

(3) to deny any religion, claim, or hold on the conscience of any party.

3. Historical foundations:

Without doubt, none of the Scrooby congregation separatists or the Salem puritans, intended to grant any sort of freedom of conscience beyond what they allowed for themselves. This was due to the concept of the establishment of a theocracy...thinking in the area of freedom of conscience would not show up for a long time. Those whose minds were not with the gathered congregation were either returned to England or exiled inland, or punished in some way so as to make their views unpopular or altered to fit the pattern of conformity. We have sketched earlier the career of Williams and his colleague Clarke, and here must pick him up in greater detail for this particular aspect of our work.

Roger Williams and his wife sailed from England in 1630 and arrived in New England on Feb. 5, 1631. He had an Oxford education, was a capable speaker, and, so far as anyone knew, was "orthodox" in the Puritan definition of that term. He established no fellowship at Boston and went to Salem to preach where he soon was on the wrong side of the government--and consequently went to Plymouth in the summer of 1631. His disagreements were in church order, doubts of the sacrament, etc. In 1633 he returned to Salem where he became involved in conflict with Cotton but was nevertheless invited to a preaching post in 1634. A storm of disagreement proceeded, largely due to Williams' intransigency regarding the government. In 1634 he was before the General Council, in 1635 before the roll of the magistrates, and in Oct. 1635 he was given six weeks to sign an oath of fidelity. When he did not comply he was ordered deported to England in January of 1636 but avoiding this, he spent 14 weeks in the wilderness and eventually wound up in Rhode Island...obtaining a deed to the Providence territory in 1638.

In 1639 Williams announced himself to be a Baptist and declared the church at large to be apostate. In 1643 he went to England for a charter which was eventually obtained by Clarke. The temporary charter was given, however, in 1644 and in that same year he issued the BLOODY TENANT OF RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION which was answered and restated and reanswered several times with longer and more notable titles. The thrust of the BLOODY TENANT can be oversimplified somewhat by noting that it chiefly espoused the ideas that:

- the state had no authority over conscience
- the church had no conscientiable link with the state
- Biblical state examples were always in local setting
- true freedom is the cross