

himself observes, he "knew not what bread or bed did mean." He found more favour among those blind pagans than among the Protestants of New England; they allowed him to settle among them, and ever after treated him with kindness and respect. He there laid the foundation of the Colony of Providence and Rhode Island: and is supposed to have been the founder of the first free Government that the world ever knew, at least since the rise of Antichrist, effectually securing to all subjects FREE and FULL LIBERTY OF CONSCIENCE. The grand principle of his government, which was adopted by nearly all the United States at the time of the American revolution, was that "no man or company of men, ought to be molested by the ruling powers on account of their religion, or for any opinion received or practised in any matter of that nature: accounting it no small part of their happiness that they may therein be left to their own liberty." Whether Mr. Williams adopted all the sentiments that were imputed to him, we have not the means to determine; but he appears to have been the first of our countrymen who thoroughly understood the grounds of civil and religious liberty; while many of the ministers of New England cherished an intolerant and persecuting spirit. Having formed a settlement in Rhode Island, whither he was banished, he gave to the selected spot the name of PROVIDENCE, "from a sense of God's merciful providence to him in his distress; and though, for a considerable time, he suffered much fatigue and want, he provided a refuge for persons persecuted for conscience sake."

About the year 1639 he embraced the sentiments of the Baptists; and, being in want of one to administer the ordinance, "he was baptized by one of his community, and then Mr. Williams baptized him and the rest

of the Society," who remained in church fellowship under the new denomination. Thus was founded the first Baptist Church in America, and the second in the British Empire; a church in London having been formed in 1633, under the pastoral care of Mr. John Spisbury. Mr. Williams did not remain long with the church after its formation, having begun to feel some doubts about the validity of his own baptism, and some conscientious scruples as to the office and qualifications of Christian ministers. A succession of good men have continued to labour for the Lord in that church to the present day. The church has experienced some of the usual vicissitudes to which all things on earth are liable; but it has never ceased to exist, and for the most part it has enjoyed great prosperity.

Desirous of procuring the most effectual aid for the settlement he had formed, and the surrounding country, he went over to England in the year 1644, for the purpose of procuring a charter from the Government. On his arrival he found the nation deeply involved in civil war, which increased the difficulty of his undertaking. He succeeded, however, at length in obtaining from the parliament a charter to this effect:—"THE INCORPORATION OF PROVIDENCE PLANTATIONS IN THE NARRAGANSET BAY, IN NEW ENGLAND, with full power and authority to rule themselves and such others as shall hereafter inhabit within any part of the said tract of land, by such form of civil government as by voluntary consent of all, or the greater part of them, they shall find most suitable to their state and condition."

While Mr. Williams was in London to procure this charter, he asserted his principles in a Tract which he published there, entitled *The Bloody Tenet of Persecution for the Cause of Conscience*, 1644. Mr. Cotton, a New England Minister, who thought