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*Under God*  
by Wills, Garry

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From Garry Wills' Under God.

Simon and Schuster, 1990.

◇ T H I R T Y ◇

## Religious Separatism

THE SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY CHURCHES SET UP IN PURITAN MASSACHUSETTS were surprisingly like the communities St. Paul wrote to in the 50s CE, fractious, spirit-filled, divided on points of doctrine and practice, and maintaining an uneasy peace with the secular authorities—for it is wrong to think of those settlements as theocratic. Leaders like John Winthrop tried to protect the churches by keeping the secular authorities separate from them, a pattern that would develop into America's more far-reaching attempts at separation in the eighteenth century. Winthrop's strategy can be seen in his treatment of the two most famous religious troublemakers of seventeenth-century New England, Anne Hutchinson and Roger Williams.

Feminists are giving new kinds of attention to Anne Hutchinson, the spiritual teacher driven out of Boston in 1638.<sup>1</sup> This is appropriate. Mrs. Hutchinson's foes used against her the very lines, from St. Paul to the Corinthians, that modern fundamentalists like Francis Schaeffer marshal against women's rights. On the other hand, Mrs. Hutchinson was herself a close student of that Pauline letter, which gave her some ideas for her own kind of perfectionism, even though Paul was arguing *against* the perfectionists.<sup>2</sup>

The perfectionist party at Corinth—which St. Paul called with irony the “strong ones”—was listening to “super apostles” (2 Corinthians 11. 5, 12. 11).<sup>3</sup> If ever anyone believed in super apostles it was Anne Hutchinson. Her own special preacher, John Cotton, had drawn her to America in the first place, where she hoped to escape the disappointing mediocrities of her Lincolnshire church.

But she could not instantly join the Boston church which the newly arrived Cotton served as teacher. Boston was not Lincolnshire, where any baptized person joined a parish just by residing in it. Those who sailed for Massachusetts in the 1630s were not all saved. Some were servants or craftsmen brought over for their skills, others were sincere Christians not yet visited by the Spirit in a “born-again” conversion experience. To join a Congregationalist church—organized not by the state or by an overarching established church—one had to testify to the Spirit’s working, convince the saints of the particular community that one’s experience was authentic.

Mrs. Hutchinson had no problem making her experiences vivid to the listeners. Her problem was doctrinal. If one held “popish” or other false views, the Holy Spirit could not be prompting one’s soul. Only the devil uses falsehood. A fellow passenger heard Mrs. Hutchinson express views of questionable orthodoxy on the trip across the Atlantic. Besides, her evident devotion to the learned teacher John Cotton was enough to provoke suspicion in the pastor of the church, John Wilson, who felt threatened by Cotton’s learning and popularity.

For two years Anne Hutchinson was part of the civil community in Boston but not of the church—which should give pause to those who talk about any union of church and state in New England. There was an established church in New England, but it was the church of Old England, from which the Massachusetts Bay Company was careful not to separate itself. This relationship was one of the many anomalies in colonial law. A convenient fuzziness was cultivated in the early days, when the Bay Company feared for its patent. In 1630, the “Romanizing” Archbishop Laud had become King Charles’s lord commissioner of plantations. He would not look kindly on any attempt of the company to sever its ties with the church.

The Bay Colony gave tax money to the private organizations (actually, those set up by the Holy Spirit) called churches; but it did not appoint the ministers (chosen, with the Spirit’s help, by each congregation for itself); establish the rules of their conduct, or admit any of the clergy into its civil offices (a far cry from the state in England, where Laud was

archbishop of Canterbury and what we would call the secretary of state for foreign affairs).

Thus the Church of England was formally established in New England but practically ignored; while the Congregationalist bodies were formally nonestablished but practically all-important to the community’s life. This situation offended logic, and Puritans were very logical; but it served many purposes. The state (company) was a buffer between the local church communities and the formal but distant church officially recognized.

Still, the true purists in New England felt contaminated by any ties with the “High Church” regime of Laud. The pragmatic governor John Winthrop fought a never-ending battle against outbreaks of zeal that would repudiate Anglicanism and, very probably, end the “holy experiment” of the Massachusetts Bay.<sup>4</sup> In the very year of Anne Hutchinson’s arrival (1634), John Endecott had risked treason proceedings by publicly cutting the red cross out of the English flag, since it had been added, in the past, with the pope’s permission. Similar trouble was brewing with William Staughton in Dorchester and Roger Williams in several towns. It is against this background that Anne Hutchinson’s challenge to the compromises of the Massachusetts situation must be read.

Mrs. Hutchinson, finally admitted to the church, began to attract a circle of women to discuss the previous Sunday’s sermon. As a mystic and student of Scripture, she soon departed from the lackluster preaching of John Wilson. She found rich pickings in Paul’s First Letter to the Corinthians, especially verses 44 and 45 of the fifteenth chapter:

If there is such a thing as an animal body, there is also a spiritual body. It is in this sense that Scripture says, “The first man, Adam, became an animate being,” whereas the last Adam [Christ] has become a life-giving spirit.

This explained her experience of a total new creation in Christ. It made her think her existence prior to that was shadowy and evaporating. Her church trial would turn almost entirely on the theological consequences of this insight.<sup>5</sup>

Mrs. Hutchinson found few preachers able to breathe the high mystic air with her. She suggested that the others in Massachusetts were not fully saved, that they still preached a gospel of meritorious human works rather than that of the wholly unmerited and totally transforming grace of God. She attracted an awed following, made up of the well-to-do and influential.<sup>6</sup> Her favored preachers were joined by the handsome young

Henry Vane, briefly in Boston on his way to glory and the scaffold in the later days of Cromwell. Vane was elected governor (at age twenty-three) in 1636. It looked as if the whole city of Boston had become Hutchinsonian—and the whole province could follow suit. John Winthrop set out to prevent that by maneuver and repression. He saw here a repetition of Roger Williams's progress, the year before, from criticism of the Church of England to criticism of the Massachusetts churches. If the government itself could be brought to repudiate the clergy of New England, as well as that of Old England, the colony would offer an affront to Laud far weightier than Endecott's desecration of the flag.

Was Hutchinson's offense political or theological? It was both—but not for the reason Charles Francis Adams gave in his pioneering study of this controversy. He said that she challenged the union of church and state represented by Winthrop and others.<sup>7</sup> That gets things exactly backward. By carrying her perfectionist theology into the election of Vane, the Hutchinsonians were merging the churches with the state in a way that would have removed the state's buffer status *between* the local congregation and the "mother church."

Hutchinson was given two separate trials—as a disturber of the peace by the state, and as a heretic by her church. Winthrop had trouble making his secular case against the clever theologian until, in an urge to bear witness to the Spirit within her, Mrs. Hutchinson lost her last defenders by claiming a special mission that would indict all her accusers. It is often said that her most damaging admission was that her views came to her by a direct revelation. But for those who knew their Bible as the Puritans did, the most dumbfounding moment must have come when she said:

This place in Daniel [Daniel 6] was brought unto me and did show me that though I should meet with affliction, yet "I am the same God that delivered Daniel out of the lion's den, I will also deliver thee." Therefore I desire you to look to it, for you see this scripture fulfilled today.<sup>8</sup>

The scene is that of Jesus reading the prophecy of Isaiah in the synagogue, then informing his listeners: "This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears" (Luke 4.21). When she said that by their treatment of her "you will bring a curse upon you and your posterity," few could doubt that she was a troubler of the peace. Winthrop destroyed her in order to protect the partial separation of church and state.

At the heresy trial, she was questioned on her novel meanings for *soul*, *life*, and *the new Adam*. She recanted some views and claimed to have

held others only since her arrest. This last contention was a lie, in the view of her former "super apostle" John Cotton, who adduced the punishment of Ananias by the early church as a precedent for dealing with her: "You have lied not to men but to God" (Acts of the Apostles 5.5).<sup>9</sup>

Anne Hutchinson and her husband withdrew into the territory that would become Rhode Island, where Roger Williams had preceded them and established good relations with the resident Indians. (Mrs. Hutchinson was not so fortunate; she was killed by Indians in 1643.) Had Laud retained his power in England, Williams would probably have fared as ill in his new place as he had in Massachusetts. He could not, by his own principles of noncontact with the corrupt Church of England, have sought a patent for his territory. But the Civil War overthrew King Charles and his archbishop; Henry Vane was high in the councils of Cromwell, who treated Williams graciously; and Williams turned his own religious separation into a paradoxical program of civil inclusiveness.

Make no mistake, though—Williams never abandoned his exclusionist theology. No one could have differed more from Dr. Johnson, who said of the crazed poet Christopher Smart, "I'd as lief pray with Kit Smart as with anyone else."<sup>10</sup> Williams always had trouble finding people pure enough to pray with—his enemies could never make out whether that meant he prayed only with his wife or not even with her. They were certain it precluded him from grace before meals except when he dined alone.<sup>11</sup> Williams had prepared himself with great discipline to be an apostle to the Indians, learning their languages for the purpose, only to throw the whole project up when he decided he could not find a church pure enough to bring them into. What was the point of leading people "from one false worship to another"?<sup>12</sup>

He was harshest in his opposition to Quakers, whom he called "Foxians" so he could pun endlessly on the name of their founder, George Fox. Fox's writings were his "brutish barkings." He did the work of Jesuits: "Their faces look divers, but they both carry firebrands in their tails to burn up the holy Scripture" (a reference to the foxes in Judges 15.3-4).<sup>13</sup> Everything about the Quakers irritated him—their long hair, their handshakes (instead of the Puritans' kiss of peace), their uncoordinated singing, their silent meetings ("what spirits are their dumb spirits in their dumb meetings but those foul dumb spirits mentioned in that gospel, which the Lord Jesus will cast out and tumble down to Hell, whence they came, in his holy season"), their disorderly outbursts when they did speak, their ignorance of Scripture's original languages, their ungrammatical *thees* and *thous*, their informality ("cheek by jowl with all their betters"); their

lack of respect for superiors in age and dignity, their letting women preach.<sup>14</sup>

As for the agitation that gave them the name they accepted, boasting of their quaking, that was the work of the devil: "Which extraordinary motions I judged to come upon them, not from the holy Spirit and power of God, but from the spirit and power of Satan."<sup>15</sup> He would not persecute even these diabolical meddlers, but he gave them fair warning that the civil power reached, as its name implies, to incivility, "as that is a duty and command of God unto all mankind."<sup>16</sup> Thus he protested with great eloquence the whipping of Baptists in Massachusetts, but not that of the Quaker women who walked naked down the streets of Salem or into the town meeting at Newberry.<sup>17</sup>

Some early Quakers took to themselves the command that Isaiah "go naked for a sign" (Isaiah 20:2-3)—and in Massachusetts, of all places. This was the proof, for Williams, that the devil had subverted nature itself in the Quakers, overcoming women's innate modesty.<sup>18</sup> He had a vision of Quakers calling on all women to strip down in the meetinghouse:

I demanded of them how it should be known that it was the voice and command of God, the God of holiness, and not the command of the unclean Spirit? For I told them that, under that cover that one of them might be so commanded and sent in such a posture and behavior amongst men, why might not ten or twenty, yea, all the women in this present assembly be so stirred up as it were by the Spirit of God, to the horror and amazement of the whole country, yea of the whole world?<sup>19</sup>

As one can gauge from his reaction to Quaker behavior, Williams was a stickler for Puritan practices, and he castigated others for their unwillingness to maintain his own high standards within the churches. If Massachusetts expelled him it was only as Coriolanus was exiled from Rome: "I banish you." He had been telling the Bay authorities that they were still in the embrace of the pope. He declared that they must sever that tie, by rejecting all association with the Church of England, before he would accept them. When the community in Salem refused to join him in this view, "he refused communion with his own church," as Winthrop put it.

If Puritans in general feared Rome, Williams outdid them. While liberals of the 1950s were extolling Roger Williams, they criticized people who found Communists under every bed. But Williams was able to find the pope lurking everywhere, even in Luther's incompletely reformed church.<sup>20</sup> While Massachusetts was in communion with the church of

Charles I, that king was "committing fornication with the Whore" of Rome.<sup>21</sup> "Who sees not, then, but by the links of this mystical chain New England churches are still fastened to the Pope himself?"<sup>22</sup> Calling John Winthrop of Boston a willing handmaid of the pope was roughly like saying, in the 1950s, that General MacArthur was a secret agent for Joseph Stalin.

Naturally, the ultimate charge Williams had to bring against the Quakers was their convergence with Catholicism. To Williams, the Foxists were "the new Papists"—in fact, the new Jesuits.<sup>23</sup> George Fox aspired to be a Protestant pope, supreme among those with the "Foxian itch" of being called Masters.<sup>24</sup> Surface differences should not distract people from the fact that "the Papists' and Quakers' tongues are both spitting and belching out fire from one fire of Hell."<sup>25</sup> The more Williams thought about the Quakers, the more he seemed to find even the Catholics preferable to this new assault from hell. "The Papists come nearer the truth" on the meaning of justification, and as for destroying the peace of souls, "the Papists [do it] not so much as the Quakers."<sup>26</sup>

How did a man who was ecumenical only in his impartiality of attack become the American symbol for tolerance? Paradoxically, his theological intolerance is the key to his political permissiveness. The most abominable thing he could do in the eyes of his fellow New Englanders was to admit Roman Catholics to his province of Rhode Island. But we have to remember that almost everyone, even his admiring opponent John Winthrop, was a Roman Catholic to him—either the pope's agent or the pope's dupe, allied to Rome by intent or by effect, a collaborator in the larger campaign being orchestrated by Satan. So letting an actual Jesuit into Rhode Island would not be much different from admitting a benighted Quaker. (When two Quaker women came to convert him, saying they were sent on the mission of the prophet Joel, his wry answer was: "That is not everyday work.")<sup>27</sup> He was lax, by New England standards, in legislating even against witches, since he felt that most of his neighbors were in some measure compacting with the devil. Clearly the Quakers were—why else did they quake? So if he started hanging witches, he would be forced to proceed thence to Quakers and afterward, by degrees, through almost the whole of the population. Once he had resigned himself to the prospect that Rhode Island would fill up with consorts of the Whore of Babylon, wearing almost every guise imaginable, there was not much he could do but get along with them, day by day, as he had with the devil-worshiping Indians.

Getting along with sin in the world was not simply the outcome of his

practical situation. It came from his deepest theological insight, which repeated that of St. Augustine in *The City of God*. Like Augustine, Williams was oppressed with the vision of a world doomed by original sin. All positions of authority, even those in the Christian churches, were tainted by ambition and avarice. What better performance could the political order promise? The only way people could strip the state of its pretensions was by lowering their expectations of what it might deliver.

The reduction of political claims took place in the political terms each man was given. For Augustine that meant challenging the Greek definition of a polity as the arbiter of justice. In a famous argument, he removed justice from Cicero's definition of the state, and said that only a more modest agreement on loved things held in common could unite people on earth, while they moved mysteriously toward their ultimate communities—the eternal City of God and the equally eternal Earthly City (hell).<sup>28</sup>

Williams, by contrast, accepted the seventeenth-century belief that all sovereignty is derived from the people, but added that it was a people darkened in mind and will by sin. It is one thing for a government to rule *legitimately* at the will of a people so blinded. It is quite another to say that such a government, or even the people constituting it, have any right to speak for God through His church. It is only because Williams gives full scope to popular authority, in the first paragraph here, that his denial of its claims on the church is so powerful in the next paragraph:

The sovereign, original, and foundation of civil power lies in the people, whom they [Williams's critics] must needs mean by the civil power, distinct from the government set up [by the people]; and, if so, then a 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 commonwealths, where the people are not deprived of their natural freedom by the power of tyrants.

And if [it be] so that the magistrates receive their power of governing the church from the people, undeniably it follows that a people as a people naturally considered—of what nature or nation so ever in Europe, Asia, Africa or America—have fundamentally and originally, as men, a power to govern the church, to see her do her duty, to correct her, to redress, reform, establish, et cetera. And if this be not to pull God and Christ and Spirit out of heaven and subject them unto natural, sinful, inconstant

men, and so consequently to Satan himself by whom all peoples naturally are guided, let heaven and earth judge.<sup>29</sup>

So, precisely *because* he was a democrat in politics, Williams would not let politicians preside over the church. He believed men are too depraved to be given such a divine trust. As in Augustine's scheme, humankind is too contrary to agree on an ultimate justice, which will be perceptible only in the City of God.

The radical insight of Augustine and Williams extended not just to the state but to the visible church on earth. For neither man was this coterminous with the City of God. People enter and leave the visible church (Williams mainly leaving); some are destined to be saved who are not yet even in it (as Augustine was not for so many years); some now in it will not continue there. Only God knows who his real saints are, and he will manifest them only at the Last Judgment. No doctrine could have been more unwelcome to the Puritans of New England, who hoped to form a community of visible saints on earth, a new and better Israel, one as certainly under divine guidance as the old one, but with a superior order of grace won by the First Coming of Christ. For such saints, salvation meant little if "perseverance" in the church were not included among its gifts.

Perry Miller contrasts Williams's Augustinian "typology" with Luther's approach to Scripture.<sup>30</sup> For Williams the figures in Jewish Scripture were "types" to be fulfilled in Christ. They lost their independent meaning after that fulfillment.<sup>31</sup> With this stand Williams struck at the "federal" theology of New England, which had modeled a covenant (*foedus*) on Israel's ancient contract with God. Williams stood apart from the Protestants of his day (and later) for a reason Martin Marty suggests in this comment: "American Christians always did get more of their civil views from the Hebrew Scriptures—which they call the Old Testament—than from the New."<sup>32</sup> That was never true of Williams.

For Augustine, there was no manifest providence outside the special circumstances of prophecies fulfilled in Christ.<sup>33</sup> He belonged, after all, to a *Christian* Roman Empire that was falling apart. The burden of his argument was that this did not show any special judgment against Rome, as opposed to the general tendency of "the world" to fall apart. He mocked Christian superstition as well as Christians' lingering fondness for pagan auguries and astrology.<sup>34</sup> He dismissed the scheme of readable prophecies in Revelation, removing that book from active influence on orthodox Christianity for most of the Middle Ages.<sup>35</sup>

Both Augustine and Williams relied heavily on the New Testament parable of the wheat and the tares (Matthew 13:36-40), which must grow together until God separates them at the harvest (the Last Judgment), when the tares will be burnt.<sup>36</sup> For Williams, this meant that God's punishment of the crimes against Him—the so-called "First Table" (tablet), the first four commandments of God (those carried in Moses' right arm in the Charlton-Heston scene)—were reserved for God alone to punish. The state can punish only civil disturbances. That was the logic of Augustine's later position as well, though he had earlier violated it to call Donatist unrest a *civil* matter.<sup>37</sup>

It is not surprising, perhaps, to find the learned Williams, trained at Cambridge University, in an age when theology was the queen of the sciences, agreeing with the basic argument of Augustine, the great father of the church from the fifth century. But people are justifiably startled when they see passages of Williams chiming so well with things written a century later by a secular hero of the Enlightenment, Thomas Jefferson. Jefferson is thought of as the one who added to the Constitution's simple ban against federal establishment the image of a *wall* of separation between church and state. He did this in his letter of 1802 to the Baptists of Danbury, Connecticut:

I contemplate with sovereign reverence that act of the whole American people which declared that their legislature should "make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof," thus building a wall of separation between church and State.<sup>38</sup>

But Williams had advocated a wall of separation in his treatise of 1644, *Mr. Cotton's Letter Lately Printed, Examined and Answered*:

The faithful labors of many witnesses of Jesus Christ, extant to the world, abundantly proving that the church of the Jews under the Old Testament in the *type*, and the church of the Christians under the New Testament in the *antitype*, were both separate from the world, and that when they have opened a gap in the hedge or *wall of separation* between the garden of the church and the wilderness of the world, God has ever removed the candlestick, et cetera, and made his garden a wilderness, as at this day. [Italics added.]<sup>39</sup>

In his practical comments on the futility of persecution, Williams also sounded Jeffersonian. Williams, for instance, wrote: "A false religion and worship will not hurt the civil state in case the worshiper break no civil law."<sup>40</sup> Jefferson put the same thought more vividly: "It does me no injury

for my neighbor to say there are twenty gods, or no god. It neither picks my pocket nor breaks my leg."<sup>41</sup>

Most of those who note the resemblance between Williams's words and Jefferson's have treated it as accidental. The two men were speaking from different sets of values, we are told. Jefferson was trying to save a secular republic from the superstitions of the past, Williams trying to sequester religion from the interference of earthly rulers. This division may be too neat, as we shall see; but there certainly is an *a priori* case for thinking that Williams's views on toleration, though interesting to a historian, had no powerful effect on the course of history. Certainly that is the judgment of Perry Miller, whose views are never to be treated lightly:

Roger Williams, if viewed in a strictly historical perspective, is a relatively minor character. He furnishes an episode in the history of Massachusetts. He is the chief pioneer of Rhode Island, but only one among the obstreperous band who finally created the colony, more by good luck than by good management. As for any direct influence of his thought on the ultimate achievement of religious liberty in America, he had none.<sup>42</sup>

He could not be more blunt than that. Nor does anyone separate Williams more drastically from Jefferson's influence on religious liberty:

Only after the spread of the Enlightenment, after the teachings of Jefferson, the First Amendment, and the sheer multiplication of denominations had made the "voluntary principle" the only possible mode of religious activity, would liberals, including reluctant ones, look back with pleasure upon Roger Williams and salute in him an almost forgotten prophet of themselves. This secular interpretation of Roger Williams is a misreading of his real thought.<sup>43</sup>

One could argue with the specifics of Miller's description. Admittedly, others settled in the area that was to become Rhode Island—Anne Hutchinson's followers in Portsmouth, William Coddington's at Newport, Samuel Gorton's at Warwick. But none of them could have settled or developed their claims without the peace Williams had made with the Narragansett Indians. Was this, as Miller claims, more a matter of luck than of management? Certainly the Indians were using Williams: "It was convenient to have friendly white settlements between them and the more aggressive Puritan colonies."<sup>44</sup> But it took the particular virtues and knowledge of Williams to capitalize on this situation, and in doing so Williams may have saved not only his fellow pioneers in Rhode Island but the mother colony of Massachusetts itself. He provided a buffer not only

between Indians and Europeans, but between competing tribes of Indians, whose combined force could have swept the Massachusetts Bay area clean of its Europeans.<sup>45</sup> Thus he inadvertently did the native Americans a disservice and their exploiters a favor.

There is something inadvertent about much of Williams's achievement. He cared most about leading a reformed church, and could never form such a thing. He cared comparatively little about a secular power, yet that is what he set up. The tolerating state was only a means, in his mind, to serve the end of true religion. Toleration, instead, became an end in itself for many in Rhode Island, and ushered in the very errors he most opposed. Quakers had become a majority within the Rhode Island Assembly by the 1670s, when Williams thundered against them so tirelessly.

Rhode Island was never considered a model by the other colonies. On the contrary, it seemed a pattern of all the things to be avoided by a responsible polity. Quaker opposition to taxes, oaths, and service in the militia, coupled with a free-enterprise spirit that encouraged smuggling and the slave trade, led others to call the place Rogue Island.

Because of its constant friction with the Board of Navigation, Rhode Island was quick to throw off British government—a year before Massachusetts destroyed the tea shipment, Rhode Island forces had burned the British ship *Gaspée*. But the state was as unwilling to be controlled by the Continental Congress as by Parliament. It fought congressional taxes, refused to send delegates to the constitutional drafting convention of 1788, and rejected the Constitution thirteen times over a period of two years before joining the Union—late, reluctantly, and by the closest of votes—after Washington had already been sworn in as president. The state even lapsed at times from the one great virtue of its government, banning some Catholics and Jews.

But these lapses should not distract us from the extraordinary accomplishment of Williams's Patent of 1644, the Assembly's Civil Code of 1647, and John Clarke's Charter of 1663. In the middle of the seventeenth century, Rhode Island had given greater protection to freedom of religion than any other government in what was then known as Christendom. Nor was this an aberration. The process by which those zealous for religion separated it from government presented in microcosm the process that would be worked out in America over the next centuries. The secular state came from the zeal of religion itself. The Rhode Island Civil Code accomplished this, as the Constitution would later do, by a restriction of

the secular power's sphere. As G. B. Warden puts it, the Rhode Island code

did not establish religious freedom, religious rights, or religious toleration by any explicit, positive means. Instead, such toleration was accomplished by the omission of the regulatory provisions contained in other codes and English statutes. By that indirect means alone was it possible to maintain some semblance of accommodation with strict Biblicists in Newport, with Antinomians in Portsmouth, with separating Congregationalists in Providence, and with crypto-Anglicans in Warwick.<sup>46</sup>

It was the most religious community that produced the most religiously neutral state, just as—a century later—it would be a very religious nation that produced the first secular state. This latter development did not occur because Americans had ceased to be religious, or even become less religious, by the eighteenth century, but because they were following the logic of the position that Roger Williams, with his genius, had arrived at by way of Augustinian reflection on the world, the gospel, and government. Those reflections were not as distant from the later arguments of Jefferson and Madison as scholars have made them. But even if they were, the actual motive of people in ratifying the First Amendment was closer to the desire to protect the purity of religion than to protect the prerogatives of the state. As Mark DeWolfe Howe wrote in his provocative book on church and state: "In making the wall of separation a constitutional barrier, the faith of Roger Williams played a more important part than the doubts of Jefferson."<sup>47</sup> The partial separation of church and state that Winthrop had contrived, for the protection of his congregations, Williams turned into an entire separation. In the process he purified American churches in ways that his distant ally, Oliver Cromwell, never succeeded in doing for England.