments (as the state-agents and factors for the commonweal) if in the midst of all your cares and fears, and tossings about the souls and consciences and salvations of others, your own most dear and precious selves make an eternal shipwreck...Be not so busy about the earthly estate, no nor the heavenly estate of others, as to forget to make sure your own vocation and election, and to work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.\(^2\)

In two letters written late in his life amid the distressing days of King Philip's War, incidental statements reveal that his estimation of the most important issues in life had not changed. In a letter to Governor Leverett,

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dated October 11, 1675, Williams writes:

The business of the day in New England is not only to keep ourselves from murdering, our houses, barns, etc. ...but our main and principal opus diei is, to listen to what the Eternal speaketh to the whole ship (the country, colonies, towns, etc.) and each private cabin, family, person, etc. He will speak peace to his people...1

In another letter addressed to John Winthrop, Jr., dated December 18, 1675, he writes:

Dear Sir, if we cannot save our patients, nor relations, nor Indians, nor English, oh let us make sure to save the bird in our bosom, and to enter in that straight door and narrow way, which the Lord Jesus himself tells us, few there be that find it.2

It was the "bird in our bosom" about which he was most concerned.

To assume that Roger Williams was first a political philosopher and incidentally a Christian thinker is to ignore the fact that he was an inheritor of the Puritan tradition. As a matter of fact, the Puritan mind was basically theological. It is difficult for the twentieth century man, living in an age which has not taken the Scriptures seriously, to understand this fully. Heaven and Hell, the Judgement, the injunctions of God's Word were literal truth to the Puritan, and in his reforming zeal he took himself and them quite seriously.

The Puritan turned to the theological aspects of a question as naturally as the modern man turns to the economic; and his first instinct was to seek guidance within the covers of his Bible...or was it rather to seek there justification for a policy already determined on other, or political and economic grounds?3

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1 N. C. P., Vol. VI, 373.
2 Ibid., 378.
In this sense Williams was certainly a Puritan. If his position was not based directly upon his understanding of the Scripture, he always sought to justify it by the Scripture.

Life, to Roger Williams, was indeed a serious matter. In what would seem a queer observation, to the modern mind, on the sports of the Indians, in *A Key to the Language of America*, he wrote:

*This life is a short minute, eternity follows. On the improvement or disimprovement of this short minute, depends a joyful or dreadful eternity; yet (which I tremble to think of) how cheap is this invaluable jewel, and how many vain inventions and foolish pastimes have the sons of men in all parts of the world found out, to pass time and post over this short minute of life, until like some pleasant River, they have past into mere motuum, the dead sea of eternal lamentation.*

However, the primary reason for questioning the statement that Williams' conception of religious liberty stemmed from his political, not his religious, thinking is his deeply religious spirit. Perhaps this is demonstrated better in *Experiments of Spiritual Life and Health* than anywhere else. H. Richard Niebuhr, in *The Kingdom of God in America*, points out that "America has produced few more beautiful devotional books than Roger Williams' *Experiments of Spiritual Life and Health.*" This work was written while he was compelled to spend much of his time away from home as a peacemaker among the Indians, during the convalescence of his wife after a serious illness. It had been written for her encouragement and comfort during his absence. It was printed in London in 1652 and is dedicated to the wife of his good friend, Sir Henry Vane. He wrote, as follows:

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2 Hudson, 963.
My scope is to fill each truly Christian soul with triumph and rejoicing; I speak peace and joy to the weakest lamb and child (in Christianity) that is so low, so weak, so little, so poor in its own eyes, that it sometimes saith, it hath no Christ, no spirit, no faith, no love, no nor true desire in itself... (and) I sound joyful alarms of encouragement to the strong...  

The purpose of this brief work is to present to the Christian the evidences of piety and ways of guarding this piety from abuse and misapprehension. There are three parts: First, the evidences of a real piety, although it may be weak and imperfect, are presented; then the evidences of a more mature piety are presented; and finally, directions are given for increasing and maintaining this piety in the soul of the Christian. In a quiet and simple manner Williams deals with the vanity of this world, the need for freeing ourselves from the encumbrances all about us, the brevity of time at our disposal, the need for meditating upon inevitable death, the true significance of sorrow and suffering in the life of the Christian, and the necessity of loving and serving God for his sake alone. The little work cannot be read without an appreciation of the Christian depth and dedication of the author. When reading it one is reminded of Richard Baxter and William Law, and it is to be regretted that it has not been more widely available as a contribution to the general body of Christian devotional reading.  

Roger Williams had named the first settlement in Rhode Island, "Providence", because he was convinced that God in his good providence had led him to that place. He came more and more to feel that by the providence of God he had been designated to be the defender of the persecuted for conscience sake and he was convinced that he could not do otherwise.

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1 Experiments of Spiritual Life, viii.
2 It is good to know that a new edition of this work is soon to appear in the United States.
I desire not to sleep in security and dream of a nest which no hand can reach. I can not but expect changes, and the change of the last enemy, death, yet dare I not despise a liberty, which the Lord seemeth to offer me, if for mine own or others peace: and therefore have I been thus bold to present my thought to you.  

This he wrote to John Winthrop in 1632.

After reading the sections numbered 10 and 11 in Williams’ letter of June 22, 1670, to Major Masson, it would certainly be most unnatural to attribute his deep sense of freedom of conscience and religious liberty to anything other than his theological concepts, and, above all, to his deeply religious spirit.

Alas! Sir, in calm midnight thought, what are these leaves and flowers, and smoke and shadows, and dreams of earthly nothings, about which we poor fools and children, as David saith, disquiet ourselves in vain? Alas! what is all the scuffling of this world for, but, come will you smoke it? What are all the contentions and wars of this world about, generally, but for greater dishes and bowls of porridge, of which, if we believe God’s Spirit in Scripture, Esau and Jacob were types? Esau will part with the heavenly birthright for his supping, after his hunting, for god belly; and Jacob will part with porridge for an eternal inheritance. O Lord, give me to make Jacob’s and Mary’s choice, which shall never be taken from me.

How much sweeter is the counsel of the Son of God, to mind first the matters of his kingdom; to take no care for tomorrow; to pluck out, cut off and fling away right eyes, hands and feet, rather than to be cast whole into hell-fire; to consider the ravens and the lilies, whom a heavenly Father so clothes and feeds; and the counsel of his servant Paul, to roll our cares, for this life also, upon the most high Lord, steward of his people, the eternal God: to be content with food and raiment; to mind not our own, but every man the things of another; yea, and to suffer wrong, and part with what we judge is right, yea, our lives, and (as poor women martyrs have said) as many as there be hairs upon our heads, for the name of God and the son of God his sake. This is humanity, yea, this is Christianity. The rest

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is but formality and picture, courteous idolatry and
Jewish and Popish blasphemy against the Christian reli-
gion, the Father of spirits and his Son, the Lord Jesus.
Besides, Sir, the matter with us is not about these
children's toys of land, meadows, cattle, government,
&c. But here, all over this colony, a great number
of weak and distressed souls, scattered, are flying
hither from Old and New England, the Most High and
Only Wise hath, in his infinite wisdom, provided this
country and this corner as a shelter for the poor and
persecuted, according to their several persuasions...1

From what has been said it would appear that, contrary to the
contention that Roger Williams was primarily a political philosopher and that
he was more concerned with social commonwealths than with theological dogmas,
he came to his position on religious liberty and a democratic government from
a religious basis. Actually it seems that he developed his political con-
cepts incidentally, and by force of the necessity of providing a peaceable
and respectable government for his settlement which was to him above all a
haven for the oppressed.

In a letter to John Winthrop, written in 1636, or 1637, Williams
says;

The masters of families have ordinarily met once a fort-
night and consulting about our common peace, watch and
planting; and mutual consent have finished all matters
with speed and peace.2

This implies no formal or complicated governmental system was set up at the
outset in the Providence settlement, but that a simple "town meeting" type
gathering of the heads of families was held to deal with the necessary busi-
ness. In this correspondence he speaks of the fact that some young men (new
settlers) had come in and were dissatisfied and desired freedom of vote. He
indicates that he has been thinking of a written covenant and asks Winthrop's

1 N. C. F., Vol. VI, 343-344.
2 Ibid., 4-5.
advice on the sample covenant which appears in the letter. It seems that his democratic concept and practice arose as a necessary corollary to his more fundamental concept of religious liberty. It would be erroneous to imply that Williams was not to some degree a political thinker and pioneer leader, but it must be kept in mind that he was first a religious thinker, and then a political thinker. Hence to discover the source-springs of his great concept of religious liberty we are justified in turning our attention to his religious thought.

C. CERTAIN ASPECTS OF HIS CONCEPT OF GOD.

Williams' last published work, coming as a result of his controversy with the Quakers, reveals that he actually agreed with the New England churches and the prevailing Calvinism in nearly all the fundamental points. The only exception was his refusal to unite with any visible church. In discussing the ground wherein the Quakers err he refers to the fact that there are

four great points of the Christian belief: 1. The Doctrine of the Father, Son, and Spirit...2. The Doctrine of the Fall, Redemption, Justification, Sanctification, etc. ...3. The Doctrine of the Church, the Officers, Baptism, the Lord's Supper...4. The Resurrection, Eternal Judgement, Eternal Life, Heaven and Hell, Angels, Devils etc...

In *The Bloudy Tenent* he speaks of the

four sorts of spiritual or Christian foundations in the New Testament (as): First, the Foundations of all foundations, the Corner-stone itself, the Lord Jesus, on whom all depend, Persons, Doctrine, Practice...Secondly, Ministerial foundations. The Church is built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets...Thirdly, The foundation of future rejoicing in the fruits of obedience...Fourthly, The foundation of doctrines, without the knowledge of which,

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there can be no true profession of Christ, according to the first institution, Heb. 6. The foundation or principles of repentance from dead works, faith toward God, the doctrine of baptism, laying on of hands, the resurrection, and eternal judgment. 1

Practically all of the orthodox of his day would have accepted these statements.

Williams' Calvinistic conception of predestination is made clear in his condemning the Quakers for their Arminianism. He charges them with holding a position, contrary to the true Protestant doctrine of a certain number of God's elect or chosen drawn by mercy, out of the lump of lost mankind according to God's appointment from eternity, by his call in time, by his holy Word and Spirit: and all from this grace and spirit of regeneration, or new-birth, it was not, it is not possible that David or Peter, or any child of God be un-childed, can finally or totally depart and fall. 2

It appears that he at no time questioned this element of Calvinistic teaching.

He accepted Jesus Christ as the incarnate Son of God, the co-equal with the Father, the sacrifice for the sins of mankind. The death, burial, resurrection, and ascension of Christ were also accepted by Williams in the typical orthodox Protestant fashion of that day. He possessed a deep sense of God's providential care. He wrote in A Key into the Language of America:

As the same sun shines on the wilderness that doth on a garden! So the same faithful and all sufficient God, can comfort—feed and safely guide even through a desolate howling wilderness. 3

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He spoke with conviction in *The Bloody Tenent*, "...the Lord himself knows who are his, and his foundations remaineth sure, his elect or chosen cannot perish or be finally deceived". There are many indications that Roger Williams was strongly convinced that God's providential care not only safeguarded him, but was always leading him in the battle he waged for religious liberty.

He also saw God revealed in the natural phenomena all about him.

So that I affirm, that the great light of heaven, the sun and the moon, and all the lesser lights the stars are words and preachings of God to us: Every wind and cloud, and drop of rain and hail, every flake of snow, every leaf, every grass, every drop of water in the ocean, and rivers, yea, every grain of corn, and sand on the shore, is a voice or word and witness of God unto us.

Williams conceived of the terms, "Kingdom of God", and "Kingdom of Heaven", as referring to one and the same thing which signifies,

First, the kingdom of government of God and Christ in the soul. Secondly, the government of God in his holy providence in the world. Thirdly, his government in the congregation or churches of his saints called out of the world. Fourthly, the glorious state to come after this life.

It is of interest to note briefly something of Williams' eschatology. He anticipated with keen expectancy the literal second-coming of Christ, "...the true Lord Jesus Christ: whom I desire joyfully to expect to return from heaven, as literally and personally as all true Christians hold (Acts 1) he is ascended".

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2 George Fox Digg'd out of hi Burrowes, N. C. P., Vol. V, lxiv.
3 Ibid., 445.
4 Ibid., 378.
5 Ibid., 321.
He confessed that there was much uncertainty and difference of opinion about the fulfillment of the prophecy in the Apocalypse. However, he felt certain that:

The Revelations of John and the revelations of God's wonderful providences, seem to proclaim wonderful and dreadful discoveries of the Son of God approaching. And it is as sure as that there is a Lord Jesus Christ, that God will subdue all his enemies, that he will shortly break (and make all his followers tread on) the proudest necks born up this day in the world, even the grandest Seigniories of the Turkish and Popish Empires, the two so mighty opposers of the Son of God. And it is not improbable, both their ruins and downfall must be from some top and pinnacle of glorious prosperity and furious outrage against their (Antichristian and Christian) enemies.¹

He believed in the ultimate justice of the universe, for had not justice already demonstrated itself in the past and present and therefore would in the future? "Let us cast our eyes upon the fiery flashes of his severe justice revealed unto us in a three-fold time, the time past, present, and to come." God will judge nations in due season; hence it is not man's responsibility to persecute men for their spiritual errors. Men need not attempt to do God's business for "it is most true, that sooner or later the God of heaven punisheth the nations of the world, for their idolatries, superstitions..."²

Heaven and hell were definite realities to Roger Williams although he admitted there was much he could not understand about them in this life. He wrote:

The true Protestant believes these three things, First, that there is a state eternal of joy to

² Experiments in Spiritual Life and Health, 52.
³ The Bloudy Tenent Yet More Bloudy, 71, N. C. P., Vol. IV.
the righteous bodies and souls after this life: and a state of eternal misery of soul and body to the ungodly: Although the exact knowledge of particulars exceed the present sight of our mortal eyes, the hearing of our ears, and the capacity of our hearts, etc.1

The body and the soul of God's child are immortal. "As to the soul, who of sober Papists or Protestants questions the immortality of it: and of the body also, in joy or sorrow to eternity."

At this point it would be well to pause and endeavor to determine to what degree Roger Williams' thought thus far considered contributed to his theory of religious liberty. Thus far we have found little to distinguish him from the orthodox Calvinism of his day, other than his withdrawal from all organized churches and his "seekerism". It is particularly interesting to note that "although banished by a Calvinist theocracy he was at certain points even more Calvinist in his theology than his opponents". However, although he was completely Calvinistic in his stern view of predestination, he had come to question seriously certain important positions of the Boston Bay theocracy. He denied the Puritan dream for the new world which haunted the soul of John Cotton. He not only refused to concede the contention of Cotton that the Indians were the Amalekites and rightfully to be displaced by the new Israelites, on whom God had conferred the new Canaan, but rejected the more basic claim that the Puritans were God-chosen Israelites. As will be more fully considered later, Williams held that ancient Israel did constitute a national church but was the only valid ex-

2 Ibid., 352.
ample in history, and after Christ the Jewish nation ceased to be the chosen people. Williams also placed his finger upon a practical paradox in Calvinism in the combination of predestination and revivalism. To build the new Israel of the Bay, either the standard must be lowered and church membership made all inclusive or an extensive revivalism with heretofore undreamed of success must be promoted. Since a revival purposed to save souls, how could it be justified or explained in the light of Calvinistic dogma that the number of the elect is predetermined?

It appears that the basis of Williams' protest against the Bay theocracy and his advocacy of religious liberty rested upon two profound convictions. First, there was his deep concern for safeguarding the purity of the church. To build the new Canaan, Cotton must follow either a course of lowering the standards of the church and automatically including all citizens, which Williams considered a travesty on the New Testament, or he must use the magistrate to compel men to religious uniformity. Secondly, it was against the forcing of men's consciences that Williams protested with such passion. His Calvinism was over-ridden by his concern for man's rights. Cotton was concerned with society and a system which he conceived as being of God. Williams was concerned with man as an individual and was convinced that all systems that rob the individual of his God-given rights must go. Hence it is to Williams' concept of man that we must turn for the real basis of his devotion to religious liberty.

D. WILLIAMS' CONCEPT OF MAN

Williams' interest in religious liberty was not philosophical or theological but practical. He did not begin with doctrine but with people.
He has been presented as the fearless protagonist of a great cause, the pioneer statesman creating a civil order devoid of religious requirements. But he was so, not merely out of loyalty to a principle, however divine in origin for him, but out of loyalty to men of like qualities as himself who were being denied, robbed, and deprived of their highest rights and privileges.¹

There are many indications of his concern for the downtrodden and ordinary men in his writings. No doubt this concern was accentuated by the fact that he felt himself to have been downtrodden; yet it is particularly noticeable that when once he secured his own liberty, he, unlike so many others, continued to fight for the liberty of others.

I desire not that liberty to myself which I would not freely and impartially weigh out to all the consciences of the world besides—all these consciences (yes, the very consciences of papists, Jews, and Christians), as I have proved at large in my answer to Master Cotton's Washings.²

Williams' concern for the welfare of an orphan daughter of Daniel Abbott, a friend of former years now deceased, and his assistance of two needy widows indicated in a letter addressed to the town of Providence, February 22, 1651, further reveals his interest in the lowly. Williams' influence was probably behind the assembly's ruling that the masters should give their servants a holiday during the week when protest was brought against servants playing games on Sunday and desecrating the Lord's Day. This was an unusually generous gesture for the era and indicates a beneficent attitude toward all human beings. His attitude toward the Indians, in no small degree

³ The Letters of Roger Williams, N.C.P., Vol. VI, 207.
revealing his spirit, will be considered in the next section of this chapter.

Actually, what was Williams' concept of man? In what manner did he conceive of man as related to God? What of man's natural tendency to err and the divine plan for his redemption? And above all, what part of Roger Williams' religious thought concerning man lay back of his fierce devotion to religious liberty?

Everywhere it is very plain that he considered all men sinful by nature. He speaks of the "three greatest sinners that ever were in this world, the devil, and the first man, and the first woman", alluding, of course, to sin entering the race through Adam and Eve. All men were children of wrath.

Nature knows no difference between Europe and America in blood, birth, bodies, etc. God having of one blood made all mankind, Acts 17, and all by nature being children of wrath, Ephesians 2.

Repentance is spoken of as "turning of the whole Soul...from the sin of nature, and that heart filthiness which we bring into the world with us... Since

mankind be corrupted from the womb, and the imagina-
tion of the thoughts of man's heart be only evil and that continually...and millions of experiences of all the world over confirm...the activity of highest reason in this world falls short...the heart of man is shut up locked and barred up in willing

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1 George Fox Digg'd out of his Burrowes, N. C. P., Vol. V, 324-325.
3 George Fox, 179.
4 Ibid., 425.
5 Ibid., 354.
ignorance and darkness until the finger of God...pick open in a more gentle way, or break open by great affliction and terrors the soul and spirit of man.  

Apart from divine intervention man is hopeless.

While Williams believed that all men are sinful by nature and hence damned, he also held that it was the will of the Father through the death and resurrection of the Son that men be redeemed, cleansed, and made fit subjects for the heavenly habitation. Like the Baptists and certain other Separatist groups he limited church membership and baptism to those who had had a personal experience of grace and he contended that it is impossible "for any man to enter the Kingdom of God without a second birth. John 3". Christ comes to dwell in the heart by faith.

As many as received him, that is received Christ Jesus in the house of their hearts to dwell there by believing and obeying of him, they are born of the Spirit, and are Sons of God.

His denial of the efficacy of any priest, church, or government to act on behalf of an individual with God, and his insistence upon the necessity of every man responding personally to the love of God in Christ Jesus are consistent with Williams' deep sense of the importance of the individual. Any other view denied the soul competency of the individual before God and in Williams' mind was contrary to the light of nature and reason as well as the Scriptures. Actually any other was not Christianity at all, for to Williams there was no church apart from a body of believers who had experienced the second birth. There was explosive potential in this concept of the

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1 George Fox Digg'd out of his Burrowes, N. C. P., Vol. V, 58.
competency of the individual soul and the priesthood of all believers 
which had been promulgated with force in the Protestant Reformation. In 
it its full implication, it carried terrific momentum for transforming both the 
political and religious concepts then in vogue.

An important question in connection with Roger Williams' concept of 
man as it relates to his fundamental principle of religious liberty is in 
what manner did he distinguish between man in grace and man out of grace? 
This distinction was a very vital one to the Puritan. In Puritan thinking 
there was a real concern for both liberty and equality but this liberty and 
equality was generally reserved for the redeemed. Only the man in grace 
could claim these privileges. It is well to bear in mind that the main body 
of Puritan thought was Calvinistic and had adopted, at least to some degree, 
the ideal of the "holy community". Early the problem of how the unregenerate 
society was to be dealt with in relation to this "holy community" became a 
paramount question. Either it must be forced to conform or left to perish 
in its sin and to contaminate others at the same time. This conviction lay 
back of much of the intolerance of this period.

Williams had come into conflict with John Cotton and others in New 
England who, in the strict Calvinistic pattern, had set themselves to erect a 
"New Jerusalem", a "Holy Community" in that wilderness. One of the strong 
conflicts in Puritan thinking was between the impulse to reform and the con-
cern for liberty. How could the "holy community" be erected if men were left 
free to believe and teach all the error of their natural, sinful state? When

1 Woodhouse, Introduction, 59.
2 Ibid., 35-37.
faced with this problem, the vast majority either forsook the principle of liberty altogether or limited it entirely to the redeemed. After all, only a man in grace had the enlightenment necessary to make his conscience a safe guide. Furthermore, could any unredeemed conscience really exercise anything but license? Woodhouse is right in suggesting that Roger Williams resolved this dilemma between the motives of reform and liberty by the principle of segregation. The church and the state must be separated. Their methods of reform are entirely different; one is entirely spiritual and the other physical. In no sense does civil peace depend upon spiritual or ecclesiastical uniformity.

Williams contends that all men have certain rights whether in grace or out of grace. He is convinced that it is not necessary for an individual to be in grace to be a good citizen. Has not the vast majority of the human race lived in civil peace without knowing Christianity?...So many glorious and flourishing cities of the world maintain their civil peace, yes the very Americans and wildest pagans keep the peace of their towns and cities; though neither in one nor the other can any man prove a true Church of God in these places...2 And I ask whether or no...Jews, Turks, or Anti-christians may not be peaceable and quiet subjects, loving and helpful neighbors, fair and just dealers, true and loyal to the civil government? It is clear they may from all reason and experience in many flourishing cities and kingdoms of the world, and so offend not against the civil state and peace; nor incur the punishment of the civil sword, notwithstanding that in spiritual and mystical account they are ravenous and greedy wolves.3

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1 Woodhouse, 59.
3 Ibid., 142.
God has ordained certain civil rights to men as citizens apart from their relation to the church. To those who would persecute, he writes in

_The Bloudy Tenant Yet More Bloudy_,

Christ Jesus was of another opinion for he distinguished between Gods due and Caesars due: and therefore (with respect to God his cause and religion) it is not lawful to deprive Caesar the civil magistrate, nor any that belong to him of their civil and earthly rights. I say in this respect, although that a man is not godly, a Christian, sincere, a church member, yet to deprive him of any civil right or privilege, due to him as a man, a subject, a citizen, is to take from Caesar, that which is Caesars, which God endures not though it be given to himself.1

The element of Roger Williams' religious thought which apparently contributed more than any other to his convicted devotion to religious liberty was his belief in the intrinsic worth of the individual. The very crux of this belief lay in his respect for conscience. It was the violation of conscience entailed in persecution which he attacked most frequently and passionately in favor of religious liberty. Williams would not accept the current conception that only a rightly informed conscience was a true conscience at all. His inclusion of the erroneous conscience distinguished him from his New England Puritan contemporaries, who maintained that those such as Williams who refused to conform, were not actually persecuted for conscience but for sinning against conscience. In this, the inclusion of the erroneous conscience, Williams was employing an argument used in the sixteenth century by Ochino in some degree and by Castellio more completely, and which came to have wide acceptance in the seventeenth century.

Williams defends the integrity of the mistaken, for he will have no conscience, whether rightly or wrongly informed, abused. His evidence

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in this defense is not extensive. He does not argue, as Milton, that
truth is a quest in which error may represent a necessary stage, or that
error is an indispensable foil to truth, or that truth is many-sided. He
simply holds that those whom the Puritans judged in error were as devoted
and sacrificial as others whom they esteemed correct. Could they then be
regarded as insincere?

In considering Cotton's argument, that he did not persecute for
conscience, but for sinning against the light of conscience, Williams makes
it clear that he stands in awe of any man's conscience, even that of the
non-Christian.

I have before discussed this point of an heretic sinning
against light of conscience: And I shall add that how¬
soever they lay this down as an infallible conclusion
that all heresy is against light of conscience; yet
(to pass by the discussion of the nature of heresy, in
which respect it may so be that even themselves may be
found heretical, yea and that in fundamentals) how do
all idolaters after light presented, and exhortations
powerfully pressed, either Turks or pagans, Jews or
Anti-christians, strongly even to death, hold fast (or
rather are held fast by) their delusions.

Yea, God's people themselves, being deluded and
captivated are strongly confident even against some
fundamentals, especially of worship, and yet not a¬
gainst the light, but according to the light or eye
of a deceived conscience.

Now all these consciences walk on confidently and
constantly even to suffering of death and torments, and
are more strongly confirmed in their belief and con¬
science, because such bloody and cruel courses of perse¬
cution are used toward them.¹

Man's conscience cannot be reached by the physical sword, only God
can pry open the conscience.

Speaks not the Scripture expressly of the Jew...that God
hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they
should not see, etc. all which must be spoken of the very

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conscience, which he that hath the golden key of David can only shut and open, and all the picklocks or swords in all the smith's shops in the world can neither by force or fraud prevent his time. Is it not said of Antichristians...that God hath sent them strong delusions, so strong and efficacious, that they believe a lie and that so confidently, and some so conscientiously, that death itself cannot part between the delusion and their conscience.1

Conscience is a universal possession which is not limited to any special group or race or religion. "This conscience is found in all mankind, more or less, in Jews, Turks, Papists, Protestants, Pagans, etc." Even erroneous consciences deserve respect and should stimulate thoughtful men to examine their own position.

Remember that the thing which we call conscience is of such a nature (especially in Englishmen) as once a Pope of Rome at the suffering of an Englishman in Rome, himself observed that although it be groundless, false, and deluded, yet it is not by an argument or torments easily removed.3

...Let me...remember you of the...story...of William Hartly in Queen Elizabeth her days, who receiving the sentence of hanging, drawing, etc., spake confidently (as afterward he suffered) what tell you me of hanging, etc. If I had ten thousand millions of lives, I would spend them all for the faith of Rome, etc. Sir, I am far from glancing the least countenance on the consciences of papists, yea or on some Scotch and English Protestants too, who turn up all roots, and lay all level and in blood, for exaltation of their own way and conscience. All that I observe is, that boldness and confidence, zeal and resolution, as it is commendable in a kind when it seriously respects a Diety, so also, the greatest confidence hath sometimes need of the greatest search and examination.4

Men can not escape conscience and are thereby compelled to make choices if they are to be true to their highest nature.

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3 Ibid., 508.
4 Ibid., 509.
I speak of conscience, a persuasion fixed in the mind and heart of a man, which enforceth him to judge (as Paul said of himself a persecutor) and to do so and so, with respect to God, his worship, etc.\textsuperscript{1}

Williams would carefully guard the inviolability of even the papists' consciences, regardless of the fact that he considered their consciences the most erroneous and beguiled. After all, he reasoned, that was no more than their right!

I confess in this plea for freedom of all consciences in matters...of worship, I have impartially pleaded for the freedom of the consciences of the papists themselves, the greatest enemies and persecutors in Europe of the saints and truths of Jesus: Yet I have pleaded for no more than is their due and right...\textsuperscript{2}

He held every man who sincerely followed his conscience, whether Jew or Turk or papists or Christian, in deepest respect. Williams had tremendous confidence in the individual's conscience when left free to make its own choice.

However, I commend that man, whether Jew, or Turk, or papist, or whosoever, that steers no otherwise than his conscience dares, till his conscience tell him that God gives him a greater latitude. For, neighbor, you shall find it rare to meet with men of conscience, men that for fear and love of God dare not lie, nor be drunk, nor be contentious, nor steal, nor be covetous, nor voluptuous, nor ambitious, nor lazy-bodies, nor busy-bodies, nor dare displease God by omitting either service or suffering, though of reproach, imprisonment, banishment and death, because of the fear and love of God.\textsuperscript{3}

Williams was a typical Puritan in holding that the mark of the saint was that he obeyed his own conscience at any cost.

The extent of Williams' faith in conscience is nowhere revealed more clearly than in his daring assertion that a conscientious papist is

\textsuperscript{1}\textit{Ibid.}, 508.
\textsuperscript{2}\textit{Ibid.}, 47.
\textsuperscript{3}\textit{Letters, N. C. P.}, Vol. VI, 328-339.
nearer heaven than, and is to be preferred to, an indifferent Protestant.

In dealing with the prevalent fear of that era that the papists could not be trusted with religious liberty because of the political and religious dangers involved, Williams writes:

I allege the experience of a holy, wise and learned man, experienced in our own and other states affairs, who affirms that he knew but few papists increase, where much liberty to papists was granted, yea fewer than where they were restrained: Yet further, that in his conscience and judgement he believed and observed that such persons as conscientiously turned papists (as believing Popery the truer way to heaven and salvation) I say, such persons were ordinarily more conscionable, loving, and peaceable in their dealings, and nearer heaven than thousands that follow a bare common trade and road and name of Protestant religion, and yet live without all life of conscience and devotion to God, and consequently with as little love and faithfulness unto men.¹

Williams' judgement of the worth of the individual is indicated not only by his regard for every man's conscience but also by the manner in which he honored and esteemed those with whom he violently differed. His personal relations were marked by frank controversy and warm friendliness. He spoke of John Cotton, his bitter controversalist, as "that heavenly man".

To John Endicott, who deserted him at Salem and had Obadiah Holmes whipped, he wrote in frank remonstrance,

It is a dismal battle for poor naked feet to kick against the pricks. It is a dreadful voice from the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords: Endicott, Endicott, why huntst thou me? Why imprisonst thou me? Why finest, why so bloodily whippst, why wouldst thou (did not I hold thy bloody hands) hang and burn me? Yes, Sir, I beseech you to remember that it is a dangerous thing to put this to the maybe...that in fighting

¹ The Bloody Tenent Yet More Bloody, N. C. P., Vol. IV, 317. This is thought to have been a quotation from a manuscript of John Robinson which was never published. However, the important point here is that Williams' statement reveals his own conviction.
against several sort of consciences...I have not fought against God, that I have not persecuted Jesus in some of them.1

Yet in the very same letter he apologizes for not having been more generous and courteous. He was no less frank with John Winthrop, writing him that he mourned his nakedness and poverty in spirituals, yet at the same time wishing him every good fortune in a civil way and praying that God's will might be more clearly revealed to them both. Winthrop replies that he thinks otherwise and Williams responds:

The fire will try your works and mine, The Lord Jesus help us to make sure of our persons that we seek Jesus that was crucified. However, it is and ever shall be my endeavor to pacify and allay, where I meet with rigid and censorious spirits who not only blame your actions but doom your persons; and indeed it was one of the first grounds of my dislike of John Smith the miller, and especially of his wife, viz. their judging of your persons as devils.2

Once Winthrop wrote Williams, "Sir, we have often tried your patience, but could never conquer it". Years later, Williams wrote young Winthrop who had subscribed to his banishment, "Your loving lines in this cold dead season were as a cup of your Connecticut cider!" Williams' persistent demand that, even though the Quakers were obsessed of grossest error, they be heard, is further indication of his fundamental belief in the worth of the individual. Regardless of how violently he differed from them he could not forego this basic principle.

The fact that he was able to retain the friendship of men such as

2  Ibid., 90.
3  Proceedings of Massachusetts Historical Society, 1855-1858, 314.
Milton, Cromwell, Endicott, and Winthrop indicates an unusual attitude and ability. It seems that he "had learned the high art of carrying on a battle of ideas without loss of respect, esteem, and affection". It was this characteristic of Williams, revealed in his letters, that lay behind Lowell's statement that

Charity and tolerance flow so noticeably from the pen of Williams that it is plain they were in his heart.
He does not show himself a strong or a very wise man, but a thoroughly gentle and good one.  

In an era of stern men it is refreshing to meet such a man and it should be borne in mind that "to be able to struggle even to the point of banishing and being banished in the winter's cold and yet to preserve the unity of spirit and the bond of peace may well be the highest of Christian attainments".

E. HIS WORK AMONG THE INDIANS AS A REVELATION OF HIS THOUGHT.

A third proof of Williams' evaluation of the worth of the individual is found in his work among the Indians. It is impossible to understand Roger Williams as a man or to evaluate his religious thought without taking into account this work among, and concern for, the Indians. As Lawrence C. Wroth has pointed out, perhaps the dearest project of Roger Williams' heart was not even his great principle of soul liberty, with its ecclesiastical and political implications but, above all, a great desire for the conversion of the Indians. He indicates this concern in his earliest known letter written in New England. "What I long after", he wrote, "is the natives'
This concern seems to have been a passion with him throughout his entire life. It is indicated in the fact that for forty years Roger Williams labored to bring about a better understanding between the people of Massachusetts and his Narragansetts, endeavoring to keep the Indians in fair and peaceful ways, to explain their misunderstandings and errors, to soften the hearts of those merciless men of the colonies who went into battle against the Indians breathing the words of the comminatory Psalms. He was the first of several in the American story who placed themselves between the Indians resentful and bewildered, and the white man, relentless pushed forward by the economic pressure behind him.

Williams' concern for the Indians is clearly indicated in his plea addressed to the General Court of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, dated October 5, 1654. On the 12th of September (at Warwick) Williams had been elected president of the colony, hence this was an official endeavor to prevent hostilities then threatening between the united colonies and the Indians.

Selections from this revealing letter merit quoting.

We have in these parts a sound of your meditations of war against these natives, amongst whom we dwell...I remember, that upon the express advice of your ever-honoured Mr. Winthrop, deceased, I first adventured to begin a plantation, among the thickest of these barbarians.

That in the Pequod wars it pleased your honoured government to employ me in the hazardous and weighty service of negotiating a league between yourselves and the Narragansetts, when the Pequod messengers, who sought the Narragansetts' league against the English, had almost ended that my work and life together.

That at the subscribing of that solemn league which, by the mercy of the Lord, I had procured with the Narragansetts, your government was pleased to send unto me the copy of it, subscribed by all hands there, which yet I keep as a monument and a testimony of peace and faithfulness between you both.

2 Wroth, 23.
That, since that time, it hath pleased the Lord so to order it, that I have been more or less interested and used in all your great transactions of war or peace between the English and the natives, and have not spared purse, nor pains, nor hazards (very many times), that the whole land, English and natives, might sleep in peace securely.

That in my last negotiations in England with the parliament, council of state, and his highness, I have been forced to be known so much that if I should be silent I should not only betray mine own peace and yours, but also should be false to their honourable and princely names, whose loves and affections, as well as their supreme authority, are not a little concerned in the peace or war of this country.

At my last departure for England I was importuned by the Narragansetts sachems, and especially by Ninigret, to present their petition to the high sachems of England, that they might not be forced from their religion, be invaded by war: for they said they were daily visited with threatenings by Indians that came from about the Massachusetts, that if they would not pray they should be destroyed by war. With this their petition I acquainted in private discourses divers of the chiefs of our nation, especially his highness, who, in many discourses I had with him, never expressed the least displeasure, as hath been here reported, but in the midst of disputes ever expressed a high spirit of love and gentleness, and was often pleased to please himself with very many questions, and my answers about the Indian affairs of this country, and after all hearing of yourself and us, it hath pleased his highness and his council to grant, amongst other favours to this colony, some expressly concerning the very Indians, the native inhabitants of this jurisdiction...

...are not all the English of this land generally a persecuted people from their native soil? and hath not the God of peace and Father of mercies made these natives more friendly in this, than our native countrymen in our own land to us? Have they not entered leagues of love, and to this day continued peaceable commerce with us? Are not our families grown up in peace among them? Upon which I humbly ask, how can it suit with Christian ingenuity to take hold of some seeming occasions for their destruction...I pray it may be remembered how greatly the name of God is concerned in this affair, for it cannot be hid how all England and other nations ring with the glorious conversion of the Indians of New England...Honoured sirs, whether I have been and am a friend of the natives' turning to civility and Christianity, and whether I have been instrumental, and desire to so be, according to my light, I will not
trouble you with; only I beseech you consider how the name of the most holy and jealous God may be preserved between the clashings of these two, viz, the glorious conversion of the Indians in New England.

...How much nobler were it and glorious to the name of God and your own, that no pagan should dare to use the name of an English subject who comes not out in some degree from barbarian to civility...¹

Roger Williams' interest in the Indians had manifest itself as early as 1632, during his residence at Plymouth. He had opportunities to acquaint himself with them through their visits to the settlement, and through his visits among them. Eagerly he set himself to learn their language, living, he wrote, in their "filthy, smoky holes", sharing their food with them, and going hungry for lack of it. He wrote, "My soul's desire was, to do the natives good." He came to know Massasoit, the Sachem of the Pokanokets, and father of the famous Philip, and Canonicus, the Narragansett Sachem. Many years afterward he writes, "God was pleased to give me a painful, patient spirit, to lodge with them in their filthy, smoky holes, even while I lived at Plymouth and Salem, to gain their tongues."

In a work by Wood, entitled, *New England's Prospect*, published in 1634 in London, there is this statement:

One of the English preachers in a special good intent of doing good to their (the Indians') souls, hath spent much time in attaining to their language, wherein he is so seen a proficient, that he can speak to their understanding, and they to his; much loving and respecting him for his love and counsel. It is hoped that he may be an instrument of good among them.²

³ Ibid., 3.
⁴ Ibid., 4.
Undoubtedly this reference is to Roger Williams, for John Eliot did not begin his work until eleven or twelve years after Wood's book was printed.

Williams' conscientious effort to learn the Indian language, and his endeavor to familiarize himself with their customs and religious conceptions was most unusual for a Protestant missionary of that era. Cotton held that the Indians were Amalekites, rightfully to be displaced by the new Israelites, on whom God in his good providence had conferred this Canaan. Williams would have none of it, for he contended that the Old Testament relationship including war with Amalek, is to be spiritualized.

The book entitled *A Key into the Language of America*, and compiled during his voyage to England in 1643, published soon after his arrival in London, is an evidence of his devotion to the Indians. Here we learn important facts about the habits, customs, manners, as well as the language of the Indians. Here we also have a delightful picture of Williams as "a man in whom is seen convinced tenderness, tolerance, and a sunny reasonableness of disposition." Again and again throughout the work we find evidence of Williams' concern for the Indians and his desire to see them saved. He even hoped for the conversion of the wildest and indicates as much in connection with a discussion of some of their uncivilized customs.

There is a moving picture of Williams' effort to win a Pequot Captain by the name of Wequash to Christianity, in the section of the work addressed, "To the Reader".

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1 Ibid.
2 Wroth, 21.
Two days before his death, as I past up to Quinnehticutt River, it pleased my worthy friend, Mr. Fenwick, whom I visited at his house in Say-Brook Fort at the mouth of that river to tell me that my old friend Wequash lay very sick: I desired to see him, and himself was pleased to be my guide two miles, where Wequash lay.

Amongst other discourse concerning his sickness and death (in which he freely bequeaths his son to Mr. Fenwick) I closed with him concerning his Soul: He told me that some two or three years before he had lodged at my house, where I acquainted him with the condition of all mankind, and his own in particular, how God created Man and all things: how Man fell from God, and the wrath of God against him until repentance: said he, "Your words were never out of my heart to this present," and said he, "me much pray to Jesus Christ". I told him so did many English, French, and Dutch, who had never turned to God, nor loved him. He replied in broken English: "Me so big naughty Heart, me heart all one stone!" Savory expressions using to breathe from compunc and broken hearts, and a sense of inward hardness and unbrokenness. I had many discourses with him in his life, but this was the sum of our last parting until our general meeting.¹

In George Fox Digg'd out of his Burrowes, Roger Williams speaks of his method of dealing with the Indians in discussing the Scripture.

When we deal with Indians about religion, our work is to prove unto them by reason, that the Bible is God's Word, for by nature they are much affected with a kind of Deity to be in writing. That all their Revelations, and visions, and dreams (in which the devil wonderfully abusive them) are false and cheating.

That this Scripture or Writing we pretend to, is from God by their own experience, because it agrees with their own consciences, reproving them for those sins their souls say they are guilty of: That the terrible Majesty of God's justice in punishing sinners so shines in it, and also his infinite goodness and mercy in finding out such a way of mediation, and such a Mediator that their souls cannot but adore infinite justice and mercy in it. That the Holy power of God so appears in it in working upon the souls of millions, turning them from dogs, and swine, and wolves, and lions, and sheep, and lambs, and doves, and etc. in love meekness, patience, etc.²

¹ Ibid.
Evidently Williams' method was primarily one of personal evangelism. At least he dealt with them individually and was extremely anxious that they should give proof of their conversion before being accepted as professed Christians. And he certainly refused to sanction mass conversion which was the common practice of his day whereby whole tribes and nations received baptism at the bidding of a chieftain or king. For Roger Williams, conversion was a personal, individual matter, and one must be convinced of "Repentance from dead works, and (have) faith towards God, before the doctrine of Baptism..." This is clearly indicated in the following discussion:

A Quinnihticut Indian (who had heard our discourse) told the Sachem Miantonomo, that souls went up to Heaven, or down to Hell, "For", saith he, "Our fathers have told us, that our souls go to the Southwest". The Sachem answered, "But how do you know yourself, that your souls go to the Southwest? did you ever see a soul go thither?" The Native replied, "He hath books and writings, and one which God himself made, concerning men's souls, and therefore may well know more than we that have none, but take all upon trust from our forefathers".

The said Sachem, and the chief of his people, discoursed by themselves, of keeping the Englishman's day of worship, which I could easily have brought the Country to, but that I was persuaded, and am, that God's way is first to turn a soul from it's idols, both of heart, worship, and conversation, before it is capable of worship, to the true and living God, according to I Thes. 1. 9.

You turn to God from idols to serve or worship the living and true God. As also, that the two first principles and foundations of true God in Christ, are repentance from dead works, and faith towards God, before the doctrine of baptism or washing and laying on of hands which contain the ordinances and practices of worship the want of which, I conceive, is the bane of millions of souls in England, and all other Nations professing to be Christians Nations who are brought by public authority to baptism and fellowship with God in ordinances or worship, before the saving work of repentance, and a true turning to God, Hb. 6. 2. 1

This conviction is also presented very emphatically in Williams' work, *Christenings Make not Christians*, which was published in London in 1645.

Roger Williams' friendship with the Indians was repaid when, upon his banishment, he fled to them and subsequently settled on their land. The Providence settlement was upon land belonging to his friends, Canonicus and Miantonomi. Their residence was about thirty miles south of the settlement. In consideration of his "many kindnesses and services" they freely gave unto him all the land lying between the Mooshausick and Wanasquatucket Rivers. In accord with his avowed principle that the Indians were the rightful owners of the land, Williams wrote:

> I spared no cost towards them, and in gifts to Massasoit, yea, and all his, and to Canonicus, and all his, tokens and presents many years before I came in person to the Narragansett; and when I came, I was welcome to Massasoit, and to the old prince Canonicus, who was most shy of all English to the last breath. It was not thousands, nor tens of thousands of money could have bought of him (Canonicus) an English entrance into this bay.¹

Williams evidently maintained his interest in and work among the Indians until the very end. As has been indicated before, Williams' moving to Wickford in Narragansett country from Providence in 1645 was partly motivated by his desire to continue his missionary work among them. An interesting question is, "How successful was Williams with his work among the Indians?"

It is very regrettable that another work of Williams which he gave to the press at about the same time as the *Key* is not now available and is evidently permanently lost. At the end of the Table appended to the *Key* he writes that he had "further treated of these natives of New England, and that

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¹ Knowles, 109.
great point of their conversion". However, general evidence would indicate that he had very little success.

In the light of his many admirable qualities as a missionary, why did he fail in this chief desire of his heart? Wroth has suggested several reasons: First, it was impossible for a single missionary, regardless of how faithful and efficient he might be in presenting the gospel, to overcome the stiff wall of hatred which had been raised between the English and the Indians. In the second place, Williams' rejection of the mass conversion procedure of his day certainly greatly limited his visible success. He would have no forcing of the Indians' consciences. When it was rumored that Massachusetts would make war on the Narragansetts unless they accepted Christianity, he immediately took the side of the Indians. Perhaps there was also a weakness in the mingling of the function of a missionary and a trader which Williams was forced to do because of his conviction which finds expression in his work, The Hireling Ministry None of Christ's, published in London in 1645. A final reason, which Wroth gives as the most significant, is indicated in the following statement:

His desire for their conversion was a thing of the mind, an expression of his general benevolence, a duty laid upon him by his conscience that the Scripture might be fulfilled rather than a motive arising from a deep emotion of pity or love.2

In the light of all the evidence, this final reason for Williams' lack of success appears questionable and certainly should be carefully examined. Throughout Williams' writings, again and again, there appears, often as incidental expressions, his deep concern and interest for the Indians, if

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2 Roger Williams, 26-29.
not his love for them. His request for an Indian child, a war captive, in a letter to Governor John Winthrop, July, 1637, reflects a deep personal interest in the child.

...I am bold (if I may not offend in it) to request the keeping and bringing up of one of the children. I have fixed mine eyes on this little one with the red about his neck, but I will not be peremptory in my choice, but will rest in your loving pleasure for him or any, etc.¹

In another letter written also to John Winthrop and dated November 10, 1637, he refers to two Pequot squaws who had been serving as slaves, and had run away, and assures them that he will see that they are kindly used. One claimed that she had been severely beaten and the other that she had been raped. He wrote:

My humble desire is that all that have those poor wretches might be exhorted as to walk wisely and justly toward them, so as to make mercy eminent, for in that attribute the Father of mercy most shines to Adam's miserable offspring.²

Williams' request for justice in punishment of the four Englishmen who slew an Indian, in a letter addressed to Winthrop, August, 1638, reveals his estimate of the worth of the individual Indians in a day when many considered them of little more intrinsic worth than animals. His fairness resulted in their confidence. Writing to John Winthrop, Jr., Williams discussed the vile liquor traffic of the white man with the Indian, and speaks of his unwillingness to profit from such a destructive business, "I might have gained thousands (as much as any) by that trade, but God hath graciously given me rather to choose a dry morsel, etc." In his previously quoted

¹ N. C. P., Vol. VI, 35.
² Ibid., 80.
³ Ibid., 110-112.
⁴ Ibid., 333.
letter to the Massachusetts Bay General Court, seeking to prevent the threatening war between the United Colonies and the Narragansetts, we find one of the clearest pictures of Williams' real attitude toward the Indians. However, it would be erroneous to leave the impression that Roger Williams always manifested an enlightened twentieth century viewpoint in relation to the Indians. Although in many things he was far ahead of his generation, he was, as has already been pointed out, nonetheless, as all men, a man of his age with human limitations. There is a statement in his previously mentioned letter to the General Court of the Bay colony which might, on first consideration, appear to cancel other expressions of his Christian attitude of the worth of the individual Indian's soul. The quotation which is often omitted by biographers is as follows:

But I beseech you, say your thoughts and the thoughts of your wives and little ones, and the thought of all English, and of God's people in England, and the thought of his Highness and council, (tender of these parts) if, for the sake of a few inconsiderable pagans, and beasts, wallowing in idleness, stealing, lying, whoring, treacherous witch crafts, blasphemies, and idolatries, all that the gracious hand of the Lord hath so wonderfully planted in the wilderness, should be destroyed.

When we consider this statement in the light of the fact that the whole purpose of the letter was to prevail upon Massachusetts to forego their avowed intention of attacking the Indians, and that these expressions were the common language of the men to whom the letter was addressed, they do not seem to indicate so grave an inconsistency. In true Calvinistic fashion Williams always considered the unregenerate in a completely damned state, utterly vile, and lost without the redemption of Jesus Christ.

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1 Quoted in this chapter, 135-136.
There is also the problem, mentioned previously, of Williams' heading the committee to distribute the captives who were brought into Providence after the King Phillip's War. These captives were distributed among the heads of the families on the following conditions: "All under five years to serve till thirty; above five and ten, till twenty-eight; above, to fifteen, till twenty-seven; above fifteen, to twenty, till twenty-six years; from twenty to thirty, shall serve eight years; all above thirty, seven years." As a possible explanation, Gammell suggests that Williams may have regarded their servitude as the only condition compatible with the peace and safety of the colonies. When we take into account the near extinction of these tribes it is conceivable that he thought it best for the Indians. Perhaps the best we can urge for him is that he decided that his dream of converting and civilizing the Indians was hopeless. Yet in all fairness it should be pointed out that he was more merciful than the other leading men of the colony who advocated not only enslavement but shipping them off to the terrible slave market of Morocco.

Notwithstanding these unpleasant exceptions, the full sweep of Roger Williams' published writings would leave the general impression that, deeply embedded in the thought of this unusual man, rested a deep concern for the conversion of the Indian, and a deep and abiding love for this oft-maltreated and cruelly-used native American. His degree of success and his larger degree of failure were perhaps, above all else, due to the enormity of his task, and the high spiritual demands his own conscience imposed.

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1 Gammell, 194.
2 Ibid.
3 Straus, 225.
upon him. He is not the first or the last Christian missionary who, having demanded a personal, individual conversion experience, has had to count results in small numerical figures. Is that to say he was a failure?

This work of Williams among the Indians and his writings in connection with it brings into sharper focus certain elements of his religious thought. Here we see revealed the seriousness with which he took the demands of the gospel. In the background of his thinking there was the overwhelming conviction that the commissions of our Lord were to be obeyed. He was possessed of a missionary passion for the souls of the Indians, and he was persuaded that whatever hindered this, was to be avoided. One of his strongest arguments against war with the Indians in his letter addressed to the General Court of the Bay was the injury that the name of God and the mission cause would suffer as a result of fighting.

A second element of his thought emphasized here is his judgement of the worth of the individual. In an era when so few looked upon the Indian as an individual of eternal significance, his deep interest in their welfare, his efforts to understand their thought, culture, and language, his demand that they receive honest consideration and justice, and his ready defense of them against those who would coerce them in spiritual matters stand as an encouraging demonstration of the Christian faith. Again and again we see him taking the Indians' part and, to the extent of much personal inconvenience, working for better relations between the white and the red man.

Herein presented is another important element in his religious thinking: the conviction that salvation is a personal, individual matter.

There is a reference in Williams' *The Bloody Tenent Yet More Bloody*, (N. C. P., Vol. IV, 370-371) to the fact that John Cotton held that the conversion of the nations would not be great until the "seven plagues and the seven angels be fulfilled". Williams acknowledges this interpretation to be very probable. This opinion probably contributed to his pessimism about the outcome of his work among the Indians.
which, if valid, must be a vital, real experience between the lost man and
his God through Jesus Christ. Perhaps he was too cautious in his demand for
proof of the sincerity of the native's acceptance of Christianity, but he was
at the same time always true to his conviction that political or institu-
tional Christianity was contrary to the New Testament and inadequate to meet
men's needs. He was persuaded "that God's way is first to turn a soul from
its idols, both of heart, worship, and conversion, before it is capable of 1
worship," and "that the two first principles and foundations of the true
religion...are repentance from dead works, and faith toward God, before the
doctrine of baptism or washing and the laying on of hands..." 2

A fourth element is his reluctance about going to war. More than
half a dozen times he refers to it in the letter addressed to the General
3 Court of the Massachusetts colony. "I consider", he says, "that war is one
of those three great sore plagues with which it pleaseth God to afflict the
sons of men", and he adds, "...yet I beseech you consider how the present
events of all wars that ever have been in the world have been wonderfully
fickle, and the future calamities and revolutions wonderful in the latter
end". He illustrates his point by referring to the suffering and destruc-
tion which had accompanied recent clashes between the Indians and the Dutch.
Turning to the Scriptures he takes warning from Josiah's folly in going to
war, and then reminds his readers that it is so much nobler both to the name
of God and to England to be the occasion of pointing men to Christ, instead
of to destruction.

1 A Key to the Language of America, N. C. P., Vol. I, 220.
2 Ibid., 221.
3 The letter from which the quotations which follow are taken appears on
Williams cannot be classified as a pacifist, for he plainly states, "I never was against the righteous use of the civil sword of men or nations". However, at the same time he is careful to point out man's tendency to strain the word "righteous" as he continues, "but yet, since all men of conscience or prudence ply to windward to maintain their wars to be defensive..." In his Key Williams, in a general discussion on the wars among the Indians, points out the irony of men, created by the same God, fighting with each other.

How dreadful and yet how righteous is it with the most righteous Judge of the whole world, that all the generations of men being turn'd enemies against, and fighting against Him who gives breath and being, and all things (whom yet they cannot reach) should stab, kill, burn, murder and devour each other?

MORE PARTICULAR

The Indians count of men as dogs,
   It is no wonder then;
They tear out one another's throats!
   But now that English men,

That boast themselves God's children, and
   Members of Christ to be,
That they should thus break out in flames.
   Sure 'tis a mystery!

The second sea'ld mystery or red horse,
   Whose rider hath power and will,
To take away peace from earthly men,
   They must each other kill.\(^1\)

His questioning about war is further evident in a letter addressed to John Winthrop, dated July 21, 1640.

I yet doubt (now since the coming of the Lord Jesus and the period of the national church) whether any other use of war and arms be lawful to the professors of the Lord Jesus, but in execution of justice upon malefactors at home: or preserving of life and lives in defensive war.\(^2\)

\(^1\) A Key to the Language of America, N. C. P., Vol. I, 265-266.
\(^2\) N. C. P., Vol. VI, 139.
In another letter referring to the bloody hostilities between the Indians and the united colonies in King Philip's War, he writes,

I presume you are satisfied in the necessity of these present hostilities, and that it is not possible at present to keep peace with these barbarous men of blood, who are as justly to be repelled and subdued as wolves that assault the sheep...I fear the event of the justest war: but if it please God to deliver them into our hands...

F. WILLIAMS' CONCEPTION OF THE CHURCH AND HIS MYSTICISM.

We now pass to a consideration of Williams' position in relation to the church. By a gradual process he moved from an apparent orthodoxy to an extremely radical position. He was first a communicant and preacher in the Church of England, then an intense Separatist or Independent, then a Baptist, and finally, not being satisfied with this position, or that of any organized group, became a "Seeker". He once wrote as follows:

In the poor, small span of my life I desired to have been a diligent and constant observer, and have been myself in many ways engaged, in city, in country, in court, in schools, in universities, in churches, in Old and New England, and yet cannot, in the holy presence of God, bring in the result of a satisfying discovery, that either the begetting ministry of the apostles to the nations, or the feeding and nourishing ministry of pastors and teachers, according to the first institutions of the Lord Jesus, are yet restored and extant.

He had come to doubt the validity of the ordinances as practiced by the Baptists and finally of any ordinances practiced by any existing churches. His unsettled state and continual agitation for reform while in the established church in England, and in the churches of New England, has already been referred to in a preceding chapter. The matter of his sub-

1 Ibid., 377-378.
2 Hireling Ministry None of Christ, 4.
mitting to immersion at the hands of Ezekiel Holyman, his leadership in organizing the first Baptist Church in America, and his subsequent withdrawal from its membership is a part of his biography. Roger Williams has left no account of the type of worship service conducted in Providence but we do know that he preached upon the Sabbath and often during the week.

There was great interest in prophecy and it appears that Williams became deeply engrossed in it, and perhaps thus came to his extreme position. He came to hold, as has already been intimated, that the entire church had departed from the apostolic pattern. He felt that the triumph of Christ's kingdom could not be expected until a new dispensation, restoring the primitive pattern, should arise. In *The Bloody Tenent*, he wrote:

> Thousands, and ten thousands, yea, the whole generation of the righteous, who since the falling away (from the first primitive Christian state or worship) have and do err fundamentally concerning the true matter, constitution, gathering, and governing of the Church: and yet far be it from my pious breast to imagine that they are not saved, and their souls are not bound up in the bundle of eternal life.

He also seems to have thought that the only valid and effective ministry was that of the prophets, for he wrote:

> The apostolical commission and ministry is long since interrupted and discontinued; yet ever since the beast anti-Christ arose, the Lord hath stirred up the ministry of prophecy, who must continue their witness and prophecy until their witness be finished, and slaughters, probably near approaching, be accomplished.

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1 Elton, 135-136.
2 N. C. P., Vol. III, 64.
3 *Hireling Ministry None of Christ*, 4.
Perhaps in none of his writings is Roger Williams' conviction in these matters more clearly revealed than in a letter he wrote to Mrs. Sad- 
leir, the daughter of his benefactor, Sir Edward Coke. Among other things, he writes:

...for all this have I done myself (referring to his years in the established church in England) until the Father of Spirits mercifully persuaded mine to swallow down no longer without chewing; to chew nor longer without begging the Holy Spirit of God to enlighten and enliven mine against the fear of men, tradition of the fathers, or the favor or custom of any men or times. I now find that the church and sanctuary of Christ Jesus consists not of dead but living stones. Is not a parish or national church forced...to the pretended bed of Christ's worship—by laws and swords? His true lovers are volunteers, born of his spirit, the now only holy nation and royal priesthood (I Peter 2, Psalm 110). I find that, in respect of ministerial function and office, such ministers, not only popish, but protestant, not only episcopal but presbyter- ian, not only presbyterian but independent also, are all of them, one as well as another, false prophets and teachers, so far as they are hirelings, and make a trade and living of preaching (John 10) as I have lately opened in my Discourses of the Hirpling Ministry None of Christ's ...But, at last, it pleased God and the Father of mercies to persuade mine heart of the merely formal, customary, and traditional profession of Christ Jesus with which the world is filled...I most humbly pray so much Berean civi- lity at your ladyship's hands as to search and remember:

First, the Lord Christ's famous resolution of that question put to him, as touching the number that shall be saved (Luke 13:24) 'Strive to enter in at the strait gate, for many shall seek to enter, and shall not be able.' Secondly, There is an absolute necessity (not so of a true regeneration and a new birth, without which it is impossible to enter into or to see the kingdom of God (John 3, etc.) Thirdly, As to the religion and worship of God, the common religion of the whole world, and the nations of it. It is but customary and traditional from father to son, from which (old ways, etc.) traditions, Christ Jesus delivers his, not with gold and silver, but with his precious blood. (I Peter 1: 18, 19) Fourthly, Without spiritual and diligent examination of our hearts, it is impossible that we can attain true solid joy and comfort, either in point of regeneration or worship, or whatever we do (II Cor. 13:5, Rom. 14:23). Fifthly, In
the examination of both of these—personal regeneration and worship—the hearts of all the children of men are most apt to cheat, and cozen, and deceive themselves, yea, and the wiser a man is the more apt and willing he is to be deceived. (Jer. 17, Gal. 6, I Cor. 3:18) Sixthly, It is impossible there should be a true search, without the Holy Spirit, who searcheth all things, yea the deep things of God. Rom. 8, Psalms, 143:10). Lastly, God's Spirit persuadeth the hearts of his true servants: First, to be willing to be searched by him, which they exceedingly beg of him, with holy fear of self-deceit and hypocrisy. Second, To be led by him in the way everlasting (Psalm 139) whether it seem old in respect of institution, or new in respect of restoration.1

The depth of his conviction that the church is a voluntary group of Christ's lovers who have experienced true regeneration and a new birth is here clearly indicated. This he presents in sharp contrast to the traditional national churches which he contends have long since degenerated into merely ceremonial institutions with little sense of the individual's personal relation to God. Dogma and custom must be carefully examined under the guidance of the Holy Spirit before being accepted as the will of God, and those who would be true followers of Christ must honestly and earnestly search for the way everlasting as well as pray that they may be searched of the Holy Spirit in order that they may be freed from self-deceit and hypocrisy.

To what degree did Williams continue to hold to the tenets of the Baptists after he had withdrawn from that communion? Also, in matters of doctrine and practice, how far did he consider himself removed from the churches of New England from which he separated himself before his banishment? In The Bloudy Tenent he indicates that he considers the Separatists nearer the New Testament concept than either the Anglicans or the Presbyterians.

1 N. C. P., Vol. VI, 245-249.
Of these, they that go the furthest, profess they must yet come nearer to the ways of the Son of God: And doubtless, so far as they have gone, they bid the most, and make the fairest plea for the purity and power of Christ Jesus, let the rest of the Inhabitants of the world be judges.  

More than once he refers to the "Six principles or foundations of Christianity", alluded to in Hebrews 6:1,2, which were adopted as a basis of fellowship by a good many Baptist churches in Rhode Island. For example, in The Bloudy Tenent Yet More Bloudy, he writes:

On six principal pillars or foundations (saith the Holy Spirit, Heb. 6:6) is built the fabric of true Christianity: On repentance, on faith, on baptism, on laying on of hands, on the resurrection, and the eternal judgement.  

At the close of the section addressed to "The Readers", in the same work, he enumerates the characteristics of the churches which are nearest Christ Jesus in his opinion.

I believe and profess, that such persons, such churches are got nearest to Christ Jesus, on whose forehead are written these blessed characters of the true Lord Jesus Christ; First, content with a poor and low condition in worldly things. Second, an holy cleansing from the filthiness of false worships and worldly conversations. Third, an humble and constant endeavor to attain (in simplicity and purity) to the ordinances and appointment of Christ Jesus. Four, are so far from smiting, killing and wounding the opposites of their profession and worship, that they resolve themselves patiently to bear and carry the Cross and gallows of their Lord and Master, and patiently to suffer with Him.

From a letter to John Winthrop, Jr., December 10, 1649, we learn that he considered the Baptist practice of immersion in accord with the New Testa-

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3 Ibid., 47-48.
"At Seekonk", he writes:

A great many have lately concurred with Mr. John Clarke and our Providence men about the point of a new baptism, and the manner by dipping; and Mr. John Clarke hath been there lately (and Mr. Lucar) and hath dipped them. I believe their practice comes nearer to the first practice of our great founder Jesus Christ, than other practices of religion do, and yet I have not satisfaction neither in the authority by which it is done, nor in the manner; nor in the prophecies concerning the rising of Christ's kingdom after the desolations by Rome, etc.¹

But as is here indicated he continued to question the authority for the ordinance. He held both ordinances were simply symbolic remembrances.

The water, the bread, the wine, etc. are appointed by Christ Jesus to be means while profession of Christ Jesus is made on earth to hold forth a remembrance of him until his second coming.²

In typical rebellion against Roman Catholic practice he objected to kneeling when receiving the Lord's Supper and also opposed what he considered the Popish observances of Christmas and Easter.

One of the most interesting things about Roger Williams' last published work, George Fox Dig'd out of his Burrowes, in connection with this phase of his thought, is the fact that in debating with the Quakers he indicates his position to be far more conservative in religious matters than might be assumed from his earlier actions and writings. It would appear that he agrees with the prevailing Calvinism of his day and that he concurs with the New England churches in nearly all the fundamental points of belief. The point where he radically departs from them is his refusal to be connected with a visible body of believers. However, even here, he strongly

¹ Letters, N. C. P., Vol. VI, 188.
² George Fox Dig'd out of his Burrowes, N. C. P., Vol. V, 290.
differs from the Quakers who contended that there was no visible church and
that the ordinances were only spiritual. He believed in a visible church
but rejected the ministry and ordinances of his own day because he felt they
were unauthorized. He opposed the preaching of women as unnatural. His
references to "the people called Baptists" indicates that he did not consider
himself officially one of them. It is also worth noting that, so far as
is known, neither Fox nor any of his associates connected with the contro-
versy referred to Williams as a Baptist, or as a member of any other group.
It is apparent that the years had lessened the hurt from the sufferings of
banishment, and that Williams saw much good in the Bay churches and is here
anxious to defend them.

Upon being challenged by his Quaker opponents, that he was inco-
sistent in attacking them for not believing in a visible church when he was
not living in church ordinances himself, Williams clearly states his thought
on the matter at this advanced period in his life.

I answered, that it was one thing to be in arms against
the King of Kings and his visible Kingdom and adminis-
tration of it, and to turn off all to notions and fancies
of an invisible Kingdom, and invisible officers and wor-
ships as the Quakers did: another thing among so many
pretenders to be the true Christian army and officers
of Christ Jesus to be in doubt unto which to associate
and lift ourselves.

After all my search and examinations and considerations
I said, I do profess to believe, that some come nearer
to the first primitive churches, and the institutions
and appointments of Christ Jesus than others, as in
many respects so in that gallant and heavenly and funda-
mental principle of the true matter of a Christian con-
gregation, flock or society, viz. actual believers,
true disciples and converts, living stones, such as can
give some account how the grace of God hath appeared

1 Ibid., 18, 19, 30, 359f.
2 Ibid., 102.
unto them; I professed that if my soul could find rest in joining unto any of the churches professing Christ Jesus now extant, I would readily and gladly do it, yea unto themselves whom I now opposed.1

Williams was truly a "nonconformist", courageous enough to accept and follow, in the words of Masson, "every possible consequence of his main principle".2 What he believed to be inconsistent with New Testament and primitive Christian practices he could not accept. No pressure could force him to be untrue to his conscientious convictions. He labored and suffered that others might have the privilege of worshiping God in accord with the dictates of their own conscience, and he was determined to follow that conscience in his own breast, and was determined to keep it free. He was truly a "seeker", a pilgrim searching for that Holy City, the New Jerusalem, which he was convinced would come down when men voluntarily and seriously sought to believe and practice the Christianity of the first century.

As has been mentioned, he was in some sense a "mystic".

The evaluation of a faith which expresses itself in prayer and contemplation, in patiently awaiting revelation from God, in a search for the Church 'in the smoke of the Temple' leads us surely to apply to its possessor a term that is much abused, that is the term 'mystic'. It can be and has been used as a screen for every sort of vagary of faith and doctrine, for every irregularity of practice but if mysticism means something besides a vague mistiness of the spirit, if it means a definite, continuous effort at a reunion of the soul with the Godhead through personal communion in prayer and contemplation, then we may with good reason, think of Roger Williams as a mystic, for that continuity of effort appears as a characteristic of notable strength in his spiritual life...3

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3 Wroth, 35.
Perhaps Russell Blankenship has overdrawn the situation in saying,

As a mystic he placed implicit reliance upon the inner light and its ability to lead men truly. If the inner light is to be trusted, and no mystic ever thinks of questioning its promptings, then every action of the individual must be given the respect and confidence due an act of the divine spirit.¹

But he has pointed to a very real characteristic of Williams' thinking. He thought that all men were possessed of an inner light which must be respected and held inviolate, for it was a gift direct from God's hand, but he always pled for that inner light to be guided by the Holy Spirit and the revealed word of God. He was careful to distinguish between the Quaker concept of guidance by an inner light and his belief of Christ dwelling within the believer.

I told them I acknowledged Christ within as much as any of them, and infinitely more, for I did confess that every believing soul did bring home and apply the power and virtue of Christ's birth, and life and death, etc., according to that clear scripture Eph. 3.10: That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith. I said there was a nearer union between Christ Jesus and a soul believing on him, than between a man and his wife, and between the soul and the body. That union is earthly and dissolving: but that between Christ Jesus and the believer, it is eternal in God's decrees and councils, it is temporary in God's calling of his chosen out of the world, to repentance and belief in the mediator Christ Jesus, and it perpetuated and continues to eternity.²

This judgement is further strengthened by reading his little book, *Experiments in Spiritual Life and Health* to which reference has already been made. Here we find a system of mystical living and practice. It is a simple guide for a quiet approach to union with God through prayer, self-examination, self-castigation, Bible study, and meditation. Here we see a searching soul

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laid bare and "to the end of his days Williams, certain that the Holy Spirit of God by the return of Christ Jesus would newly reveal to man the divine 'truths' lost a few years after the Apostles, remained a diligent and constant Seeker".
A. HIS OPPOSITION TO A NATIONAL CHURCH.

Let us now turn our attention to the specific elements of Roger Williams' theory of religious liberty. First, there was his opposition to the national church ideal. From the beginning Williams had looked upon the whole Puritan dream of establishing the new Israel in New England after the pattern of the national church as illusory. No entire nation had ever or would ever be completely Christian. Ancient Canaan did constitute a national church but as such it was unique in history. With the coming of Christianity the Jewish nation had ceased to be a chosen people. The New Testament pattern called for the elect to be gathered into Christian churches which were entirely distinct from the nation. Israel, Jehovah's Land, or Immanuel's land is applicable to no other land or group save in a spiritual and typical sense.

The Christian community should not and could not be maintained by the methods which are advocated by those who favor a national church. The method of comprehension which modified Christ's standards in order to include the whole nation was fatal to the purity of the church. In Williams' eye only the regenerate are qualified for church membership. He took very seriously the matter of the distinction between the elect and the reprobate and, like the Anabaptists, was convinced that the church must be purged of the tares. If anything, Williams heightened the Anabaptists' ideal. He writes with

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feeling as follows:

From this perverse wresting of what is writ to the church and the officers thereof, as if it were written to the civil state and the officers thereof; all may see how since the apostasy of Antichrist, the Christian world (so called) hath swallowed up Christianity, how the church and civil state, that is the church and the world are now become one flock of Jesus Christ; Christ's sheep, and the pastors or shepherds of them, all one with the several unconverted, wild or tame beasts and cattle of the world and the civil and earthly governors of them: The Christian church or kingdom of the saints...now made all one with...civil state...Christ's lilies, garden and love, all one with the thorns, the daughters and wilderness of the world, out of which the spouse or church of Christianity is called...

If the standard is not to be lowered, and it is unrealistic to expect every member of the state to be also a member of a single national church, then the only alternative is constraint which Williams opposes with vigor. The weakness of the national church lies in the fact that it must be a single church and this can only exist where force is employed. Since uniformity is impossible there will always be dissenters. Williams does not endeavor to defend diversity as an ideal or draw elaborate analogies from other areas of life but he merely points out that it is the law of life. Men will no more be satisfied with a single church than with one style of coat or hat.

The whole idea of a national church or enforced uniformity is at once not in accord with clear New Testament teaching, and is repellent to Williams. He is convinced that "no national, provincial, diocesan, or parish church...is a true church". Forced uniformity eventually results in nothing but war and destruction both to church and state.

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God requireth not an uniformity of religion to be enacted and enforced in any civil state; which enforced uniformity (sooner or later) is the greatest occasion of civil war, ravishing of conscience, persecution of Christ Jesus in his servants, and of the hypocrisy and destruction of millions of souls.  

He continues by pointing out that such enforced uniformity of religion throughout a nation... confounds the civil and religious, denies the principles of Christianity and civility, and that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh. 

One of the chief causes of God's indignation against England is the fact that she has attempted to force all men, sinners and saints alike, into a national church. The ridiculousness of such a practice is indicated by the fact that it hath been England's sinful shame, to fashion and change (her) garments and religions with wondrous ease and lightness, as a higher power, a stronger sword hath prevailed. 

with the result that within the compass of one poor span of twelve years revolution, all England hath become half Papist, half Protestant, to be absolute Protestant; from absolute Protestants, to absolute Papists; from absolute Papists (changing as fashions) to absolute Protestants?

Enforced uniformity places spiritual power in the hands of the civil officers and hence establishes faith on no surer foundation than the changeable will of an individual.

Williams' reaction against enforced uniformity had evidently been

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2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., 325-326.
4. Ibid., 257-258.
5. Ibid., 137.
stimulated at this time by the Presbyterian advocacy of the national church ideal in England. He, along with the more extreme Separatists, and certain individuals, had hoped for a more tolerant religious settlement. He strikes directly at the prevalent conception of Puritan Calvinism that the will of God demands the attention of the state and the church and that there can be no civil peace or prosperity without an established and enforced uniformity when he writes:

It is true, the rejoicing of a Church of Christ, is the glory of any nation, and the contrary the shame; yet this proveth not that God vouchsaith to no state, civil peace, and temporal glory, except it establish and keep up a Church of Christ by force of arms; for the contrary we have mentioned...1

An established religion, defended by the civil sword, demonstrates that it is worldly and false by the very fact that it has to turn to the worldly powers to establish and defend itself. The spiritual weapon is adequate to defend the true church. Williams points out that so often the clergy have used the magistrate to promote their own ends, for, he says, "commonly where state-religions are set up, the magistrate is but the ministers' cane through whom the clergy speaks..." 2

The national church ideal has been advocated upon the basis of the Old Testament and tradition.

I am unquestionably satisfied,...that there was never any national religion good in the world but one, and since the desolation of that nation, there was never, there shall be never any national religion good again. 3

At great length in The Bloudy Tenent, Williams points out that the state-

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2. Ibid., 382.
3. Ibid., 240.
4. Ibid., 442.
church of the Jews came to an end with the advent of Christ. The Jews were a people led directly by the hand of God in a manner in which no other nation has ever been led. No modern nation can claim such leadership or such uniformity. The national church-state of the Jews came to an end with the advent of Christ. The national church-state of the Jews was figurative and typical and in no sense to be reproduced in New Testament practice, except as it foreshadowed spiritual truth. All through Williams' writings there appear references which would indicate this deep conviction that the Old Testament pattern of seeking to establish a national Canaan is contrary to the New Testament teaching and a direct violation of the lesson learned from the Old Testament experience.

To Roger Williams, the national church had always meant civil disharmony and bloodshed and a robbing of the church of its spirituality.

Again, we ask, whether in the constitution of a national church, it can possibly be framed without a rack and tormenting of the souls, as well as of the bodies of persons, for it seems not possible to fit it to every conscience: sooner shall one suit of apparel fit every body, one precedent every case, or one size or last every foot?...Whether it be not the cause of a world of hypocrites, the soothing up of people in a formal state worship to the ruin of their souls; the ground of persecution to Christ Jesus in his members, and sooner or later, the kindling of the devouring flames of civil war, as all ages justify?...An unbelieving soul is dead in sin, and to drag an unbeliever from one form of worship to another is the same thing as changing the clothes of a corpse.

4 Ibid.
B. THE ROLE OF THE MAGISTRATE.

Williams came to the conclusion that before religious liberty could be achieved in any real measure there must be absolute separation of church and state. As has been pointed out, separation of church and state depended to a great extent on disposing of the prevailing concept of a national church and enforced uniformity. This brings us to the question of the role of the magistrate in relation to the church which was so closely associated with the prevailing idea of the national church.

Williams denied categorically that the civil magistrate possesses the right to judge, or govern, or defend the spiritual state of the church. When the civil magistrate punishes for spiritual causes he automatically sets himself up as a judge of the church. Actually, Williams contends, the power which princes have exercised in religious affairs has never been justly their possession, and such mingling of the civil and the spiritual has been harmful to both the state and the church.

From the beginning of the world God has ordained that in the civil state there be magistrates to punish evil doers, but their authority has ever been limited to the civil realm. Williams does not hold, as the Anabaptists did, that no Christian should hold the office of magistrate. Williams points out that those who contend that the magistrate has authority over men's consciences and thus ascribe to the civil magistrate and his sword more than God has ascribed, have also been most ready to cut off

2 Ibid., 393.
5 Ibid., 114.
skirts, and (in case of his inclining to another conscience than their own) to spoil him of the robe of that due authority with which it hath pleased God and the people to invest and clothe him.

Williams holds to an even fuller civil authority than Cotton, but hastens to deny that the magistrate has any authority in the spiritual realm. Neither natural reason nor Christian truth grant the magistrate the direction of the church and control over the consciences of men. The office of the magistrate is a true and lawful office even in nations which have never heard the name of Christ.

Williams concurs with Luther in calling attention to the fact that many states without any knowledge of Christianity have been successfully administered.

The commonwealth of Rome flourished five hundred years together, before ever the name of Christ was heard in it; which so great a glory of so great a continuance, mightily evinceth the distinction of the civil peace of a state from that which is Christian religion.

Both these Antichristian states, and since also the Turkish Monarchy, have flourished many generations in external and outward prosperity and glory, notwithstanding their religion is false, and although their religion is false, and although it is true, that in the time and period appointed, all nations shall drink of the cup of God's wrath, for their national sins.

Williams denies with characteristic vigor that only church members and Christians can serve as magistrates. Why! he contends, if none but true Christians, members of Christ Jesus might be civil magistrates...then none but members...
of churches, Christians should be husbands of wives, father of children, masters of servants...But against this doctrine the whole creation, the whole world may justly rise up in arms, as not only contrary to true piety, but common humanity itself.

He hastens to point out that it is better if the magistrate is a Christian and church member and that the magistrate owes three duties to the true church.

First, approbation and countenance, a reverent esteem and honorable testimony...with a tender respect of truth, and the professors of it. Secondly, personal submission of his own soul to the power of the Lord Jesus in that spiritual government and kingdom...Thirdly, protection of such true professors of Christ, whether apart, or met together, as also of their estates from violence and injury...2

God never intended that salvation should depend on the whim of a ruler nor that his truth should be subject to war and circumstances. The Protestants have applauded such persecutions as Elizabeth's of the Catholics, evidently forgetting that by an equally valid authority, James persecuted the Puritans. If magistrates have the right to persecute men for conscience sake, then surely, he contends, those who advocate it must agree that the magistrates should persecute such as their consciences lead them to persecute.

Williams continues, and with a sting in his words, charging those who talk of a godly magistrate as really speaking of one who is ready to do their personal bidding. They always advocate submitting in spiritual matters to magistrates who agree with their own consciences. Actually they are really advocating that "all other consciences in the world (except their own) must be persecuted by such magistrates".

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2 Ibid., 372-373.
3 Ibid., 188.
4 Ibid
Finally, by way of summary, Williams writes:

But (to wind up all) as it is most true that the magistrate in general is of God (Rom. 13) for preservation of mankind in civil order and peace, (the world otherwise would be like the sea, wherein men like fishes would hunt and devour each other)...Now what kind of a magistrate soever the people shall agree to set up, whether he receive Christianity after, he receives no more power of magistracy, than a magistrate that has received no Christianity. For neither of them both can receive more than the Commonwealth, the body of the people and civil state, as men, communicate unto them, and betrust with them...And hence it is true, that a Christian captain, Christian merchant, physician, lawyer... and so consequently magistrate is no more captain, merchant, physicians, lawyer,...magistrate than a captain, merchant, etc. of any other conscience or religion.¹

Here Williams goes far beyond Luther in contending that since a non-Christian can be a magistrate, a Christian serving in the office of magistrate has no more authority than a non-Christian serving in the same office, to meddle with religion.

Protestantism was very slow in putting aside the medieval conception of union of church and state. All major church groups in seventeenth century England, including the Anglican, Presbyterian, and even conservative Independents, held to the philosophy of the national church with dogged persistence. Many were convinced that a national church with enforced uniformity was essential to the preservation of Protestant thought as well as national unity and peace. Even in governmental theory the state and church were tied together. If the prince received his right to rule by virtue of divine authority it was assumed that he thereby had the grave responsibility of defending and guiding the church. Under such a setup the dogma of the church had a direct influence upon the legitimacy of the rulers' perogative to rule.

¹Ibid., 398-399.
C. COMPLETE SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE.

To dissociate the two, Williams was forced to find another basis for the state. This he succeeded in doing by contending that the state and civil society are creations of nature. He goes back to the home as the prototype of the state, and argues that long before men were conscious of organized religion the origin of the state had come about through the process of social contact. The desire for peace and prosperity in the community had led to its development. This was evident in the fact that so many admirably organized and peaceable societies had been administered before Christianity and maintained since in many countries which know nothing of Christ. Actually, religious differences among the citizens of the state relate in no way to the state's sphere of influence or source of authority.

At the same time, Williams contends that the church's area is entirely spiritual and not to be intertwined in any way with that of the state. The weapons of the state are physical and civil, whereas the weapons of the church are entirely spiritual. They cannot be joined. Nothing is effective in dealing with spiritual illnesses save spiritual remedies. In relation to the state the church is like a Corporation or Company of Merchants in a city.

Truth. Oh how lost are the sons of men in this point?
To illustrate this: The church or company of worshippers (whether true or false) is like unto a body or college of physicians in a city; like unto a corporation, society, or company of East Indian or Turkey Merchants, or any other society or company in London:

2 Ibid., 150, 160.
3 Ibid., 148.
which companies may hold their courts, keep their records, hold disputations; and in matters concerning their society, may dissent, divide, break into schisms and factions, sue and impale each other at the law, yea wholly break up and dissolve into pieces and nothing, and yet the peace of the city not be in the least measure impaired or disturbed; because the essence or being of the city, and the well-being and peace thereof if essentially distinct from those particular societies; the city-courts, city-laws, city-punishment distinct from theirs.1

Williams argues that men seeking to promote their own interests have awakened Moses from the grave and ignored the plain teachings of the gospel and have prevailed upon the state to interfere with the spiritual realm of the church. The endeavor to promote religion by the civil sword has resulted in nothing but injury to the state and even greater injury to the church. It has meant bloodshed, war in the civil realm, hypocrisy and soul-torture in the spiritual.

In seeking to clarify his theory of the absolute separation of church and state Williams uses the figure of a ship at sea. This figure is the basis of his famous letter addressed to the town of Providence in reply to the accusations that religious liberty and separation of church and state were hostile to civil peace. In this letter he takes the ship with its passengers as a type of a commonwealth. The passengers, although they may be of such wide differences of religious convictions, as Papists, Protestants, Jews, and Turks, should not be forced to come to the ship's prayers or to worship in any manner contrary to their consciences. Yet he hastens to add that the ship's captain has a perfect right to set the ship's course and to maintain

1 Ibid., 73.
2 Ibid., 221.
peace even with the civil sword, if need be.

Williams uses the figure of the ship again in The Bloudy Tenent. Here he likens the church to a ship. The minister whom God has called is the captain or pilot and the prince is simply another passenger. If the Prince commands that which is contrary to Christ's rule he should not be obeyed, but "boldly, with spiritual force and power he ought to be resisted". The ship's company should "resist and suppress these dangerous practices of the prince and his followers, and so save the ship". Thus the authority of the state and of the church is complete in their respective realms, but they are distinct and separate and are not to infringe one upon the other.

Williams' demand for separation of church and state was not based simply upon the fact that the spheres of their operation are distinct but also upon the fact that the basis of their respective memberships must be different. The church is comprised of the regenerate only, while the state includes everyone in a given area. The very fact that the redeemed are so few in comparison with citizens of the state and so different will result in frequent persecution.

Precious pearls and jewels, and far more precious truth are found in muddy shells and places. The rich mines of golden truth lie hid under barren hills, and obscure holes and corners. The most high and glorious God hath chosen the poor of the world: and the witnesses of truth...are clothed in sackcloth, not in silk and satin, cloth of gold, or tissue; and therefore I acknowledge, if the number of princes professing persecuting be considered, it is rare to find a King, prince, or governor like Christ Jesus...who tread not in the steps of Herod the Fox, or Nero the Lion, openly or secretly persecuting the name of the Lord Jesus...

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1 Letter quoted in Chapter III, 92.
3 Ibid., 379.
4 Ibid., 378.
5 Ibid., 180.
One of the arguments Williams marshals to support his contention that the church and state are separate is based upon the analogy of flesh and spirit. The church uses the word, and the state the sword.

I hence observe, that there being in this Scripture held forth a two-fold state, a civil state and a spiritual, civil weapons and spiritual weapons, civil vengeance and punishment, and a spiritual vengeance and punishment: although the Spirit speaks not here expressly of civil magistrates and their civil weapons, yet these states being of different natures and considerations, as far differing as spirit and flesh, I first observe, that civil weapons are most improper and unfitting in matters of the spiritual state and Kingdom, though in the civil state most proper and suitable.¹

In this manner Williams had endeavored to construct a foundation upon which a policy of real religious and political liberty could be raised. He could visualize no genuine, lasting religious liberty apart from a policy of separation of church and state.

D. THE BLOODY TENET OF PERSECUTION.

In The Bloudy Tenent we have Williams' most comprehensive attack upon the doctrine of persecution. He sets out to trace the bloody history of persecution, and to demonstrate that it has been the chief cause of human misery and bloodshed. It has been said that

he was so utterly absorbed in the assault upon intolerance that...he failed to undertake a systematic exposition of the doctrine of toleration which he desired to replace it. Religious liberty is the inferential by-product of Williams' holy war against the evils of persecution.²

In the very opening sentence of this work Williams declares that the blood of so many hundred thousand souls of Protestants and Papists, spilt in the wars of present

and former ages, for their respective consciences, is not required nor accepted by Jesus Christ and the Prince of Peace.\(^1\)

By the use of pregnant Scripture quotations and arguments he sets out to answer various contentions of Calvin, Beza and Cotton. At some length he endeavors to show that the constitutions and administration of all civil states and their officers are civil, and therefore in no sense defenders, judges, or governors of the church. God has specifically commanded that all men in all nations be granted freedom of conscience. The Jewish church-state pattern was purely figurative and ceremonial, hence in no way setting a pattern for New Testament practice. The dangers and results of enforced conformity are dealt with and the civil and spiritual blessings that come from liberty of conscience are presented.\(^2\)

In his special address to the Houses of Parliament, Williams states that he is endeavoring to prove by "arguments from religion, reason, experience," that the greatest problem facing England is that of persecution for conscience's sake. He subtly points out the irony of English parliaments permitting the poorest homes to have English Bibles and the simplest man to search the Scriptures, yet at the same time forcing their consciences against their own biblical persuasion. Wherein is England superior to Rome and Spain in which men have no Bible if she compels men to believe as an established church believes?\(^3\)

Williams neither evades nor hesitates in defining the doctrine of persecution.\(^4\)

\(^2\) Ibid., 3-4.
\(^3\) Ibid., 6.
\(^4\) Ibid., 13.
I acknowledge that to molest any person, Jew or Gentile, for either professing doctrine or practising worship merely religious or spiritual, it is to persecute him, whatever his doctrine or practice be true or false...1

Liberty of belief and liberty are both included in Williams' concept of religious liberty. With this definition always in the background of his thinking, he proceeds to denounce without reservation the theory and the fruits of persecution. In a systematic manner he takes up each scripture passage which those who have advocated persecution in dealing with heresy have used. To his own satisfaction, at least, he demonstrates that each in turn is forcing the word of God to sanction human and selfish designs. He then deals with the arguments presented by those who have advocated the use of the sword in dealing with spiritual error. Finally, after making reference to the tolerant expressions of men across the ages, he points to the advantages, civil, religious, and economic, that will ensue from a practice of real religious liberty.

E. THE PROBLEM OF HERESY.

Williams is careful to point out that he does not in any sense wish to leave the impression that he considers heresy an insignificant matter. Actually, such sin is terrible and far more serious than a civil offense. Yet he does contend that though spiritual error is the gravest sin, no human being can correct it with physical weapons. Nor is any person qualified to sit in judgement upon such matters. This is God's perogative and His alone; "Such a sentence no civil judge can pass, such a death no civil sword can inflict." Enforced religious uniformity is not only against the explicit command of Almighty God but also always hazards the possibility

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1 Ibid., 63.
2 Ibid., 125.
of persecuting the truth, viewed as error. Has it not often been true that the heresies of yesterday are the accepted truths of today?

To indulge in persecution is a dangerous sport.

Is it possible (may you well say) that since I hunt, I hunt not the life of my Saviour, and blood of the Lamb of God: I have fought against many several sorts of consciences, is it beyond all possibility and hazard, that I have not fought against God, that I have persecuted Jesus in some of them?

His language is even sterner as he continues,

Sirs, I must be humbly bold to say, that 'tis impossible for any man or men to maintain their Christianity by their sword, and to worship a true Christ! to fight against all consciences opposite to theirs, and not to fight against God in some of them, and to hunt after the precious life of the true Lord Jesus Christ. Oh, remember whither your principles and consciences must in time and opportunity force you.

The fact that Williams so strongly opposed the use of the civil sword does not mean that he was insensitive to the very real problem of heresy and error which so troubled the orthodox mind of his and preceding Christian centuries. John Cotton had faced this problem of how to deal with heresy with the gravest concern. Although he acknowledged the use of the sword in dealing with heresy with reluctance and endeavored at considerable effort to safeguard its use, he none the less saw no further than the horizon of his own era, and advocated the use of the civil sword in matters of grave heresy. From the very outset the leaders of the Boston Bay settlement had as their ideal the establishment of a government in which both cit-

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2 Ibid., 515-516.
zens and magistrates would work together to bring about the kingdom of God on earth. Their goal was a theocracy patterned after the Hebrew nation of the Old Testament. This is clearly expressed in Cotton's own words.

Democracy, I do not conceive that ever God did order as a fit government either for church or commonwealth. If people be governors, who shall be governed? As for monarchy, and aristocracy, they are both of them clearly approved and directed in Scripture, yet so as referreth the sovereignty to himself, and setteth up theocracy in both, as the best form of government in the commonwealth, as well as in the church.

While Cotton held that the church and state were separate instruments, ordained of God, at the same time he defined their common purpose as the establishment of God's Kingdom upon earth. Civil and individual peace and prosperity depend upon purity in religion. Thus civil authorities were authorized to punish idolaters, blasphemers, sabbath breakers, those who withheld tithes, disrupters of religious services, lack of reverence and obedience to civil authority, witchcraft, etc. Every adult was compelled to attend public worship and to support both the ministry and the church. Three months was the time set for excommunication before the civil powers were to act.

Williams' arguments forced Cotton to face the full implications of his concept and it is interesting to note that he went to great detail to define his position and indicate the safeguards which must be observed. Of course he in no sense considered himself a persecutor. He was, rather, God's fearless apostle seeking to establish a theocracy in the new world. He is careful to point out

that it is not lawful to persecute any for conscience sake rightly informed (that is to say, bringing more,

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and true light.)

For an erroneous and blind conscience (even in fundamental, and weighty points) it is not lawful to persecute any till after admonition once or twice, according to the apostles direction, Tit. 3. 10, 11. That so such a man being convinced of the dangerous error of his way; if he still persist (being condemned of himself, ver. 11) it may appear he is not persecuted for cause of conscience, but for sinning against his own conscience.

In things of less moment, whether points of doctrine or worship, if a man hold them forth in a spirit of Christian meekness and love, (though with zeal and constancy) he is not to be persecuted, but tolerated, till God may be pleased to manifest his truth to him, Phil. 3. 17. Rom. 14. 11, 12, 13, 14.

But if a man hold forth or profess any error, or false way, with a boisterous and arrogant spirit, to the disturbance of civil peace, he may justly be punished according to the measure of the disturbance caused by him.1

Williams opposes him at every point. He will have none of Cotton’s evasive definitions of persecution. They are merely another effort to defend, or at least to rationalize, a practice which has no authority in God’s word, in natural thought, or in human experience. It is an effort to justify a purely selfish practice designed to force men to conform to Cotton’s own conception, by contending it is the will of God and for the civil and religious welfare of the state. To Cotton’s contention that he would distinguish between things fundamental and indifferent and would refrain from using force in dealing with the latter, Williams replies that nothing that God has commanded is indifferent. He is thoroughly convinced that this and any other method of dealing with heresy is not only the cause of irreparable damage but absolutely futile as well.

In the second place, Williams opposes the use of the civil sword in dealing with heresy, not only because it is contrary to the command and

spirit of Christ and cruel and criminal, but because it is absolutely ineffective. Persecution only drives the strong to a more determined obstinacy or martyrdom, and the weak to hypocrisy. Guns and swords can never dispel spiritual fog; only light can do that.

Tis light alone, even light from the bright shining Sun of Righteousness, which is able, in the souls and consciences of men to dispel and scatter such fogs and darkness.¹

Furthermore the church has other and effective means for dealing with heresy. Williams advocated that the church should carefully maintain its internal purity by means of the sword of the spirit and excommunication, ² which are spiritual weapons for spiritual ills. But as to those outside the church, if God has seen fit to allow them to live, men certainly should do the same, for they are tares that must be left until the great harvest.³ Williams was convinced that toleration was actually more effective in ridding the state of undesirable persons than persecution. In referring to the Quakers, the Rhode Island authorities wrote to the commissioners of the united colonies:

We moreover find that in those places where these people aforesaid, in this colony, are most of all suffered to declare themselves freely, and are only opposed by arguments in discourse, there they least of all desire to come, and we are informed that they begin to loathe this place, for that they are not opposed by the civil authority, but with all patience and meekness are suffered to say over their pretended revelations and admonitions, nor are they like or able to gain many here to their way...⁴

¹ The Bloudy Tenent of Persecution, N. C. 8., Vol. III, 80-81.
² Ibid., 100-101.
³ Ibid., 166-167.
Time demonstrated this faith misplaced, for before long Rhode Island had a Quaker governor and a large Quaker following.

In the third place, persecution by the church does inestimable damage to the cause of Christ. It robs the church of its essentially spiritual nature and power. Compulsion often forces men to accept, at least formally, what they neither believe nor understand. In supporting his position Williams uses an argument which Castellio had formulated, that is, that constraint results in hypocrisy.

Can the sword of steel or arm of flesh make men faithful or loyal to God? Or careth God for the outward loyalty or faithfulness, when the inward is false and treacherous? Or is there not more danger...from an hypocrite, a dissembler, a turncoat in his religion (from fear or favour of men) than from a resolved Jew, Turk, or Papist who holds firm unto his principles, etc.\(^1\)

A Weapon of steel may produce an external repentance.

Faith it is that gift which proceedeth alone from the Father of Lights, Phil. 1:29 and till he please to make his light arise and open the eyes of blind sinners, their souls shall lie fast asleep (and the faster, in that a sword of steel compels them to a worship in hypocrisy) in the dungeons of spiritual darkness and Satan's slavery.\(^2\)

Even those who advocate persecution admit that coercion can not make Christians. It merely destroys whatever spirituality and moderation the persecuted have.

The union of church and state and the persecuting zeal of Constantine against non-Christians did the churches a great deal more harm than all

\(^1\) The Bloudy Tenent Yet More Bloudy, N. C. P., Vol. IV, 208.
\(^3\) Ibid., 290.
the bloody persecutions against the Christians by Nero. Roger Williams writes:

Doubtless those holy men, emperors, and bishops, intended and aimed right, to exalt Christ: but not attending to the command of Christ Jesus, to permit the tares to grow in the field of the world, they made the garden of the church, and the field of the world to be all one...  

It robs men of true faith for men inevitably tend to put their trust in the sword of steel instead of the sword of the spirit, the word of truth, when the church depends on the support of the civil magistrate.

He thinks this is an evident demonstration that men repose more confidence (however they deceive themselves to the contrary) in the sword of steel that hangs by the side of the civil officer, than in the two-edged sword proceeding out of the mouth of Christ Jesus.

In the fourth place, the practice of persecution does great injury to the evangelistic and missionary program of the church. The heretic is damned eternally when his life is taken by persecution, whereas if he were left alone, as Christ commanded, later he might be won. The pagan will not respect a faith that pretends to be spiritual but depends upon the magistrate's sword for support. Surely men will ask, "Are there no spiritual swords to do Christ's work? Must men borrow Caesars?"

One of Williams' most cutting arguments, demonstrating the ineffectiveness of persecution in dealing with the problem of heresy, is found in his charge that no human being possesses adequate knowledge of God's truth to judge in such matters. But if he did, and here Williams cuts deep,

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1 Ibid., 184.
2 Ibid.
3 Ibid.
he would know that Christ has ordained none but spiritual weapons to deal
with spiritual ills. Beyond the love and admonition of the heretic with
spiritual truth, and, in extreme and obstinate cases, ex-communication by
the church, there was nothing the Christian could do to reduce heresy. Cer-
tainly the state can do nothing to solve the problem. In the final analysis,
God is the judge and that judgement shall occur at the final harvest when both
the wheat and the tares are gathered.

Always in Roger Williams' mind, above and beyond the ineffectiveness and cruelty of persecution in dealing with heresy, there was the burning conviction that it absolutely violated the whole spirit of Jesus Christ.

There is a sharp eloquence in his words when he says,

And I desire Mr. Cotton and every soul to whom these lines may come, seriously to consider, in this controversy, if the Lord Jesus were himself in person in Old or New England, what church, what ministry, what worship, what government he would set up, and what persecution he would practice toward them that would not receive him.1

E. HIS CONCEPTION OF RELIGIOUS LIBERTY.

As we seek to summarize his conception of religious liberty it is well to keep in mind that

Williams did not undertake a careful or systematic defense of toleration. His theory of religious liberty may be said to be implicit in all his writings, and to follow as a corollary from his masterly demolition of the doctrine of persecution.2

However, while his theory of religious liberty is not a carefully reasoned and systematized philosophy, it is everywhere evident and genuine. He was frank and fearless in his advocacy of the principle which increasingly be-

came a passion to be pursued with holy zeal. He sincerely felt that his primary purpose in life was to discover and proclaim the crying and horrible tenet of the bloody doctrine (of persecution), as one of the most seditious, destructive, blasphemous, and bloodiest in any or all the nations of the world, notwithstanding the many fine veils, pretences, and colours of not persecuting Christ Jesus.¹

He was very conscious of the distinction between religious liberty and religious toleration and he is careful to emphasize that it is a policy of absolute religious liberty that he is advocating. Liberty of conscience is not a concession which a state can grant or withhold as implied in the very term, religious toleration, but is a fundamental, God-given, inalienable right which lies entirely beyond the perogative of the state. Williams was convinced that full religious liberty was necessary if the church and the state were to achieve their finest and fullest expression, and that religious toleration was essential for civil peace and actual survival. The church and state were doomed unless a halt be called to the bloody tenet of persecution.

It must be kept clearly in mind that back of his concept of religious liberty was a firm belief in the separation of church and state. He thought of both as God given, but endowed with distinct and separate authority and functions. Had not Christ specifically spoken of things belonging to Caesar and things belonging to God? The Lord Jesus commanding to give God the things that be Gods, and to Caesar the things that be Caesars, gives all his followers a clear and glorious torch of light to distinguish between offenders against God in

a spiritual way, and offenders against Caesar, his laws, state and government in a civil way.¹

The failure to observe this principle, and the establishment of national churches, and enforced religious uniformity has been the primary cause of the extensive persecution in the world.

God requireth not an uniformity of religion enacted and enforced in any civil state; which enforced uniformity (sooner or later) is the greatest occasion of civil war, ravishing of conscience, persecution of Christ Jesus in His servants, and of the hypocrisy and destruction of millions of souls.²

The individual and the church must be absolutely free to believe and worship as they see fit so long as their practices do not jeopardize the civil peace and order. Not only must the state refrain from coercing the church, but the church must also leave the state free. Williams not only disapproved of the prevailing Anglican concept of making the church subservient to the state but he equally objected to the Presbyterian idea of making the state servant of the church. Either policy would cause grave injury to both. The church must rely on the magistrate for nothing more than the protection from violence which its members rightfully claim as members of the civil society...The true church will seek no other sanction than its own truth, defend itself by no other weapon than those with which Christ armed it.³

Salvation is not a gift the church can give or withhold but the result of an experience of personal faith in Jesus Christ which is available

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to every man. The church is but a body of believers who have chosen to separate themselves from the world and in thanksgiving and humility worship God. There is a daring sweep in this argument of Williams. Accepted, it would sweep away many established institutions and practices. The Christian, in the final analysis, is bound to Christ only by a personal experience of regeneration, and no authority, magistrate, priest, even the church, can intrude into the awful intimacy of that relationship. Here again we find a reaffirmation of Williams' fundamental faith in the worth and competency of the individual.

Williams distrusted all formal creeds. While he suggested that certain Christian teachings were to be considered as fundamental, he hastened to indicate that at best all creedal statements are subjective and relative. To him creeds were as incomplete and imperfect as the fallible men who drew them up. Why not be satisfied with the New Testament which is a complete and divinely inspired revelation? Is not the word of God the best and most adequate creed? He questioned the value of the efforts of the Westminster Assembly in their endeavors to draw up a creedal statement. Doctrinal statements had so often closed the door to new truth and served as chains on consciences that he had little confidence in them. At this point he concurs with the Baptists.

Religious liberty will not only bring spiritual blessings to the church and the individual but will result in peace, stability, and economic prosperity to the state. Williams reminds England that the great growth and economic prosperity of the state of Holland is a result of her practices.

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of religious liberty. The practice of religious liberty in Amsterdam, a poor fishing town...drew boats, drew trade, drew shipping, and that so mighty in so short a time, that shipping, trading, wealth, greatness, honour (almost to astonishment in the eyes of all Europe, and the world) have appeared to fall as out of heaven in a gown or garland upon the head of that poor fisher town. ¹

He subtly suggests that England can equal, and outstrip the Dutch if they will learn this lesson. However, Holland has not received the full benefits possible from such a policy for they have withheld religious liberty from the Arminians and the Roman Catholics. This economic argument was one that would make a strong appeal to the rising middle class business man and trader. Williams is always careful to call attention to the beneficial by-products of such a policy.

It seems that every observation in Williams' thinking inclined toward religious liberty. He used every argument that he could muster to defend it. And one of the striking things about his concept is that there were absolutely no reservations in it. He was prepared to follow his principle to its ultimate conclusion. All men who did not break the civil peace were to receive absolute liberty of belief and worship.

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 worship, be granted to all men in all nations and countries...³

In an era when virtually no English Protestants dared advocate reli-

² Ibid., 10.
gious liberty for Roman Catholics, Williams did not hedge even here.

In this plea for freedom to all consciences...I have impartially pleaded for the freedom of the consciences of the Papists themselves, the greatest enemies and persecutors (in Europe) of the saints and truths of Jesus: Yet I have pleaded for no more than is their due and right.¹

If the test of the religious toleration of a Protestant thinker is his attitude toward Roman Catholics, then Roger Williams has a perfect mark. ²

Williams' idea of keeping the conscience free and inviolate extended even into the domestic realm. There is evidence of this in the case of Joshua Varin and his wife which has already been referred to in this work. In The Bloudy Tenent he deals with the family unit as the prototype of the state, and then points to the fact that if a husband has an unbelieving wife he will not force her to believe. This is in accord with the apostle Paul's teaching in I Cor. 7.³

Williams faced the most difficult problems connected with his theory and unhesitatingly applied it to them. In an era when men still were convinced that liberty of belief and worship would be fatal both to the church and state, and result in paganism and disunity and weakness, Williams unflinchingly stood by his conviction that it would bring spirituality, peace, and prosperity, and he laboured to that end.

Finally, while Williams' concept of religious liberty was not marked by a systematic philosophy and order, it is above all characterized by an impassioned devotion. To read his writings is to feel that if he were

¹ The Bloudy Tenent Yet More Bloudy, N. C. P., Vol. IV, 47.
more deeply concerned about any matter other than his love for religious liberty it was his hatred of persecution. Evidently he became so obsessed with destroying the tenet of persecution that he neglected a systematic exposition of the great concept that was to take its place. He must have written in hot haste, taking little time for reflection. One might wish that he had written more directly on the positive side of religious liberty instead of the negative aspect of eliminating persecution, but there are compensations.

In his passionate attempt to expose and destroy the "bloody tenet of persecution", sometimes through the force of sheer conviction, he rises to poetic eloquence, and always he endeavors to exhaust the vocabulary in his effort to reveal the evils of persecution. He pled with Parliament.

Whatever way of worshipping God your own consciences are persuaded to walk in, yet (from any act of violence to the consciences of others) (refrain for such persecution is) a greater rape, than if (you) had forced or ravished the bodies of all the women in the world.\(^1\)

His words burn as he cries out:

That which hath emperors, and more bloody Roman popes, hath never tended to destroy, but built and fortified such hellish works. That which all experience (since Christ's time) hath showed to be the great fire-brand or incendiary of the nations hath powdered so many rivers of blood about religion, and that amongst the (so called) Christian nations. That tenet, I say, will never be found a preserver, but a bloody destroyer both of spiritual and civil peace.\(^2\)

And he cuts deep when he refers to the fact that the persecutor is so sensitive about his own conscience while having little regard for other man's.

\(^1\) Ibid., 9.
Are all the thousands of millions of consciences at home and abroad, fuel only for a prison, for a whip, for a stake, for a gallows? Are no consciences to breathe the air, but such as suit and sample his?

G. HIS CONCEPTION OF POLITICAL LIBERTY.

There is another aspect of Roger Williams' thought which while not actually in the religious realm is so closely related to his basic concept of religious liberty that it merits our attention here. This is his concept of the state and political liberty. As has been previously indicated, Williams' democracy followed as a necessary corollary from his principle of religious liberty. His ideas of equality and liberty were offsprings of a common parentage, his fundamental faith in the integrity and worth of the individual. A democratic political system was evolved because it showed itself as the best safeguard for the settlement which was to the very end in Williams' mind, above all a haven for the oppressed for conscience sake. But this in itself was no small achievement for that era.

To say that Roger Williams' political thought developed as a necessary corollary to his religious thought is not to say that his political concept was not genuine and important. From the first he was greatly concerned about civil peace and order, and labored tirelessly to place the Providence settlement on a firm and enduring political basis. Since his settlement granted full religious liberty, many radicals would naturally drift in from other colonies. There were those who opposed all civil government. In an effort to defend the colony from a reputation for anarchy, Williams let it be known that he had never questioned the need for a stable civil government.

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1 Ibid., 504.
Government and order in families, towns, etc., is the ordinance of the most High, Romans 13, for the peace and good of mankind. 2. Six things are written in the hearts of all mankind, yea, even in pagans: First, that there is a Deity; Second, that some actions are nought; Third, that the Deity will punish; Fourth, that there is another life; Fifth, that marriage is honorable; Sixth, that mankind cannot keep together without some government... No government is maintained without tribute, custom, taxes, etc.1

As to the origin and function of the state, Williams states his position.

...a civil government is an ordinance of God, to conserve the civil peace of people, so far as concerns their bodies and goods...But...the sovereign original, and foundation of civil power lies in the people...And...People may erect and establish what form of government seems to them most meet for their civil condition: It is evident that such governments as are by them erected and established, have no more power, nor for no longer time, than the civil power or people consenting and agreeing shall betrust them with. This is clear not only in reason, but in the experience of all commonweals, where people are not deprived of their natural freedom by the power of tyrants.2

While Williams agrees that all government has a general divine source and is an ordinance of God, he is careful to do away with all autocratic deductions which heretofore have been sanctioned upon the basis of the Pauline assertion that "the powers that be are ordained of God". Actually, the state is divine in that it is natural and all that is natural is of God. But God has ordained that sovereignty of all civil powers rest in the people and their community consciousness of a common social purpose and desire for civil peace and prosperity. The state and the will of the people

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were one and the same to Williams. The majority rules at all times and can at any time change the government. He held that the form of government must be fitted to the needs of the people and its power must be strictly limited. This meant that the form was variable with no more executive, legislative, and judicial powers than the people were willing to grant.

On the grounds of Scripture, experience, reason, and the laws of nature he rejected the absolute divine right of kings.

And yet to what other end have or do (ordinarily) the kings of the earth use their power and authority over the bodies and goods of their subjects, but for filling of their paunches like wolves or lions, never pacified unless the peoples bodies, goods and souls be sacrificed to their god-belly and their own gods of profit, honour, pleasure, etc.  

It has been suggested that Williams' political thought has three aspects: the substitution of the compact theory of the state for the divine-right theory; the rejection of the fictitious abstract state as the sovereign repository of the social will; and finally, the creation of the machinery necessary for a democratic state.

It is to Williams' credit that in the long, difficult process of establishing a democratic state where full religious liberty was practiced he never lost his faith in the ultimate good sense and dependability of the majority in spite of the fact that he was provoked and utterly vexed at the extreme contentions of some who drifted into the Providence settlement. In a letter to Vane, written in 1654, he apologizes for some of the things that have been reported but indicates at the same time his pride in the lasting achievements of the Rhode Island experiment.

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Possibly a sweet cup hath rendered many of us wanton... We have long drunk of the cup of as great liberties as any people we can hear of under the whole heaven. We have not only been long free (together with all New England) from the iron yoke of wolfish bishops, and their popish ceremonies... but we have sat quiet and dry from the streams of blood spilt by that war in our native country. We have not felt the new chains of Presbyterian tyrants, nor in this colony have we been consumed with the overzealous fire of the (so-called) godly Christian magistrates. Sir, we have not known what an excise means; we have almost forgotten what tithes are, yes, or taxes either, to church or commonwealth. We could name other special privileges, ingredients of our sweet cup, which your great wisdom knows to be very powerful (except more than ordinary watchfulness) to render the best of men wanton and forgetful.

Williams' contribution here, as in the realm of religious liberty, was not so much one of developing a philosophy of political freedom as it was putting into practice democracy as a working experiment. The government of the colony had been democratic in spirit, even if informal and simple in organization, from the very outset. It was clearly stated in the code of laws drawn up by the first General Assembly which met after the election authorized by the first charter, "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 great part of the free inhabitants." This document concludes with these words:

...all men may walk as their consciences persuade them, every one in the name of his God. And let the saints of the most High walk in this colony without molestation, in the name of Jehovah their God, forever and ever.

The apt analysis of James E. Ernst constitutes a fitting conclusion

3 Ibid.
Thus was constituted...a genuine republic—the first thoroughly free government in the world, where the state was left plastic to the moulding will of the citizen; the conscience at liberty to express itself in any way of doctrine and worship; the church untrammelled by any prescription or preference of the civil law. In this little colony of Rhode Island was first set up this 'ensign of the people' the model for the sisterhood of states which was yet to possess the continent.¹

¹ The Political Thought of Roger Williams, 50f.
CHAPTER VI

ROGER WILLIAMS' CONCEPT OF RELIGIOUS AND POLITICAL LIBERTY

COMPAIONED AND CONTRASTED WITH THAT OF JOHN MILTON

Even as the true value of a color is more accurately determined when viewed in relation to another color, so the thought of one mind is more clearly evaluated when analyzed in the light of the thought of another. This chapter has been written with that consideration in mind. John Milton, Roger Williams' more famous contemporary, has been selected for this comparison and contrast. It seemed fitting that he be chosen. He was a friend of Williams, and an equally devoted apostle of liberty. He "spoke of William as an extraordinary man and a noble confessor of religious liberty, who sought and found a safe refuge for the social ark of conscience."

They had much in common. They were both sons of middle class London parents, graduates of Cambridge, inheritors of the early seventeenth century Puritan tradition, and were esteemed radical thinkers by their generation. Both of them endeavored to solve the dilemma created in the Puritan mind by the desire to reform, conflicting with an equally vigorous desire for liberty. They had in common an ever-widening reformation.

Williams had successively been a Puritan Anglican, a semi-Separatist, a Separatist, and finally a Seeker, before he was thirty-five years of age. In a very few years Milton passed from Puritan Anglicanism to Presbyterianism, and finally to Independent tenets. Williams and Milton were agreed with the Baptists on a number of doctrinal tenets such as the adequacy of the Biblical revelation, the dignity of the individual, a regenerated church membership and

2 Wolfe, Don M., Milton in the Puritan Revolution, 36.
separation of church and state, the method and meaning of baptism, etc. However, as far as we know, Milton was never baptized into the membership of a church and Williams early withdrew and remained a "Seeker" to the end of his life.

Milton's words, "Any believer is competent to act as an ordinary minister, and the sacraments are not absolutely indispensable", vividly remind one of Williams. Their reasons for forsaking the fellowship of all churches in the latter part of life are apparently identical, namely, they could find none that completely satisfied their consciences. It has been pointed out concerning Milton that, in later years, he forsok the fellowship of all churches, "probably not, as his apologists have assumed, simply on account of failing sight and health, but because in none did he find what his soul most craved, simple undogmatic Christianity". "In this respect, as in others...(their souls were) like stars and dwelt apart" from the common lot.

We know that Williams and Milton knew each other personally at the time of Williams' second visit to England. It would be a reasonable supposition on the basis of Williams' association with Sir Henry Vane, Oliver Cromwell, and others, were there not definite evidence to prove it. However, in a letter Williams refers to his relationship to Milton.

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2 Treatise on Christian Liberty, Bohn ed., Vol. IV, 417f., and Williams' Hireling Ministry None of Christa.


4 Ibid., 11.
It pleases the Lord to call me, for some time and with some persons to practice the Hebrew, the Greek, Latin, French, and Dutch. The Secretary of the Council, Mr. Milton, for my Dutch I read him, read me many more languages. 1

He may have known Milton as early as his first visit, as Masson infers, but we have no definite evidence concerning this.

Milton had returned to England from Italy in 1639, not yet certain of what he would do in life, but with a decided bent toward literature. His purpose would be to celebrate in lofty hymns the majesty of God and the triumphs of a great and just nation. He would write in such a manner that men would not let his words die. He had thought to write of Arthur and the Round Table but he became so obsessed with the political and religious questions facing the land that he turned his attention elsewhere. He devoted his pen to the Puritan cause. Stirred by the events happening all about him, he wrote:

This awakened all my attention and my zeal—I saw that a way was opening for the establishment of real liberty; that the foundation was laying for the deliverance of men from the yoke of slavery and superstition; that the principles of religion, which were the first objects of our care, would exert a salutary influence on the manners and constitution of the republic; and as I had from my youth studied the distinctions between religious and civil rights, I perceived that if I ever wished to be of use, I ought at least not to be wanting to my country, to the church, and to so many of my fellow Christians, in a crisis of so much danger; I therefore determined to relinquish the other pursuits in which I was engaged, and to transfer the whole force of my talents and my industry to this one important object. I accordingly wrote two books to a friend concerning the reformation of the church of England. 3

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Milton's first tract was a defense of the repudiation of any prescribed form of prayer including *The Book of Common Prayer*. To him it was ridiculous for men to read the prayers of other men to God. He reasoned that the origin for the English Book of Common Prayer was in anti-Christian practices. Next, Milton endeavored to support the Presbyterianism attack on the Episcopal system which he refers to as "Prelaty". This he regarded as the basic cause of much that was wrong in English society. It is at this point that he begins his defense of liberty. Those who had defended the established system had contended that without it England would teem with sects. Milton argues that if all the sects are to be suppressed England might as well imitate Italy and Spain. He concluded that the tares must be left to grow with the wheat and that, at least to some degree, they are useful to the wheat.

True faith is tried and tested by sects and error. The only means of maintaining the purity of the church is through its own discipline by means of excommunication.

The Westminster Assembly met in July, 1643, in accord with the ordinance of Parliament dated June 12,

for the calling of an assembly of learned and godly divines, and others, to be consulted with by Parliament, for settling the government and liturgy of the Church of England, and for vindicating and clearing the doctrine of the said church from false aspersions and interpretations.¹

This group was composed of 121 clergymen, selected by the House of Commons, six deputies from Scotland, ten English peers, and twelve members of the lower house of Parliament. It met in a total of 1,163 sessions which lasted from 1643 until 1649.

From the outset, the question of the future establishment of the church was vigorously contested. The Presbyterians contended for the establishment of their system with an absolute enforcement of uniformity. The Independents protested such ecclesiastical tyranny. Toward the end of 1644, when it appeared that the Presbyterians would prevail, the five Independent leaders, Thomas Goodwin, Philip Nye, Sidrach Simpson, Jeremiah Burroughs, and William Bridge, published a protest entitled, *An Apologetical Narration, Humbly Submitted to the Honorable Houses of Parliament.* This marked the beginning of a bitter contest between the two groups.

As soon as it became apparent to Milton that the Presbyterians were going to be just as intolerant as the Anglicans had been, he broke with them. He was irritated particularly at their measures to stifle the free press. He knew well that he could not expect a Presbyterian licenser to approve his tract on divorce. In 1644, he eluded the censors and brought out his tract on the legitimacy of divorce for reasons other than adultery. In this work he contended that marriage was primarily a companionship in a common endeavor, calling for a mutuality of taste and conviction. The difficulties Milton had experienced because of censorship in publishing his three tracts on divorce, coupled with his burning faith in a free press, prompted his eloquent plea for freedom of the press entitled, *Areopagitica.* It was an unparalleled apology for the printed page. First of all, he deals with the intrinsic worth of good books. Then the argument soars from books to truth, and the contention that truth has not been committed to a church but is the object of a quest. Milton believed that truth could be reached if inquiry were unimpeded. Truth itself has a potency that eventually compels recognition. In discovering

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1 Ibid., 247.
truth, the scrutiny and criticism of all is needed. Hence it must be a co-operative quest. Then when truth is attained she will not necessarily exhibit a single face; it is possible that she may be revealed in a variety of forms. This ideal of variety, rather than uniformity, has vast implications.

It was at this point that both Williams and Milton stand in sharp contrast to John Cotton and the prevailing New England Puritan philosophy of church and state. The New England conception was based upon the assumption that the will of God as revealed in the Scriptures was clear and explicit. Only a trouble maker or a knave would question the correctness of their interpretation. John Cotton knew nothing of Milton's theory of varied degrees of truth and error as an avenue to truth. To him the truth is clear, definite and reasonable. The belief in an inner light and the possibility of state and church contaminating each other was utter nonsense to Cotton. The church and state are partners in furthering the truth. While Williams did not endeavor to give a philosophical definition of truth or determine the means of arriving at truth, he is careful to point out that he is not so sure as to man's ability to determine the exact interpretation of Scripture as is Cotton. And furthermore, even if their interpretation were true, what good would it do to force men to submit to it?

During the first stages of the Civil War, when the Puritans of England and the Presbyterians of Scotland were allied, the struggle was defined as one against the bishops and not the King. The theory which was eloquently expressed by Milton was that the Roundheads were not fighting the King but the "malignants" by whom he was surrounded. But when the King identified himself with these so-called "malignants", a different theory must be evolved. The Presbyterians who were reluctant to take this further step were purged, and the theory was altered. Now the covenant theory of government, with the King bound
in compact with the people, was urged. If the King violates the covenant, Milton argued, he is no longer king. In such a case Parliament, which is the representative of the people, can step in and take a hand.

The story of Charles' execution and the inauguration of the Commonwealth is well-known. For Milton, this was an era of tremendous hope, but soon he was disillusioned again. Liberty, he decided, could not be conserved by giving power to the masses, nor even to the saints. He almost became embittered against "the common rout, that wandering loose about, grow up and perish, as the summer fly." He inquired,

And what the people but a herd confus'd,
A miscellaneous rabble, who extol
Things vulgar, and well weigh'd, scarce worth the praise.
They praise, and they admire they know not what;
And know not whom, but as one leads the other;
And what delight to be by such extoll'd,
To live upon their tongues and be their talk,
Of whom to be disprais'd were no small praise?
His lot who dares be singularly good,
Th' intelligent among them and the wise
Are few.¹

He had become convinced that the ignorant must be held in check, or they might rebell against reason.

During his retirement in the latter years he voiced once more the plea for liberty.

We suffer the idolatrous books of the papists...to be sold and read as common as our own; why not much rather the Anabaptist, Arians, Armenians, and Socinians? There is no learned man but will confess he hath much profited by reading controversaries, his senses awakened, his judgment sharpened, and the truth which he holds more firmly established.²

In his great work, *Paradise Lost*, Milton goes beyond the problem of the way to truth to the deeper question of the ways of God with man. He could understand why God allows the rabble to perish, but what about the fall of the saints? The development of Milton’s thought as revealed in *Paradise Lost* has been briefly expressed:

This, then, appears to be the moral, that the fall of the saints is but the nemesis of their own excess, and the guaranty of liberty is not, after all, the sound sense of Englishmen as Englishmen, nor even of the saints, but only of those qualities rooted in God which alone can make a commonwealth holy and free.

But Milton does not end with despair. In *Paradise Regained*, the Saviour refused to establish his Kingdom by force, for it is "more humane, more heavenly first by winning words to conquer willing hearts and make persuasion do the work of fear."

Williams had arrived in England the autumn before Milton published his noble *Areopagitica*. Williams’ *Queries of Highest Consideration*, which was addressed to Parliament and advocated complete separation of church and state, and his *The Bloody Tenent of Persecution* appeared almost simultaneously with Milton’s work. Both Milton and Williams were immediately marked as radical apostles of liberty.

Milton is persuaded that "now once again...God is decreeing to begin some new and great period in his church, even to reforming of reformation itself." While Williams is not so hopeful, nevertheless, he is determined to

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destroy the bloody tenet of persecution and thus clear the way for a new age, when men will be free.

In both Williams and Milton, zeal for religious liberty is the dynamic which sets them forth on their voyage of political thought and action, and they never cease to regard freedom of conscience as one of the most important of natural rights. Ruffini has accurately pointed out that

all the works of Milton, both the controversial—either religious or political—and the simply historical and poetical, glow with an inner light of the love of liberty.²

This could equally be said of Roger Williams.

Professor G. A. Wood in a discussion of "The Miltonic Ideal" finds that among the writer's many changes of opinion, political and religious,

Milton's mind is in one thing at least unchanged. It is the love of liberty that gives consistency and unity to his life and teaching...The conception of liberty as identified with virtue is a conception common to all Milton's writings, both prose and verse...The only worship that can rightly be called worship is the free and active expression of the spirit of man, conscious of being in the presence of God and inspired by his Spirit.....Hence Milton's dislike of the Common Prayer Book...

Hence, too, his bitterness toward Laud's endeavor to enforce the sacerdotal and sacramentarian system in the English Church...The same principle holds good in theology...The living faith is a personal faith. The personal search for truth is the essence of theological study...to his opponents orthodoxy means belief in a creed, to Milton it meant believe in a principle, 'Seek and ye shall find.'³

All of Milton's writings not only reveal his love of liberty, but

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¹ Woodhouse, Reviews, The University of Toronto Quarterly, 1934-35, 398.
² Religious Liberty, 177.
also his Puritan convictions and love of the Scripture. To him, the Biblical revelation was complete but comprehension of it is progressive. It is at this point that free discussion can contribute to the discovery of truth, he contends in Areopagitica. He passionately believed in the individualistic interpretation of the Bible. He identified the law of nature with the law of God. Truth is discovered as we search for the unknown by using what we already know. But at the same time, society must not be bound by the chains of custom. Milton looked upon custom as a natural tyrant in religion and in the state, one which is allied with man's fallen nature as blind affection within and tyranny without.

Milton's views of revolution and his theory of human society were expressed in terms of doctrines fundamental to Puritanism: man's fall, his natural corruption, his regeneration through grace, the peculiar privileges of the elect aristocracy and the Christian liberty of the regenerate. Nevertheless, he could not bring himself to accept, as did Williams, the prevailing Calvinistic doctrine of predestination. However, increasingly disillusioned with human nature as he saw it, and especially of England's apostasy from the cause of pure religion and true freedom, his

final estimate of the proportion of the regenerate to the unregenerate was scarcely more hopeful than that of an extreme Calvinistic Puritan like Roger Williams, for whom the regenerate state was marked not by an ethical condition merely, but by a spiritual experience vouchsafed to few.¹

Both Milton and Williams were keenly conscious of the problem of

¹ Barker, Arthur, Milton and the Puritan Dilemma, Preface, xxiii.
heresy which seemed to haunt the orthodox of that era. Writing in defense of Cromwell's army, Milton asserts the utter futility of attempting to correct errors of the mind by physical force.

Those who speak the truth, acknowledge that our army excels all others, not only in courage, but in virtue and in piety. Other camps are the scenes of gambling, swearing, riot, and debauchery; in ours, the troops employ what leisure they have in searching the Scriptures and hearing the word; nor is there one who thinks it more honourable to vanquish the enemy than to propagate the truth; and they not only carry on a military warfare against the enemies, but an evangelical one against themselves... We approve no heresies which are truly such; we do not even tolerate some; we wish them extirpated, but by those means which are best suited to the purpose—by reason and instruction, the only safe remedies for disorders of the mind; and not by the knife or the scourge, as if they were seated in the body.

Milton questions the ability of any man or group of men to judge whether an individual is a heretic or not. In Of Civil Power he wrote:

Seeing therefore that no man, no synod, no session of men, though called the church, can judge definitely the sense of Scripture to another man's conscience, which is well known to be a general maxim of the Protestant religion; it follows plainly, that he who holds in religion that belief, or those opinions, which to his conscience and utmost understanding appear with most evidence or probability in the Scripture, though to others he seem erroneous, can no more be justly censured for a heretic than his censurers....

Not only does he question the ability of men to judge the heresy of others, and the effectiveness of coercion as a corrective agency, but he also makes it clear that truth needs no assistance from the physical sword. In

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Areopagitica, he declares that "truth is strong next to the Almighty", and therefore persecution is not necessary to defend it. Actually, persecution harms truth by keeping men from discovering it. Truth is widely diffused among men, all systems containing some, mingled with error, but grasped completely by no one. As men compare different systems, they discover truth by degrees. Hence as men destroy these systems they destroy the only means of arriving at truth.

As has been stated in the preceding chapter, Williams agreed with Milton in each of these three considerations. He was convinced that physical force was absolutely ineffective in dealing with spiritual or mental error. In the last analysis, the matter of judging heresy is God's prerogative and His alone. No man is capable of making such a judgment. Williams also had perfect confidence in truth. Truth did not need the alleged assistance of the persecutor's sword. However, it should be pointed out that Williams does not even endeavor to define the philosophical basis of truth, as Milton does.

A vital question in connection with the development of a practical concept of Christian liberty was, "What part of the Mosaic Law—ceremonial, judicial, and moral—is abrogated by the coming of the Gospel?" Milton agrees with Luther in holding that not only the ceremonial is abrogated, but the whole Mosaic Law as well. He is careful to replace this outward law with an inner law which he conceived as ethical, rational, and identified with the law of nature. Milton carefully distinguishes between the situation under the law and

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2 Refer to p.173 of *Ch. V* of this thesis for a fuller account of Williams' thought on how to deal with heresy.
the gospel as follows:

...the state of religion under the gospel is far differing from what it was under the law; then was the state of rigour, childhood, bondage, and works, to all which force was not unbecitting; now in the state of grace, manhood, freedom, and faith, to all which belongs willingness and reason, not force; the law was then written on tables of stone, and to be preferred according to the letter, willingly or unwillingly; the gospel, our new covenant, upon the heart of every believer, to be interpreted only by the sense of charity and inward persuasion...

Roger Williams puts the matter in a different way. He contends that the relation of the whole Mosaic Law to the gospel is that of type to antitype. The law is the shadow, and the gospel, the substance. When the substance which is spiritual appears, the shadow which is material becomes void. Hence the Old Testament is prophetic and symbolic, and its models are not to be taken literally under the gospel. The state-church of Israel in no way gives authority for a state-church today. It merely foreshadows the true church, the mystical Israel. Hence the injunctions to purge Israel of idolaters and blasphemers are not to be construed as patterns for Christian magistrates, but are merely types referring to spiritual remedies which are to keep the New Testament church pure. The old argument had been that only the ceremonial law was abrogated. Williams insists on the purely spiritual character of all that pertains to religion. Milton does not go so far. Actually they are both seeking to nullify the magistrates' authority in the religious sphere. They are merely going about it in different ways.

The completeness with which Milton and Williams conceived the Old

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Testament Law abrogated cleared the way for their conceptions of liberty. It is certainly true that the revolutionary potentialities of Christian liberty "turn in large measure on the degree to which the gospel is held to have abrogated the Law". Freed from the bondage of the law, Milton proceeded to define and defend an expansive doctrine of Christian liberty; while with Williams it was rather a religious liberty which he sets himself more to establish and defend than to define.

The reformation revival of Pauline theology had caused the doctrine of Christian liberty to occupy a position of far greater significance and influence. The reasoning of those who contended for Christian liberty was somewhat as follows:

Freed from the oppression of the law, they voluntarily obey the will of God, substituting an ideal of love, faith, and free activity for meticulous conformity to a complicated code, largely prohibitory in character—the spirit for the mere letter. Thus they enter into Christian liberty.\(^1\)

This doctrine actually issued in several practical results in seventeenth century English life. First, this concept of Christian liberty became the basis of the demand for liberty of conscience which was held to be man's Christian birthright. In the second place, it was invoked to justify both ecclesiastical and political rebellion. In some instances it resulted in a demand for power, the rule of the saints. And finally, in certain instances, it resulted in the abrogation of the moral as well as the ceremonial laws, such as in the revival of Antinomianism.\(^2\) The first two of these results are revealed in a marked

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\(^2\) Ibid., 484.

\(^3\) Ibid., 485-486.
degree in the writings of both Milton and Williams. Christian liberty, Milton is careful to point out,

...is a blessing we have received from God himself. It is what we are born to. To lay this down at Caesar's feet, which we derive not from him, which we are not beholden to him for, were an unworthy action, and a degrading of our very nature. If one should consider attentively the countenance of a man, and inquire after whose image so noble a creature were framed, would not any one that did so presently make answer that he was made after the image of God himself. Being therefore peculiarly God's own, this is, truly free, we are consequently to be subjected to him alone, and cannot, without the greatest sacrilege imaginable, be reduced unto a condition of slavery to any man, especially to a wicked, unjust, cruel tyrant...Absolute lordship and Christianity are inconsistent.1

As had been stated already, Williams' conception of liberty was closely associated with his evaluation of the intrinsic worth of the individual. He was as concerned as Cotton that all men be redeemed and the holy community established, but he could not endure the methods employed. To force men's consciences in matters of religion is to make a farce of Christ's clear teaching and to rob men of a God-given, inalienable right. Any method which violated men's rights regardless of how excellent the end in view may be, is not justified in God's sight.

Williams had the deepest respect for conscience. He contended that every man's conscience should be held inviolate and respected. He was frank to admit that he stood in awe of the fine qualities and depth of conviction of many whom he conceived in gravest error. Like Milton, he was convinced that


Refer to Chapter IV of this thesis, p.128 for a fuller discussion.

Refer to Chapter IV of this thesis, p.128 for a fuller discussion.
absolute Lordship and Christianity were inconsistent. There was no New Testament justification for forcing any man's conscience.

Milton's idea of liberty was essentially a liberty of self-discipline and from within. He finally equated this inward liberty with virtue. The voice of the Spirit in the heart of the believer becomes one with the law of nature which is the fundamental moral law. His idea of liberty in religion is based upon the lofty ground of Christian morality.

O citizens...unless that liberty...is of such a kind as arms can neither procure nor take away, which alone is the fruit of piety, of justice, of temperance, of unadulterated virtue, (which) shall have taken deep root in your mind and hearts, there will not long be wanting one who will snatch from you by treachery what you have acquired by arms...unless by the means of piety, not frothy and loquacious, but operative, unadulterated, and sincere, you clear the horizon of the mind from those mists of superstition which arise from ignorance of true religion, you will always have those who will bend your necks to the yoke as if you were brutes...unless you will subjugate the propensity to avarice, to ambition, and sensuality, and expel all luxury from yourselves and from your families, you will find that you have cherished a more stubborn and intractable despot at home, than you ever encountered in the field...Let these be the first enemies whom you subdue...Unless you are victors in this service, it is in vain that you have been victorious over the despotic enemy in the field.¹

In Milton's thinking only the disciplined are really qualified for liberty.

You, therefore, who wish to remain free, either instantly be wise, or, as soon as possible, cease to be fools; if you think slavery an intolerable evil, learn obedience to right reason and the rule of yourselves, and finally bid adieu to your dissensions, your jealousies, your superstitions, your outrages, your rapines, your

lusts. Unless you will spare no pains to effect this, you must be judged unfit both by God and mankind... to be entrusted with the possession of liberty and administration of the government...1

Williams’ conception of liberty was in no sense as elevated nor as restricted as Milton’s. Williams would include all men and his only limitation was where individual liberty might jeopardize the community welfare or make a law-abiding society an impossibility. He did not analyze all the implications of liberty as extensively as Milton.

In comparing Williams’ and Milton’s conception of liberty, it is important that the degree to which they applied the principle of segregation be considered. Much of Puritanism did not apply the principle in the radical manner of Roger Williams. For this group,

distinction between the law of nature in its primal brightness (a brightness restored in the regenerate) and the dim relic of that law known to fallen men retains its full effect, and with two results...the necessity of supplementing reason by scripture in the civil field, and the possibility of calling in the doctrine of the law of nature to support an enforcement upon the unregenerate of a standard whose full glory is hidden from them and known only to the Saints. Even in Milton (we find) something of these results, thought in a more refined form.2

For Milton, the law of nature is only fully known by the regenerate and they alone are fully equipped to live by the law of liberty. This resulted in his final disregard of the will of the majority. However, it must be borne in mind that this conception of the law of nature, notwithstanding, had a liberating influence. Milton’s conception of liberty as abrogation of outward law

1 Ibid., 949.
2 Ibid., 92.
3 Ibid., 93.
has its effect as an ideal, even though that conception is limited to the regenerate and conceives the highest purpose of the state to be the serving of the regenerate. When the law of nature had replaced dogma as the ideal, the way was cleared for a wider liberty which sooner or later was certain to be claimed for all men.

On the other hand, "the segregation of the spiritual and the secular, of which the separation of church and state is the outward and visible sign, penetrates the foundations of Williams' thinking." First, it secures absolute autonomy of the spiritual sphere, and secondly, it banishes from the secular and political areas every deduction made from theological data. It permits the complete secularization of the state in politics and nullifies the "aristocratic" principle inherent in Puritanism, which distinguished between saint and sinner. For Williams, the army is not the elect fighting, as it is for Milton, but a band of free men fighting for their natural rights. Christ's battles are spiritual.

With Williams, Milton had come to see that to be free all religion must be removed from supervision of the state. Civil authorities are fallible and can not judge in such matters. "Many are the ministers of God", he writes, "and their offices no less different than many; none more different than state and church government...The main plea (of those who assert the contrary) is...that of the kings of Judah..." He continues by making it clear that example

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1 Ibid., 93.
2 Ibid., 509-510.
3 Ibid., 509-510.
of the Kings of Judah is not the New Testament model. Men are now under the
gospel and the situation is altered.

....the law had no distinct government or governors of
church and commonwealth, but the priests and Levites
judged in all causes, not ecclesiastical only, but
civil (Deut. 16:18, etc.); which under the gospel is
forbidden to all church-ministers, as a thing which
Christ their master in his ministry disclaimed
(Luke 12:14) as a thing beneath them (I Cor. 6:4), and
by many other statutes, as to them who have a peculiar
and far differing government of their own. 1

Milton celebrated his agreement with Sir Henry Vane on the issue of
separation of church and state with a sonnet addressed to Vane in 1652.

To know
Both spiritual power and civil, what each means,
What severs each, thou hast learned, which few
have done;
The bounds of either word to thee we owe;
Therefore on thy firm hand religion leans
In peace, and reckons thee her eldest son. 2

In the Second Defence of the English People, 1654, he urged Cromwell to the
same way of thinking. He pled that he
leave the church to its own government...no longer
suffer two powers so different as to the civil and
ecclesiastical, to commit fornication together, and,
by their mutual and delusive aids in appearance to
strengthen, but in reality to weaken and finally
subvert, each other... 3

It was in the realm of the duties ascribed to the magistrate that
Milton differed from Williams. To him, the magistrate was God's representa-
tive. "We acknowledge", he wrote, "that the civil magistrate wears an

1 Of Civil Power in Ecclesiastical Causes, The Prose Works of John
3 Second Defence of the People of England, The Prose Works of
authority of God's giving, and ought to be obeyed as his vicegerent". He held that the Christian magistrate is not only to settle justice but "the defense of things religious settled by the churches within themselves." He is to act in defense of true religion and civil rights. With Calvin, Milton still believed it the duty of a Christian magistrate to see "the true religion which is contained in the law of God, be not openly and with public sacrileges freely broken and defiled." Milton distinguished between true and false in determining the magistrate's power, and thereby deprives him of force only in those things truly religious. He is not the keeper of both tables in the Presbyterian sense, but he is the defender of them.

I persuade me in the Christian ingenuity of all religious men, the more they examine seriously, the more they will find clearly to be true; and find how false...that common saying...that the Christ and magistrate is...Keeper of both Tables, unless is meant be keeper defender only...3

On the other hand, Williams is careful to distinguish between the two tables, considering it of vital importance if freedom of conscience is to be made a reality. He contends that to make the magistrate "the reformer of the church, the suppressor of schismatics and heretics, the protector and defender of the church" is inevitably "to make him the judge of the true and false church."

Milton held that Christian liberty was the right of all men because

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1 The Reason of Church Government, Ball Ed., 34.
2 Of Civil Power in Ecclesiastical Causes, Ball Ed., 422.
3 Ibid., 422.
4 Refer to p.164f, Chapter V of this thesis for a fuller discussion on Williams' thought relating to Magistrate.
the gospel was a wholly spiritual dispensation. But he did not extend the same
liberty of outward action to all men, that was reserved only for true religion.
He contended only for full liberty for those whose beliefs and practices were
conscientious and not willful. He could not pass with Williams beyond Puritan-
ism to a strict segregation of the natural and the spiritual.

Milton would extend liberty to all Protestants. In Of True Religion, he wrote:

It cannot be denied, that the Authors or late revivers of all these sects (Lutherans, Calvinists, Anabaptists,
Socinians, Arminians) ... were learned, worthy, zealous, and religious men ... perfect and powerful in the Scrip-
tures, holy and unblemishable in their lives; and it cannot be imagined that God would desert such painful and
Zealous labourers in his church ... to damnable errors and a reprobate sense, who had so often implored the
assistance of his Spirit; but rather, having no man infallible, that he hath pardoned their errors, and accepts their pious endeavours... What Protestant then ... would persecute, and not rather charitably tolerate, such men as these, unless he mean to abjure, the principles of his own religion? If it be asked, how far should they be tolerated? I answer, doubtless equally, as being all Protestants; that is, on all occasions to
give account of their faith, either by arguing, preaching in their several assemblies, public writing, and the
freedom of printing.

But it was another matter when he came to Roman Catholics and Pre-
lacy. To him, both groups endanger the political security of the state, and
ultimately purposed to fetter men's consciences with practices and beliefs for
which there was no scriptural warrant.

For the property of truth is, where she is publickly taught, to unyoke and set free the minds and spirits of
a nation first from the thraldom of sin and superstition, after which all honest and legal freedom of civil
life cannot long be absent; but prelacy, whom the tyrant custom begot, a natural tyrant in religion, and in

1 Of True Religion, Heresy, Schism, Toleration, in The Prose Works of
state, the agent and minister of tyranny, seems to have had this fatal gift in her nativity... that whatsoever she should touch or come near either in ecclesiastic or political government, it should turn, not to gold... but dross and scum of slavery... The service of God, who is truth, her liturgy confesses to be perfect freedom; but her works and her opinions declare that the service of servility is perfect slavery, and by consequence perfect falsehood. 1

Popery, as it was called, provided the severest test for the seventeenth century theories of religious liberty. In all fairness it should be noted that the political dangers which were foremost in men's minds were not without their foundations. Even Williams, who advocated liberty for all, Jews, Turks, Pagans, Papists, was careful to note that they first must give assurance of civil obedience. But this was not Milton's single condition. In 1659 he had written that there was no

more blasphemous, not opinion, but whole religion, than popery, plunged into idolatrous and ceremonial superstition, the very death of all true religion. Their religion the more considered... rather, endeavouring to keep up her old universal dominion under a new name and mere shadow of a Catholic religion; being indeed more rightly named a Catholic heresy against the Scripture; supported mainly by a civil and, except in Rome, by a foreign power; justly therefore to be suspected, not tolerated by the magistrate of another country. 2

It was "for just reason of state" more than of religion that papists should be prohibited their freedom. However, further light is thrown on his feeling by another comment:

Besides, of an implicit faith, which they profess, the conscience also becomes implicit; and so by voluntary

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servitude to man's law, forfeits her Christian liberty. Who then can plead for such a conscience, as being implicitly enthralled to man instead of God, almost becomes no conscience, as the will not free, becomes no will?

In Of True Religion, Heresy, Schism, Toleration and What Best Means May be used against the Growth of Popery, Milton, writing after the Restoration when Catholicism favoured by the Stuarts was a serious menace to English liberty for which Milton has so long battled, clearly indicates his unwillingness to tolerate Popery.

As for tolerating the exercise of their religion, supposing their state activities not to be dangerous to the State, I answer, that toleration is either public or private; and the exercise of their religion, as far as it is idolatrous, can be tolerated neither way: not publicly, without grievous and unsufferable scandal given to all conscientious beholders; not privately without great offence to God, declared against all kind of idolatry though secret.

The difference between Williams and Milton at this point is striking. Williams realized full well that to argue that there was no conscience except a right conscience made religious liberty an impossibility. What human being was qualified to make such a judgment? Williams defends the mistaken conscience. His theory of liberty is not reserved to the rightly informed conscience. One wonders if this would have been true had his concept come to its full fruition in the charged atmosphere of the mother country instead of the crucible of the wilderness experiment. Unquestionably, the local circumstances helped in driving Milton to his conclusion. However, it is still to Williams'

1 Ibid., 417.
credit that he held his theory without reservations, and applied it without hesitation to the most perplexing situations of the century.

When we come to the realm of political liberty, it is to Williams and not to Milton that we have to turn for the full assimilation of the Puritan theory of the secular state. Milton is radical but not democratic. Principles which in Williams lead to democracy, in Milton stop short in individualism. Milton's concept of state is a laissez-faire one. Actually Milton was an impractical idealist rather than a political thinker. His theory of society was essentially religious and ethical, not secular and economic. He placed freedom of thought above civil liberty. "Give me liberty to know, to utter, and to argue freely according to conscience, above all other liberties."

Milton held that government originated in the necessity of curbing the disorders resultant on the fall. The liberty that this government can guarantee is wholly negative in character, and consists primarily in the removal of restrictions on the individual. Williams found the origin of the state in the people's community consciousness of a common social purpose and desire for civil peace and prosperity.

While Milton had no violent objection to the monarchy as such, he had wearied of the excesses of the courts of both England and France, and had reached a point of disillusionment in regard to this form of government. He is careful to point out that kings are not exempt from the laws which apply to the people, and that they can be punished by the people.

Having proved sufficiently, that the kings of the Jews

2 Refer to p. 187f Ch. V of this thesis for a discussion of Williams' theory of political liberty.
were subjected to the same laws that the people were; that there are no exceptions made in their favour in scripture; that it is a most false assertion, grounded upon no reason, nor warranted by any authority, to say ...that God has exempted them from punishment by the people, and reserved them to his own tribunal only; let us now consider whether the Gospel preach up any such doctrine, and enjoin that blind obedience which the Law was so far from doing, that it commanded the contrary. Let us consider whether or no the Gospel, that heavenly promulgation, as it were, of Christian liberty, reduce us to a condition of slavery to kings and tyrants, from whose imperious rule even the Old Law, that mistress of slavery, discharged the people of God, when it obtained ... (Christ) gives us his grace to submit patiently to a condition of slavery, if there be necessity of it, so if by any honest ways and means we can rid ourselves, and obtain our liberty, he is so far from restraining us, that he encourages us so to do...you, I say, that preach up not kingship, but tyranny, and that in a commonwealth, by enjoining not only a necessary, but a religious subjection to whatever tyrant gets into the chair, whether he come to it by succession or by conquest, or chance or anyhow...It is evident that our Saviour's principles concerning government were not agreeable to the humor of princes.1

Williams is even more outspoken and does not hesitate to reject the divine right of kings on the ground of Scripture, experience and reason.

In The Ready and Easy Way to Establish a Free Commonwealth, and the Excellence thereof, Milton recommends a free commonwealth as the most appropriate government for England. In this commonwealth the sovereign power is placed in the hands of a "general council of ablest men, chosen by the people, to consult of public affairs from time to time for the common good". He proposes that this council be perpetual instead of successive or rotating for fear

2. Refer to p.189 Ch. V of this thesis for Williams' opinion.
that the ablest men might have to retire, and be replaced by raw and inexperienced men. He is entirely opposed to a popular assembly in conjunction with the grand council conceiving it inadequate for the conservation of liberty. Neither would he trust the election of the members of the council to popular vote. He would reserve considerable power to the local governments as a safeguard.

In the Second Defense, Milton explains his conception of the functions of the state. In the course of an address to Cromwell he indicates that the state should guarantee absolute separation of the ecclesiastical and political functions, removing from the church all state support and all power of persecution. Complete freedom of discussion is an essential. A state-supported, but not compulsory, system of education should be provided. This and the maintenance of order are the only positive functions he assigns to the state. He has a strong distrust of too many laws in government.

Then, since there are often in a republic men who have the same itch for making a multiplicity of laws as some poets have for making many verses, and since laws are usually worse in proportion as they are more numerous, I trust that you will not enact so many new laws...

He also reveals his lack of faith in the masses’ ability to exercise complete liberty and safeguard it. It is the height of his concept of liberty that makes him despair of ordinary men living under a democracy.

For it is of no little consequence, O citizens, by

1 Ibid.
2 Ibid., 447f.
4 Ibid., 947.
what principles you are governed, either in acquiring liberty or in retaining it when acquired...For who would vindicate your right of unrestrained suffrage, or of choosing what representatives you liked best, merely that you might elect the creatures of your own faction, whoever they might be, or him, however small might be his worth, who will give you the most lavish feasts, and enable you to drink to the greatest excess? Thus not wisdom and authority, but turbulence and gluttony, would soon exalt the vilest miscreants from our taverns and our brothels, from our towns and villages, to the rank and dignity of senators...It is not agreeable to the nature of things that such persons ever should be free. However much they may bruit about liberty, they are slaves both at home and abroad, without perceiving it...Instead of fretting with vexation, or thinking that you can lay the blame on anyone but yourselves, know that to be free is the same as to be pious, to be wise, to be temperate and just, to be frugal and abstinent, and, lastly, to be magnanimous and brave; so to be the opposite of all these is the same as to be a slave. 1

The full implications of Milton’s conception of liberty are made clear in his Ready and Easy Way. To him it essentially meant individual freedom,—

absence of external restraint, not the right of the majority to live under the form of government that it chooses; and the disregard for the will of that majority if necessary in the interest of the regenerate. Milton’s principles, as Wordsworth rightly divined, are not democratic but aristocratic (in a somewhat extended sense of that term). To liberty as he conceives it, equality, the second ingredient of democracy cannot be added. 2

It was at this point that Williams goes so far beyond Milton. He believed that God had ordained that the sovereignty of all civil powers rested in the people. Actually to him the state and the will of the people as expressed in the majority were one and the same. The majority rules at all times and can, at any

time, change the government. Unlike Milton, Hobbes, Locke, and others, Williams denied that either political sovereignty or legal authority could justly be capricious or tyrannical. To him, sovereignty was always the highest political power in the state; but when lawful it must be the servant and agent of the people. He was not only an apostle of democracy as is indicated so clearly in his writing about the type of government in Rhode Island, but an apostle of faith in men for he never lost faith in the ultimate dependability of the majority. He succeeded in combining equality and liberty which Milton was never quite able to do.

Williams recognized fully well the vast difference between advocating liberty as a philosophic principle on the one hand and putting it into actual practice on the other. On that score he would have been justified in saying to Milton what he wrote in answer to John Cotton's contention that religious liberty was granted the Indians by the Boston Bay colony:

I answer; it is one thing to connive at a strange Papist in private devotions on shore, or in their vessels at anchor, etc. Another thing to permit Papists, Jews, Turks, etc. the free and constant exercise of their religion and worship, in their respective orders and assemblies, were such inhabitants among them.

In conclusion, perhaps it would be well to compare briefly the contribution of Williams and Milton to religious and political liberty.

What Milton did was to provide not the first but the finest literary expression to aspirations for liberty, expressed abundantly by other men whose writings were more congenial to contemporary minds. Milton stood personally apart from the melee. He was known to few and those few only such as he no doubt regarded fit, men like Vane, Lawrence and Hartlib. Yet Milton is

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1 Refer to p.187f Ch. V of this thesis for Williams' opinion.
2 The Bloody Tenant Yet More Bloody, N. C. P. Vol. IV, 374.
nevertheless, for us, the most significant voice of the age. He gave loftier, more learned, more ordered utterance to revolutionary ideas advanced by other men, utterance backed by erudition and intellectual power beyond the compass of most of his contemporaries, let alone contemporary revolutionaries. More than that, he fastened upon that one aspect of the doctrine of liberty which, however much it seemed to appeal in the circumstances of the moment to common men, appealed with peculiar force to the intellectual and the poetic.

It is likely that Milton was personally little known to the general public and was not regarded as a person of importance until after his identification with the revolutionary leaders of 1649. However, at that, he must have been far better known than Williams to the ordinary Englishman of his day. When the long sweep of years is taken into account it becomes immediately apparent that while Milton may not have been too well known in his own day he has left his mark on the past three centuries. His Areopagitica has been recognized as one of the world's most inspiring defenses of liberty. An evaluation of his influence upon the liberal movements both in the religious and political realm would be a study in itself. Williams' writings do not compare in beauty of form and depth of philosophic content and their influence has been of small significance compared with Milton's. This is evidenced by the fact that Williams' writings have been completely neglected save by the students of religious and political liberty.

In all fairness, it should be pointed out that Milton is entitled to a place as a democratic reformer. While the "aristocratic" principle of Puritanism, combined with the aristocratic principle of classical humanism, prevented Milton from adding equality to his perhaps extravagantly individualistic conception of liberty, he nevertheless bore a significant influence. The

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elements of his political philosophy, which gave rise to his conception of liberty are his Christian individualism and his sense of abstract justice as embodied in the law of nature. These elements have gradually become identified with many of the reforms demanded and achieved in the name of human rights by a large number of human beings.

While Williams' contribution in the philosophic defense of liberty has nothing like the widespread influence of Milton it has made a more direct contribution to democracy particularly in America and has served to extend Milton's exalted concept of Christian liberty to the practical realm of government and religious liberty. Williams is not surpassed by Milton or anyone else in the seventeenth century in his sincere devotion to religious liberty, and in the consistency and sweep of his concept, he stands alone. Others dared not go as far!

Attention is called to the next chapter in this thesis which deals with Williams' contribution at greater length.
In evaluating Roger Williams' contribution, Preserved Smith has written:

Not from England...nor from the Dutch Republic, but from America came the first thoroughgoing, radical plea for religious liberty, with no shrinking from the logical implications which had staggered less resolute champions. It is for this reason that the little tracts of Roger Williams must be reckoned among the world's great books. In the quality of their thought and emotion they surpass all the arguments for religious liberty written during the seventeenth century except the treatise of Spinoza, and they antedate Spinoza by a quarter of a century. Though published in London...(they) were written from his American experience as an immigrant...His fame rests equally on his plantation of Rhode Island as the first religiously free state in the world, and on his defense of his principles in three tracts: Queries of Highest Consideration, The Bloudy Tenent of Persecution, and The Bloudy Tenent Yet More Bloudy.1

Notwithstanding the elements of truth in this evaluation, it must be pointed out that Williams can not be considered an original thinker or a creative writer. He was neither the first nor the most systematic and thorough defender of his principle of religious liberty. His importance does not lie in his contribution to the philosophical foundations of religious liberty.

It is evident in all his writings that he drew heavily from the earlier Baptist theorists, who had performed such notable services to religious toleration by undergirding it with a positive theory which they maintained was implicit in religion itself. Williams expanded this theory only in particulars.2

And back of the Baptists there had been a long line of apostles of liberty to whom he was heir.

Williams was neither a reflective nor systematic writer. His works

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1 Smith, Preserved, 490-491.
have achieved greatness, not in the depth of their philosophical content or in their consistency and system, but in their passionate devotion to a mighty cause. As a matter of fact he was a "wholly emancipated individualist whose religious philosophy never settled into a rigid dogmatic pattern." He was a "free thinker whose spirit roamed with daring recklessness through the full range of religious speculation".

His religious philosophy was fluid and restless, gaining consistency and direction from the steady devotion which he lent to the principal of religious liberty as a religious right...Williams' style reflects the tempestuous freedom of his thought. (He) wrote with rich poetry, with passionate conviction, and with eloquent pleading... (His) works are marred by the very ardour of his spirit. All of his writings suffer from an almost complete want of organization and coherence. There are long arid stretches in which he flounders for the thread of his thought... He evidently wrote with hot haste and his works are marked by passion and not by reflection. Characteristically, his thought wanders in a maze of subjective rambling, to be broken at last by a passage which glows with an almost transcendent luminosity. His thought must be regarded as unsystematic, eccentric, undisciplined, and occasionally tedious. But supporting and embalming it at all times was a passionate and unreserved devotion to the cause of religious liberty.

So we must think of Roger Williams,

as a man who expressed by courageous word and deed the advanced thought of his period without in any instance originating a theory or proposing a new doctrine of political or social action. Rather than as an original thinker, one beholds him as a man of action, selfless, bold, shrewd, and passionately anxious to put to the test of practice the theories and doctrines which filled the minds of enlightened men in his time.

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2 Ibid, 473.
3 Ibid, 474-475.
4 Wroth, Lawrence, Roger Williams, 36.
James Bryce put it well when he evaluated Williams while speaking at Brown University in 1904.

Roger Williams was not a great thinker, or perhaps what we would call very original. He was tenacious, resolute, and fearless, as have been other men. What distinguishes him is that he grasped his principle and applied it to the Colony without destroying all government. He was a sweet soul; he was unselfish, tender, generous. Everybody liked him; even the Puritans of the Bay State who banished him thought him a "dear fellow", and that makes him an almost unique figure among stern, severe men... Weak things have confounded the strong and the meekness of Roger Williams has inherited the earth. Truth, we are bound to believe, will ultimately prevail. Great is he, who, if not the discoverer of a new principle, can live it and guide others. He received the truth, he lived in it and applied it with sincerity, correctness and faith. That is the greatness of Roger Williams.1

Perhaps the most striking thing about Williams' concept of religious liberty is the fullness of the sweep of it.

All writers before him, and most of those after him, at least for a long time, while asserting the principle of religious toleration, made so many exceptions to the rule of liberty as to make it worthless. To tolerate all beliefs, except those of the Papists, or of the Unitarians, or of the atheists, had been the demand of less courageous champions of freedom.2

But Williams dared to go all the way. He demanded full religious liberty for Jews, Papists, Turkish, Antichristians, Quakers—to "all men in all nations". Williams charges that Cotton's contention that he had not been "persecuted for cause of conscience, but for sinning against his own conscience", was merely a weak attempt to rationalize and justify a bloody practice. His definition of persecution is made without reservation and he stands in sharp contrast to

1 Quoted by Emily Easton, in Roger Williams Prophēt and Pioneer, 375.
2 Smith, Preserved, 491.
those who "pretend that they are not persecuting religious opinion but punishing blasphemy or idolatry (which is) exposed as false".

There is in (his) thought a complete honesty, an ultimate kind of logic which led him to accept without reservation the full implications of disorganization and ecclesiastical disintegration which the seventeenth century mind was discovering were implicit in religious liberty.2

The fundamental basis of Williams' willingness to abide by his principle without reservation was his sincere and absolute confidence in truth.

Henceforth the noble cause of religious liberty may find one who will develop it with greater vigour and reasoning and more copious erudition, but never one, however fervent a believer, who will excel Roger Williams in breadth of conception and sincerity of advocating that cause. And therefore it has been possible to say of him, in imaginative phrase and with perfect justice, that while other writers, in the limitations which they place upon liberty, resemble poets who, after declaring their hero to be invulnerable, proceed to clothe him in the commonest armour, Roger Williams, on the contrary, allows Truth to stand alone, surrounded only by her armour of light.3

Like Milton, he was convinced that truth was its own best defense and would ultimately triumph if men would allow it free reign. At this point his faith was absolute.

Closely associated with his confidence in truth was his belief in man.

He believed in man and in their native justice, and he spent his life freely in the cause of humanity. Neither race nor creed sundered him from his fellows; the Indian was his brother equally with the Englishman. He was a Leveler because he was convinced that society with its caste institutions dealt unjustly with the common man; he was democratic because he believed that the end and

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1 Smith, 491-492.
3 Ruffini, 171.
object of the political state was the common well-being; he was an iconoclast because he was convinced that the time had come when a new social order must be erected on the decay of the old...

He had the deepest respect for the worth of every individual and he stood almost in awe in the presence of any man who was willing to obey his conscience regardless of the price.

What was Williams' actual contribution to the cause of religious liberty in England and America? He cannot be regarded in any sense as the first apostle of religious liberty in England. In the light of English history and thought in this period it would be impossible to contend that he was the source of the devotion of the Independents and sectaries to religious liberty. Of course this does not mean that his contribution was not a great one and that it did not have its influence. His unorthodox position concerning the church and the fact that New England was far removed from the center of the world's political and religious life robbed his influence of much of its potency for English life. His influence upon men such as Milton, Cromwell, Sir Henry Vane and others must have been considerable. His works must have been familiar to a fairly large number of his fellow country-men, particularly in light of the fact that his Bloody Tenent was ordered burned by the Parliament. A number of contemporary references to his writings have already been cited. But evidently his writings were never well-known.

His influence in America is a different story. Professor Gervinus has put it in oft-quoted words:

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Roger Williams founded in 1636 a small new society in Rhode Island upon the principles of entire liberty of conscience, and the uncontrolled power of the majority in secular affairs. The theories of freedom in church and state, taught in the schools of philosophy in Europe, were here brought into practice in the government of a small community. It was prophesied that the democratic attempts to obtain universal suffrage, a general elective franchise, annual parliaments, entire religious freedom, and the Miltonian right of schism would be of short duration. But these institutions have not only maintained themselves here, but have spread over the whole union. They have superseded the aristocratic commencements of Carolina and of New York, the high-church party in Virginia, the theocracy in Massachusetts, and the monarchy throughout America; they have 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.1

It is true that one of the basic theories upon which the American republic was founded is directly traceable to Roger Williams' successful experiment in Rhode Island. But it cannot thereby be assumed that his work was the direct and immediate influence which brought about the adoption of the principle of separation of church and state in the United States. Unquestionably the demonstration of the practical workability of the freedoms granted in Rhode Island must have had strong influence, and his work was certainly important in an educational capacity.

Actually, however, the gradual transition from a wide diversity of practices relative to religious liberty in the thirteen original colonies, varying all the way from the high-church party in Virginia, the aristocratic conception in the Carolinas and New York, to full separation and complete religious liberty in Rhode Island, came about primarily because of four factors.

1 Gervinus, *Introduction to the History of the 19th Century.*
These were:

the heterogeneity of the national situation which encouraged broadminded tolerance, the permeation of all the states by new immigrants of varied religious loyalties, the strong "independent" conviction of certain groups, notably Baptists and Methodists, the spread of faith in liberty and reason among certain national leaders.¹

The most immediate cause of the adoption of the principle of separation of church and state in the United States of America occurred in Virginia. The principle of the equality of religious bodies before the law which was officially enunciated in the Bill of Rights adopted by the Constitutional Convention of Virginia in 1776, and enacted as a formal statute in 1786, was a result partly of the influence of intellectual liberals such as Jefferson and Madison, but even more it was the result of the strong influence of dissenting denominations. It is interesting to note that this statute went into force when the established church still held a majority of the membership of the Virginia legislature. This victory won in Virginia became the precedent for the federal government when the Philadelphia convention met to draft the Constitution in 1787. Article VI of the Constitution forbidding any religious test for federal public office, and the First Amendment, adopted in 1791, forbidding any federal act "respecting an establishment of religion" did not modify the legal status of religion in the several states and it was a quarter of a century before the maintenance of separate religious establishments was eliminated in certain of the states.²

Systems such as the Massachusetts theocracy were finally overwhelmed

¹ Van Dusen, Henry P., Church and State in the Modern World, 37.
² Ibid., 33f.
by the vast influx of lower middle class groups for which Williams had provided the revolutionary expression. And it was these succeeding waves of immigration, bringing a multiplicity of sects of which none was dominant, that finally insured American religious liberty. It is likely that the Bill of Rights was incorporated in the U. S. Constitution, not so much on the basis of philosophic principles as a matter of expediency; it was only thus that the individual states would be willing to ratify the Constitution. To that degree Williams had left his mark on the state of Rhode Island, and through that state, the future union of forty-eight states.

While Williams' contribution was early recognized in America, he has not received the consideration that he deserves. It is to be regretted that virtually none of his works have been printed in modern, attractive editions. The overwhelming amount of investigation made of his life and writings was done in the last century and consisted primarily of biographies. Bancroft, the American historian, in an evaluation rather typical of that period, wrote of 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, of no religion, leaving heresy unharmed by law, and orthodoxy unprotected by the terror of penal statutes.1

Any honest evaluation of Williams' contribution must face the fact that his achievement of religious liberty was purchased at the high price of opening the door to the secularization of the state. In the modern era of complete secularization of the state, the problems connected with this system are more evident than they were in the seventeenth century New England. And yet

can one say that the cultures of those countries with a jurisdictional system are more Christian than those with separation of church and state? Both systems present problems which challenge the Christian thinker in a day when religious liberty to so many means exemption from all religious obligations.

In conclusion, let us keep in mind that while Roger Williams' writings are important and have borne a significant influence upon political and especially religious liberty, his principal contribution lay in the realm of the practical and not the theoretical and philosophical. There have been many others who have argued with keener logic and more systematic erudition. However, he stands in sharp contrast to that large number of men across the ages who, having advocated that men possess certain rights, have neglected to contribute toward a practical system of guaranteeing those rights. Williams was willing to wager his life on the conviction that men, free both in the realm of religion and politics, could live in peace and prosperity. The generations that have followed have rejoiced in the assurance that has come from his winning this wager. Although often severely tested, his faith in truth and in mankind was ultimately completely justified. In an age of doubt and cynicism, a restoration of this faith is badly needed.

In the long and heartbreaking story of man's struggle for religious liberty it is well to remember that even toleration has been introduced, generally, not in obedience to principle, but for reasons of political expediency. And it is to Williams' eternal credit that his devotion to religious liberty was always a matter of principle. He was well aware of how few are truly "men of conscience". He once wrote to John Whipple:

For neighbor, you shall find it rare to meet with men of conscience, men that shall for fear and love of God dare not lie, nor be drunk, nor be contentious, nor steal, nor be covetous, nor voluptuous, nor ambitious, nor lazy-bodies, nor busy-bodies, nor dare displease God by
omitting either service or suffering, though of reproach; imprisonment, banishment and death because of fear and love of God.¹

Long years before in a letter to Winthrop, Williams' old friend, Sir William Masham had written:

I am sorry to hear Mr. Williams' separation from you. His former good affections towards you and the plantations were well known unto us, and made us wonder now at his proceedings. I have written to him effectually to submit to better judgments, and especially to bonds of peace inviolable. This has been always my advice, and nothing conduces more to the good of plantations. I pray show him what lawful favor you can, which may stand with common good. He is passionate and precipitate, which may transport him into error; but his integrity and good intentions will bring him at last into the way of truth, and confirm him therein. In the meantime, pray God to give him a right use of this affliction.²

Little did Sir William Masham realize how prophetic his words were, for Williams' "integrity and good intentions" did bring him "at last into the way of truth and confirmed him therein."

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Vol. II  John Cotton's Answer to Roger Williams
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APPENDIX I

AN ACCOUNT OF THE WRITINGS OF ROGER WILLIAMS

The published works of Roger Williams are not well-known and often entirely inaccessible to the general reader. The copies available are printed in antiquated style and spelling, hence are difficult for the ordinary reader. Since this is true it will be helpful to list his published works with a brief word of explanation concerning each.

I. His earliest published work was entitled, "A Key into the Language of America; or, an Help to the Language of the Natives in that part of America called New England. Together with briefe Observations of the Customes, Manners and Worships, etc. of the aforesaid Natives, in Peace and Warre, in Life and Death. On all which are added Spirituall Observations, Generall and Particular, by the Authour, of chiefe and speciall use (upon all occasions) to all the English Inhabiting those Parts; yet pleasant and profitable to the view of all men". It was printed in London in 1643 by Gregory Dexter.

This work was written while at sea, on his first voyage to England, in 1643. It was written as a help to his own memory that he might not lightly lose what he "had so dearly bought by hardship and charges among the barbarians". The book contains thirty-two chapters and is devoted to the manners and customs of the Indians with specimens of the principal words in their language. Each chapter closes with a few words of spiritual reflection and some verses of poetry. It is dedicated to his "well-beloved countrymen in Old and New England".

The greater part of this work was republished in the third and fifth volumes of the first series of the Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society. The entire work also appears in the first volume of
the Collections of the Rhode Island Historical Society. Copies of the original edition can be found in the British Museum, the libraries of the Brown University, Harvard University and Massachusetts Historical Society, and the American Antiquarian Society at Worcester.

II. Williams' second published work appeared under the title, Mr. Cotton's Letter, lately Printed, Examined and Answered. It was printed in London for Penjamin Allen in the year 1644. Evidently soon after Williams' banishment, he received a letter from John Cotton attempting to vindicate the act of the magistrates in the banishment, and endeavoring to prove that he (Cotton) had had no part in it. Cotton proceeds to state the opinions of Williams which led to the action and to show "the sandiness of the grounds" on which they rested. Williams' letter is an effort to fully explain the actual situation and to answer Cotton's arguments. It was republished as an appendix to The Bloudy Tenent of Persecution by the Hanserd Knollys Society in 1848 and in the Narragansett Club's first series, Vol. I, 1866. There are copies of the original edition in the British Museum, Bodleian Library at Oxford, and in the Libraries of Brown University and Yale University.

III. His third work was entitled, "The Bloudy Tenent of Persecution for cause of conscience, discussed, in a Conference between Truth and Peace, who, in all tender Affection, present to the High Court of Parliament (as the Result of their Discourse) these (amongst other Passages) of highest consideration". It was also printed in London, in 1644, without the name of either the writer or publisher. There are two copies of the work in the Library of Brown University. Because of slight differences in type and orthography of the title-page and of the captions of some of the chapters they appear to be of separate editions, but they were both printed in the same
An individual who was alleged to have been confined in Newgate Prison for a matter of conscience had written a letter against the use of the civil power in cases of conscience. The letter was written with milk on the paper smuggled into the prison as stoppers in the milk bottle. After its publication a copy was sent to John Cotton who wrote an answer to the opinions held in it. This answer to what was written in milk to support the benignant doctrines of toleration, is represented as written in blood, and is therefore styled by Williams, The Bloudy Tenent. Both the letter from Newgate and the answer of Mr. Cotton are printed in the work, and form the basis of a dialogue between Truth and Peace. This work was written in England during Williams' first visit. It was reprinted by the Hanserd Knollys Society in 1848 and in the Narragansett Series, Volume III, 1867. There are original copies in the libraries of Brown University, Harvard University, Massachusetts Historical Society, Bodlian and Advocates Library.

Mr. Cotton wrote an answer to this work, entitled, The Bloudy Tenent Washed and made White in the Blood of the Lamb, being discussed and discharged of Blood-guiltiness, by just Defence. This work was published in 1647.

IV. In the year, 1644, there also appeared in London an anonymous work entitled, "Queries of Highest Consideration proposed to Mr. Thomas Goodwin, Mr. Phillip Nye, Mr. Will Bridges, Mr. Jer. Burroughs, Mr. Sidr. Simpson, all Independents; and to the Commissioners from the General Assembly (so called) of the Church of Scotland upon occasion of their late printed Apologies for themselves and their Churches. In all Humble Reverence pre-
sented to the view of the Right Honourable the Houses of the High Court of Parliament. Williams was early identified as the author. The work was re-published in the Narragansett Club Series, Volume II, 1866. A copy of the first edition is in the British Museum.

V. Another work appeared in 1645 entitled, _Christenings Make not Christians_. This little work revealed Williams' fundamental conviction that salvation is spiritual and personal. This work was reprinted by the Rhode Island Historical Society, Tract 13, as a Sidney S. Rider reprint in 1881. Another work, _Wholesome Severity reconciled with Christian Liberty_ was published in 1645 in London and is attributed to Roger Williams. A copy of the first edition of _Christenings Make not Christians_ is in the British Museum.

VI. His publication was a rejoinder to Mr. Cotton's, "The Bloudy Tenent Washed and made White in the Blood of the Lamb etc." It was entitled, "The Bloudy Tenent Yet more Bloudy: by Mr. Cottons Endeavor to Wash it White in the Bloud of the Lambe; of whose precious Bloud, spilt in the Bloud of his Servants; and of the Bloud of Millions spilt in former and later Wars for Conscience sake, that most Bloudy Tenent of Persecution for cause of Conscience, upon a second Tryal, is found now more apparently and more notoriously guilty. In this Rejoynder to Mr. Cotton are principally, 1. The Nature of Persecution, 2. The Power of the Civill Sword in Spirituals Examined; 3. The Parliaments permision of Dissenting Consciences Justified. Also (as a Testimony to Mr. Clark's Narrative) is added a Letter to Mr. Endicot Governor of the Massachusetts in N. E.". The work was printed in London "for Giles Calvert" in 1652. There are two copies in the library of Brown University and one in the library of Harvard University and the British Museum. It was reprinted in 1870 in the Narragansett Club Series, Volume IV.
VII. During the same years while Williams was in England for his second visit he published another work entitled, "The Hiraling Ministry None of Chrit's, or a Discourse touching the Propagating the Gospel of Christ Jesus) Humbly presented to such Pious and Honorable Hands, whom the present Debate thereof concerns". It was printed in London in the second month of 1652. It is an argument against an established church, and the support of the clergy by law as well as opposition to pecuniary compensation for ministers of the gospel. There are two copies of this work in the library of the American Antiquarian Society at Worcester and a copy in the British Museum.

VIII. During this second visit to England Williams also brought out a third work which was entitled, *Experiments of Spiritual Life and Health, and their Preservatives*. This was also published in London in the second month of 1652. It is a delightful little devotional work which is a guide to a deeper spiritual life. The Rhode Island Historical Society brought out a Sidney S. Rider reprint of it in 1863. There is a first edition of this work in the British Museum.

IX. Other works attributed to Williams are "The Fourth Paper presented by Major Butler to the Honourable Committee of Parliament for the Propagating of the Gospel of Christ Jesus", London, 1652, and "A Parochetick, or Humble Address to Parliament and Assembly for (not loose but) Christian Libertie," London, 1644. There are first editions of these works in the New York City Public Library.

X. The last of his published writings is the account of his controversy with the Quakers. It bears the title, "George Fox Dig'd out of his Burrowes, or an Offer of Disputation, on fourteen Proposals made this last Summer, 1672, (so call'd) unto G. Fox, then present on Rhode Island, in
New England, by R. W. As also how (George Fox slily departing,) the Dis-
putation went on, being managed three Dayes at Newport on Rhode Island, and
one Day at Providence, between John Stubbs, John Burnet, and William Ed-
mundson, on the one Part, and Roger Williams on the other. In which many
Quotations out of George Fox and Edward Burroes Book in Folio are alleged.
With an Appendix, of some Scores of George Fox., his simple lame Answers to
his Opposites in that Book quoted and replied to, By Roger Williams of Pro-
vidence in New England". It was printed in Boston, 1676. A copy of the first
edition is to be found in the Libraries of Cambridge University, Harvard
University and Brown University. This work was reprinted in the Narragansett
Club first series, volume V, 1872.

Williams evidently wrote other works which either were never pub-
lished or have long since disappeared. Among these would be the Treatise he
wrote while at Plymouth, concerning the patent granted by King James to the
New England colonies, also a Treatise dealing with the conversion of the
Indians which is referred to in A Key into the Language of America, and the
volume of sermons which he so desired to put into print and begged for assis-
tance in letters to friends in the latter years of his life.

In addition to the works of Roger Williams which were prepared
especially for publication there is also a large number of letters, docu-
ments, etc. Many of these were published in the early volumes of the Massa-
chusetts Historical Society Collections. Additional letters and papers
appeared in Letters and Papers of Roger Williams, 1629-1682, published by
the same society in 1924. These letters constitute a rich source of informa-
tion about Williams' thought and personality.