

## **A HISTORY OF THE BAPTISTS** **By Thomas Armitage**

### **THE AMERICAN BAPTISTS**

#### **IV. THE PROVIDENCE AND NEWPORT CHURCHES**

ROGER WILLIAMS, having adopted the old Baptist principle of absolute soul-liberty and given it practical effect in the civil provisions which he had devised, could not stop there. This deep moral truth carried with it certain logical outworkings concerning human duty as well as its rights, and as his doctrine could not stand alone in his thought, he was compelled to take another step forward. Relieved from all outside authority in matters of conscience, to which he had formerly submitted, he was now directly responsible to God for the correctness of his faith and practice, and by all that he had suffered he was bound to walk in an enlightened conscience. This compelled him to inquire what obedience God demanded of him personally, and threw him directly back upon his word as to his personal duty in the matter of baptism. While an infant he had been christened, but having now put himself under the supreme Headship of Christ, without the intervention of human authority, he found himself at a step on pure Baptist ground, and determined to be baptized on his own faith.

Williams with five others had settled Providence in June, 1636, and their numbers soon grew, so that in about three years there appear to have been about thirty families in the colony. In the main, the Christian portion of them had been Congregationalists, but in their trying position they seem to have been left unsettled religiously, especially regarding Church organization. Winthrop says that they met both on week-days and the Sabbath for the worship of God; but the first sign of a Church is found sometime previous to March, 1639, when Williams and eleven others were baptized, and a Baptist Church was formed under his lead. Hubbard tells us that he was baptized 'by one Holliman, then Mr. Williams re-baptized him and some ten more.' Ezekiel Holliman had been a member of Williams's Church at Salem, which Church, March 12th, 1638, charged him with 'neglect of public worship, and for drawing many over to his persuasion.' For this he 'is referred to the elders, that they may endeavor to convince and bring him from his principle and practice.' [Felt, Ecc. Hist. i, p. 334] Through its pastor, Hugh Peters, the Salem Church wrote to the Dorchester Church July 1st, 1639, informing them that 'the great censure' had been passed upon 'Roger Williams and his wife, Thomas Olney and his wife, Stukley Westcot and his wife, Mary Holliman, with widow Reeves,' and that 'these wholly refused to hear the Church, denying it and all the Churches of the Bay to be the true Churches, and (except two) all are re-baptized.' [Felt, i, 379,380]

In the baptism of these twelve we find a case of peculiar necessity, such as that in which the validity of 'lay-baptism' has never been denied. Tertullian, Ambrose, Augustine and Jerome, all held that in cases of necessity 'laymen' should baptize

and the Synod of Elvira so decreed. Mosheim writes: 'At first, all who were engaged in propagating Christianity, administered this rite; nor can it be called in question, that whoever persuaded any person to embrace Christianity, could baptize his own disciple.' [Ecc. Hist. i, pp. 105,106] Some, amongst whom we find Winthrop, have thought that Williams became a Baptist under the influence of a sister of Mrs. Hutchinson; others, that John Clarke, then of Aquidneck, was very likely the instrument of influencing him to this choice. But Clarke makes no reference in his writings to the baptism of his intimate friend, as he probably would have done had he led him to this step. So far as appears, there was not a Baptist minister in the colony at the time. Williams was an ordained minister in the English Episcopal Church and had been re-ordained at Salem, May, 1635, after the Congregational order, so that no one could question his right to immerse on the ground of non-ordination. He has left no account of his baptism, and some have questioned whether he was immersed, a point that we may now examine.

Under date of March 16th, 1639, Felt says: 'Williams, as stated by Winthrop, was lately immersed;' [Ecc. Hist., i, p. 402] and that he was immersed has never been questioned by any historian down from Winthrop to Bancroft, until recently. In 1879 this question was raised, but only then on the assumption that immersion was not practiced by the English Baptists until 1641, and so, that in America, Williams must have been 'affused' in March, 1639! Richard Scott, who was a Baptist with Williams at Providence, but who afterward became a Quaker, writing against Williams thirty-eight years afterward, says: 'I walked with him in the Baptists' way about three or four months, . . . in which time he broke from his society, and declared at large the ground and reason for it; that their baptism could not be right because it was not administered by an apostle.'

After that he set upon a way of seeking, with two or three of them that had dissented with him, by way of preaching and praying; and there he continued a year or two till two of the three left him. . . . After his society and he in a Church way were parted, he then went to England.' [Appendix to Fox's Fire-band Quenched, p. 247] Here he gives no hint that 'the Baptists' way differed in any respect in 1639 from what it was when he wrote. Hooker's letter to Shepard, November 2d, 1640, shows clearly that immersion was practiced at Providence at that time. When speaking of Humphrey inviting Chauncey from Plymouth to Providence, on account of his immersionist notions, Hooker says: 'That coast is more meet for his opinion and practice.' And Coddington, Governor of Rhode Island, a determined enemy of Williams, put this point unmistakably, thus: 'I have known him about fifty years; a mere weathercock, constant only in inconstancy. . . . One time for water baptism, men and women must be plunged into the water, and then threw it all down again.' [Letter to Fox, 1677]

But Williams's own opinion of Scripture baptism, given in a letter to Winthrop, November 10th, 1649, should set this point at rest. Speaking of Clarke, the founder of the Baptist Church at Newport, he writes: 'At Seekonk a great many have lately concurred with Mr. Clarke and our Providence men about the point of a new

baptism and the manner of dipping, and Mr. Clarke hath been there lately, and Mr. Lucar, and hath dipped them. I believe their practice comes nearer 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.' These words were written ten years after he repudiated his Providence baptism by Holliman, and after he had cast aside baptism altogether, both as to 'authority' and 'manner.' As to the legitimate use of the phrase 'new baptism' by him, its sense in this case would relate to an institution administered afresh to the candidates at Seekonk in addition to their infant baptism, and to the recent introduction of that practice on this continent, as contrary to the entire previous practice here, and not to the creation of a new rite, or the revival of an old one; for even in 1649 he thought it nearer the practice of Jesus Christ. There can be no doubt as to what these elders, Clarke and Lucar, did in administering baptism at Seekonk, for Clarke's Confession of Faith, found in the records of his Church (No. 32), says: 'I believe that the true baptism of the Gospel is a visible believer with his own consent to be baptized in common water, by dying, or, as it were, drowning, to hold forth death, burial and resurrection, by a messenger of Jesus, into the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.' [Backus, i, 208] Williams says here, that 'our Providence men' 'concurred' with Clark and the converts at Seekonk, and gives no intimation that the Providence Baptists had ever differed from his own views concerning dipping as 'nearer the first practice of our great founder, Jesus Christ, than other practices of religion do.'

The hand of God appears to have led Roger Williams to plant the good seed of the kingdom in that colony, and then to step aside, lest any flesh should glory in his presence. In that day there was a very respectable class of men, both in England and the older colonies, nicknamed 'Seekers,' simply because they were earnest inquirers after truth; and, concluding that it was impossible to find it then on earth, they looked for its new manifestation from heaven. They sought a visible and apostolic line of purely spiritual character, something after the order of the late Edward Irving, and not finding this, they waited for a renewal of Apostles with special gifts of the Spirit to attest their credentials. When Williams withdrew from the Baptists he was classed with these. His theory of the apostolate seems to have been the cause of his withdrawal, and of his doubt concerning the validity of his baptism. A few years later, in his 'Bloody Tenet' and his 'Hireling Ministry,' he denied that a ministry existed which was capable of administering the ordinances, for in 'the rule of Antichrist the true ministry was lost, and he waited for its restoration, much after John Smyth's view, in a new order of succession. Of course he looked upon his baptism as defective, and withdrew from the Baptists. His was not an unusual case at that period.

Walter Cradock tells us, in 1648, of 'a man that was a member of a Church and, because he saw infants baptized and himself was not, he broke off from them, and said that there was no Church, and all the streams did run for two months together on baptism; there was nothing talked of but that, and concluded the Anabaptists and all were Antichristian, and there was no Church nor any thing till we had

Apostles again. As I told you, that any that hold that principle and follow it closely and rationally, they will infallibly come to Apostles, and miracles, and signs from heaven.' [Gospel Liberty, p. 144]

The withdrawal of Williams from the Baptists did not disrupt brotherly love between them to the end of his life, and he did not prize this brotherly fellowship lightly. In reply to Fox, 1672, he says: 'After all my search and examinations and considerations, I do profess to believe that some come nearer to the first primitive Churches and the institutions and appointments of Jesus Christ than others; as in many respects, so in that gallant and heavenly and fundamental principle of the true matter of a Christian congregation, flock, or society; namely, actual believers, true disciples and converts, living stones, such as can give some account how the grace of God hath appeared unto them.' It will be in order here to say a few words concerning the Church which he planted at Providence.

The advanced views of Williams in regard to the need of personal regeneration in a Christian and his utter rejection of infant baptism, views radically distinctive of Baptists both in his day and ours, and the direct opposite of those held by the standing order in the New England colonies of his time, show clearly the grounds of his baptism by Holliman. Of his personal regeneration he says: 'From my childhood, now above three-score years, the Father of Lights and Mercies touched my soul with a love to himself, to the only begotten, the true Lord Jesus, to his Holy Scriptures.' [ Address to the Quakers, March 10, 1673] Three years after making this statement, he states to George Fox that a Gospel Church must be made up of such regenerate men, and calls them actual believers, true disciples and converts, living stones, such as can give some account how the grace of God hath appeared unto them and wrought that heavenly change in them.' This change he calls 'that gallant and heavenly and fundamental principle of the true matter of a Christian congregation, flock or society.' [ Reply to Fox, 1676] And as these were the views which he held in 1675, thirty-six years after his own baptism, it is only fair to credit him with them at the time of his baptism. His tractate, 'Christenings make not Christians,' published in London, 1645, gives a full exposition of his radical views on this subject, in language so full and round as to make them worthy of the best teachers of Baptist theology in the present century.

This rare book, which was supposed to be lost, but which has recently been found amongst the enormous accumulations of the British Museum and republished in Rider's Rhode Island Historical Tracts, must speak here. On page 5 he says : 'To be a Christian implies two things, to be a follower of that anointed One in all his offices, second to partake of his anointings.' On page 7 he deploras departure from the true kingdom of God as shown by the marks of a 'false conversion and a false constitution or framing of national Churches, in false ministries, the ministrations of baptism, Supper of the lord,' etc. He charges, on pages 10,11, that false Christians had made amongst the heathen monstrous and 'most inhuman conversions, yea, ten thousands of the poor natives, sometimes by wiles and subtile devices, sometimes by force, compelling them to submit to that which they understood not,

neither before nor after such their monstrous christening of them. Thirdly, for our New England parts, I can speak uprightly and confidently. I know it to have been easy for myself, long ere this, to have brought many thousands of these natives, yea, the whole country, to a far greater antichristian conversion than ever was yet heard of in America. I have reported something in the chapter of their religion [in his Key] how readily I could have brought the whole country to have observed one day in seven; I add to have received a baptism (or washing), though it were in rivers (as the first Christians and the Lord Jesus himself did), to have come to a stated Church meeting, maintained priests and forms of prayer, and the whole form of antichristian worship in life and death.'

After repeating that he could so have converted the Indians, he asks: 'Why have I not brought them to such a conversion? I answer: Woe be to me, if I call light darkness, or darkness light; sweet bitter, or bitter sweet; woe to me, if I call that conversion unto God, which is, indeed, subversion of the souls of millions in Christendom, from one worship to another, and the profanation of the holy name of God, his holy Son and blessed ordinances. . . . It is not a suit of crimson satin will make a dead man live; take off and change his crimson into white, he is dead still. Off with that, and shift him into cloth of gold, and from that to cloth of diamonds, he is but a dead man still. For it is not a form, nor the change of one form into another, a finer and a finer and yet more fine, that makes a man a convert--I mean such a convert as is acceptable to God in Jesus Christ according to the visible rule of his last will and testament.'

I speak not of hypocrites, which may but glitter, and be no solid gold, as Simon Magus, Judas, etc. But of a true external conversion [probably a misprint for eternal] I say, then, woe be to me! if intending to catch men, as the Lord Jesus said to Peter, I should pretend conversion, and the bringing of men, as mystical fish, into a Church estate, that is, a converted estate, and so build them up with ordinances as a converted Christian people, and yet afterward still pretend to catch them by an after conversion.'

On pages 17,18, he thus more fully defines what he held repentance and conversion to be: 'First, it must be by the free proclaiming and preaching of repentance and forgiveness of sins (Luke 14) by such messengers as can prove their lawful sending and commission from the Lord Jesus to make disciples out of all nations; and so to baptize or wash them, into the name or profession of the Holy Trinity. Matt. 28:19; Rom. 10:14,15. Secondly, such a conversion, so far as man's judgment can reach, which is fallible, as was the judgment of the first messengers, as in Simon Magus, etc., as in the turning of the whole man from the power of Satan unto God. Acts 16. Such a change, as if an old man became a new babe (John 4); yea, as amounts to God's new creation in the soul. Eph. 2:10.'

In view of the fact that Williams remained with the Baptists but three or four months, some have seriously doubted whether he formed a Church there after that order at all, and amongst these, at one time, was the thoughtful and accurate

Callender; but he seems at last to have concluded otherwise. Scott's words appear to settle this point, for he not only says that he walked with Williams in the Baptists' way, but that Williams 'broke from his society, and declared at large his reasons for doing so;' that two or three 'dissented with him;' and that he parted with 'his society' 'in a Church way.' What became of 'his society' after he left it is not very clear. Cotton Mather says: 'Whereupon his Church dissolved themselves;' and Neal, that 'his Church hereupon crumbled to pieces.' [Magnalia, ii, 432; Neal's Hist. Diss., p. 111] It is difficult to know how far the so-called 'Records' of the Providence Church may be relied upon, as we shall see, but they say that 'Mr. Holliman was chosen assistant to Mr. Williams;' and it is probable that upon this authority Professor Knowles says, in his 'Life of Williams,' that Holliman 'became a preacher,' and fostered the society [page 168]. Scott's account carries the implication throughout that the main body held together as Baptists when Williams left them. Great blame has been thrown upon Roger Williams for leaving the 'society' in Providence, and his conduct can be accounted for in part by his preconceived notions of a succession in the ministry, as is indicated in the expression already quoted, from his pen: 'By such messengers as can prove their lawful sending and commission.' But this accounts for it only in part. We may suppose that the affairs of the colony demanded the greater part of his time and energies. And moreover, we are not without indications that he found it about as hard to get along with compeers in that 'society' as they found it to get along with him; for none of them were made of the most supple material in human nature, as their after contentions and divisions about psalm-singing, laying on of hands, and other things show. Also the following shows that he did not regard some of them as any more orthodox in some doctrinal matters than they needed to be. He says, in a letter to John Whipple, dated Providence, August 24th, 1669: 'I am sorry that you venture to play with the fire, and W. Wickenden is toasting himself in it, and my want of tongs to rake him out without burning my fingers, etc. You know who it is that counts you and us as fools for believing the Scriptures; namely, that there shall be any hell at all, or punishment for sin after this life. But I am content to be a fool with Jesus Christ, who tells us of an account for every idle word in the day of judgment.' This rather indicates that some of the Providence brethren were tinctured with 'new theology,' while Roger stood squarely with Christ Jesus on the doctrine of future retribution, and had his own trials with the rather peculiar people of that old First Church for fully half a century.

From this time on the early history of the Church becomes a perplexing confusion, from the absence of records; if any minutes were kept they cannot be found. In fact, during the so-called King Philip's War, in 1676, most if not all the houses in Providence were destroyed by the Indians, and the records, if there were any, of course, perished in the flames. About a century ago Rev. John Stanford preached for a year to the First Baptist Church in Providence, and made an honest attempt to collect the most reliable information that he could command, and formulated a Book of Records. Stanford's original manuscript of twenty pages folio has been preserved in the archives of the society, and also copied into the first volume of the Church records, which began only in April, 1775. His history of the Church was

published by Rippon in the 'Baptist Annual Register' for 1801-2. The doctor possessed unusual ability, and was not supposed to misrepresent in the slightest degree; but it was impossible for him to construct a reliable history without authentic material. All that he had was tradition and a few fragments, and he complains thus of his scanty supply: 'No attention to this necessary article has been paid;' and he further says that he attempted this collection 'under almost every discouraging circumstance.' After doing the best that he could, his supposed facts are so fragmentary as to leave long gaps unfilled, with their value so impaired that few careful writers feel at liberty to follow them entirely. Then they contain some few contradictions which the doctor was not able to explain, and which perplex all calm investigators ; for example, they state that Williams was pastor of the Church for four years instead of four months; that it is not known when Thomas Olney was baptized or ordained, and that he came to Providence in 1654; whereas, in another place, they state that he was in the canoe with Williams when the Indians saluted him with 'What cheer?' and his name always appears in the list of members baptized by Williams, and amongst the thirteen original proprietors of Providence. Professor Knowles complains of these errors; also Dr. Caldwell, a most candid and careful writer, says in his history of this Church, that this record 'contains many errors, which have been repeated by later writers, and sometimes as if they had the authority of original records.' Of the above contradictions he remarks: 'Mr. Stanford, in the Records, confounding Mr. Olney with his son, makes the following statement, which is an almost unaccountable mixture of errors.'

Where such serious defects abound in any records, it is clear that little firm reliance can be placed upon their testimony, and this without reflection on the compiler, who stated only what he found, and attempted no manufacture of facts to complete his story. We are obliged, therefore, to consult side lights and outside testimony, and take it for what it is worth, according to the means of information enjoyed by contemporaneous and immediately succeeding witnesses. These are not numerous in this case, nor are they very satisfactory, because their testimony does not always agree, nor had they equal means of knowing whereof they spoke. Hence several different theories have been put forth on the subject, in the friendly discussions of those who have cherished them, and so far without a solution of the difficulties.

In 1850 Rev. Samuel Adlam, then pastor of the First Church at Newport, wrote a pamphlet in which he attempted to show that if Roger Williams established a Church, and it did not fall to pieces after he withdrew from it, that his successor was Thomas Olney, Sr.; and that, in 1652-53, the Church divided on the subject of laying on of hands. Then that Wickenden went out with the new body, while Olney remained with the old body, which he continued to serve as pastor until his death, in 1682, after which that Church existed until 1715, when it died; and so that the present Church at Providence dates back only to 1652-53. He founds this claim on the statement of John Comer, who left a diary in manuscript, and, writing about 1726-31, said: 'Mr. William Vaughn finding a number of Baptists in the town of Providence, lately joined together in special Church covenant, in the faith and

practice, under the inspection of Mr. Wiggington [Wickenden], being heretofore members of the Church under Mr. Thomas Olney, of that town, he, that is, Mr. William Vaughn, went thither in the month of October, 1652, and submitted thereto (the laying on of hands), whereupon he returned to Newport, accompanied with Mr. William Wiggington and Mr. Gregory Dexter.'

For the above reason, JOHN COMER believed that the Newport and not the Providence Church was the first in what is now Rhode Island, and the first in America. Backus, who wrote in 1777, and Staples, in his 'Annals of Providence' (1843), both accept Comer's statement in relation to Olney as correct, Backus stating that Thomas Olney; Sr., 'was next to Mr. Williams in the pastoral office, and continued so to his death, over that part of the Church who were called Five Principle Baptists, in distinction from those who parted from their brethren about the year 1653, under the leading of elder Wickenden, holding to the laying on of hands upon every Church member.' This he repeats, and adds that when Williams 'put a stop to his further travel with' the First Church in Providence, 'Thomas Olney was their next minister,' after which he laments that darkness fell 'over their affairs.' [Hist. Baptists, i, p. 405; ii, pp. 490,491,285, Weston's ed.] Comer's testimony carried great weight with these authors, and justly; for he was a most painstaking man, possessing a clear and strong mind under high culture, ranking with the first men of his day. He was born in Boston, was nephew to Rev. Elisha Callender, pastor of the First Baptist Church there, and was baptized by him in 1725. His parents had been Presbyterians, but on reading Stennett's reply to Russell, became Baptists. They educated their son at Yale, and he was chosen colleague to Peckham at Newport. Morgan Edwards says of him: 'He was curious in making minutes of very remarkable events, which swelled at last into two volumes. . . . To this manuscript am I beholden for many chronologies and facts in this my third volume. He had conceived a design of writing a history of the American Baptists, but death broke his purpose at the age of thirty years, and left that for others to execute.' [Materials for Hist. of R.I. Baptists]

This manuscript is now in possession of the Rhode Island Historical Society at Providence, and in writing it he gathered many facts from Samuel Hubbard and Edward Smith, both contemporary with the events which they related to him.

Those who do not accept the positions taken by Comer in this matter, and they constitute the great majority, claim that Rev. Chad Brown was the immediate pastoral successor of Williams; that when the division took place, in 1652-53, it was Olney who went out from the old Church with a new interest, and not Wickenden; that the Olney interest ceased to exist in 1715, and so, that the present First Church at Providence is the veritable Church which Williams formed in 1639. All admit that there was a division in the Church in 1652-53, but it seems impossible on present evidence to determine fully which was the seceding party. John Callender, another nephew of Elisha Callender, born 1706, graduated at Harvard, and settled as successor to Peckham at Newport, a man of wonderful attainments and accuracy, preached a great Historical Sermon in 1738 on 'The History of Rhode

Island' covering its first century, which document has become standard authority; he states the case with the widest difference from Comer. He says: 'About the year 1653 there was a division in the Baptist Church at Providence about the rite of 'laying on of hands, which some pleaded for as essentially necessary to Church communion, and the others would leave indifferent. Hereupon they walked in two Churches, one under Mr. C. Brown, Wickenden, etc., the other under Mr. Thomas Olney, but laying on of hands at length generally prevailed.' On page 61, in the first edition of his sermon, he has this foot-note: 'This last continued till about twenty years since, when, becoming destitute of an elder, the members united with other Churches.'

Stephen Hopkins, in his 'History of Providence,' published in 1765, says, with both Comer and Callender before him: 'The first Church formed at Providence by Mr. Williams and others seems to have been on the model of the Congregational Churches in the other New England colonies. But it did not continue long in this form; for most of its members very soon embraced the principles and practices of the Baptists, and some time earlier than 1639 gathered and formed a Church at Providence of that society. . . . This first Church of Baptists at Providence hath from the beginning kept itself in repute, and maintained its discipline, so as to avoid scandal, or schism, to this day; hath always been, and still is, a numerous congregation, and in which I have with pleasure observed very lately sundry descendants from each of the above-mentioned founders, except Holliman.' [ Providence Gazette, 1765]

When Williams published his 'Bloody Tenet' in 1643-44, he held the doctrine of laying on of hands, for he says therein: 'Concerning baptism and laying on of hands, God's people will be found to be ignorant for many hundred years, and I cannot yet see it proved that light is risen, I mean the light of the first institution, in practice.'

He repeats the same sentiment in the 'Bloody Tenet, yet More Bloody,' 1652, and in his 'Hireling Ministry,' 1652 [page 21]. This throws a ray of light upon the statement of Morgan Edwards, made in 1770: 'At first laying on of hands was held in a lax manner, so that they who had no faith in the rite were received without it, and such (saith Joseph Jenks) was the opinion of the Baptists in the first constitution of their Churches throughout this colony.' Again he says: ' Some divisions have taken place in this Church. The first was about the year 1654, on account of laying on of hands.'

Some were for banishing it entirely, among which Rev. Thomas Olney was the chief, who, with a few more withdrew and formed themselves into a distinct Church, distinguished by the name of Five Point Baptists, and the first of the name in the province; it continued in being to 1715, when Mr. Olney resigned the care of it, and soon after it ceased to exist.' Mr. Olney, to whom Edwards refers as having resigned in 1715, could not have been the Rev. Thomas Olney who was one of the constituent members of the Church, and an assistant to Rev. Chad Brown. He died

in 1682. His son, Thomas Olney, Jr., who is said also to have been an elder, died in 1722, at the advanced age of ninety-one. He was the town clerk until his death.

It seems clear from the statements of the most reliable historians that the first warm contention on the subject at Providence was between Wickenden and Olney, as to whether the point of being 'under hands' should be made a test of fellowship ; that Olney went out, that Wickenden and Brown remained with the old Church, and that in that body, according to Callender, laying on of hands prevailed, and held its own till the days of Manning, when it ceased to be a test of membership, and gradually died out. The absence of records and contradictory statements from various sources, as to a succession of pastors until the coming of Dr. Manning, render it next to impossible to follow a regular thread here, and the tangle is made worse by the statements of all, that in its early history the Church had three or four elders at once. Dr. Barrows says, of the first Newport Church, that it had elders 'besides a pastor,' and mentions three by name; and Dr. Caldwell says, that the Providence Church had 'two or three elders' at the same time. At the time of the division, 1652-53, there were four elders in this Church--Brown, Wickenden, Olney and Dexter. From Williams onward they were a glorious body of men. Some of them were Five and some Six Principle men; but there was not one Seventh Principle Baptist amongst them, who held to the 'five barley loaves and two small fishes.' For two generations they served the Church without salaries, a practice which must have ruined it without special grace. Their course in this direction induced Morgan Edwards to say: 'The ministry of this Church has been a very expensive one to the ministers, and a very cheap one to the Church.'

There is abundant cause for gratitude that DR. MANNING found his way to Providence as pastor in 1771. From that day it began to write a new history, but not without a struggle. He came first as a visitor and was invited to preach. But, 'Being Communion day, Mr. Winsor invited Mr. Manning to partake with them, which the president cordially accepted. After this several members were dissatisfied with Mr. Manning's partaking of the Lord's Supper with them; but at a Church meeting, appointed for the purpose, Mr. Manning was admitted to communion by vote of the Church. Notwithstanding this, some of the members remained dissatisfied at the privilege of transient communion being allowed Mr. Manning; whereupon another meeting was called previous to the next communion day, in order to reconcile the difficulty. At said meeting Mr. Manning was confirmed in his privilege by a much larger majority. At the next Church meeting Mr. Winsor appeared with an unusual number of members from the country, and moved to have Mr. Manning displaced, but to no purpose. The ostensible reason of Mr. Winsor and of those with him for objecting against President Manning was, that he did not make imposition of hands a bar to communion, though he himself had received it, and administered it to those who desired it. Mr. Winsor and the Church knew. Mr. Manning's sentiments and practice for more than six years at Warren, those, therefore, who were well-informed attributed the opposition to the president's holding to singing in public worship, which was highly disgustful to Mr. Winsor. The difficulty increasing, it was resolved to refer the business to the next Association at

Swansea. But when the case was presented, the Association, after a full hearing on both sides, agreed that they had no right to determine, and that the Church must act for themselves. The next Church meeting, which was in October, was uncommonly full. All matters relative to the president were fully debated, and by a much larger majority were determined in his favor. It was then agreed all should sit down at the Lord's Table the next Sabbath, which was accordingly done. But at the subsequent communion season, Mr. Winsor declined administering the ordinance, assigning for a reason, that a number of the brethren were dissatisfied. April 18, 1771, being Church meeting, Mr. Winsor appeared and produced a paper, signed by a number of members living out of town, dated Jonston, February 27. 1771. These parties withdrew on the issue, and formed a Six Principle Church.' [Providence Church Records]

On June 10th, 1771, the first Church sent to Swansea, inviting elders Job and Russel Mason to come and break bread to them after Samuel Winsor had left them to form a new Church. They replied, June 28th: 'Whereas, you have sent a request for one of us to break bread among you, we laid your request before our Church meeting; and there being but few present, and we not being able to know what the event of such a proceeding might be at this time, think it not expedient for us to come and break bread with you' [Providence Church Records]. Before Manning accepted the pastorate permanently, the Church appointed him to break bread, and he acted as pastor pro tem. After the Church got through with all its quiddities and contentions, and came to labor earnestly for the salvation of men, the Holy Spirit was graciously outpoured upon it, and its prosperity became marked. In 1774 a young man named Biggilo was accidentally killed in Providence, and his death stirred the whole city. Tamer Clemons and Venus Arnold, two colored women, gave themselves to Christ, were converted and baptized; and the record says, 'The sacred flame of the Gospel began to spread. In fifteen months one hundred and four confessed the power of the Spirit of Christ, in the conversion of their souls, and entered the gates of Zion with joy.' They had no meeting-house for nearly sixty years, but met in groves or private houses, till noble elder Tillinghast built one, at his own expense, in 1700.

Under the ministry of Dr. Manning, this, however ceased to meet their necessities, and in 1774 the present beautiful edifice was erected at a cost of ,7,000, and dedicated to God on May 28th, 1775. Our fathers delighted greatly in its tall steeple, 196 feet in height, and in their new bell, which weighed 2,515 pounds, bearing this motto: 'For freedom of conscience, the town was first planted; Persuasion, not force, was used by the people; This church is the eldest, and has not recanted, Enjoying and granting bell, temple, and steeple.'

Mind you, reader, this was one year before the clang of that grand old sister bell at Philadelphia which rang in our independence. But, alas for the vanity of noisy metal, the Baptist bell split its sides in 1787, and that at Independence Hall followed its example, since which time the Providence people have kept their best bell in the pulpit, without a crack, from Manning to T. Edwin Crown, not the son of

Chad, but his last worthy successor. Few bodies on earth have been honored with such a line of pastors for two and a half centuries, and few Churches have been so faithful to the great, first principles of the Gospel, without wavering for an hour. These she has maintained, too, without any written creed or human declaration of faith, standing firmly on the text and spirit of the Bible, as her only rule of faith and practice; notwithstanding that for a time her organization was followed by a set of crude notions and practices which do not characterize the Baptists of today, and which do not entitle her founders to canonization by any means.

Taking Roger's Romish quiddity about apostolic succession and his thesis about some other things into account, they were a fair match for each other. The First Church at NEWPORT and its founder now invite our attention. JOHN CLARKE, M.D., has few peers in any respect amongst the founders of New England, and, except in point of time, is more properly the father of the Baptists there than Roger Williams, who must ever remain its great apostle of religious liberty. Clarke was born in Suffolk, England, in 1609; was liberally educated and practiced as a physician in London for a time; but seems to have been equally versed in law and theology, with medicine. His religious and political principles led him to cast in his lot with the New World and he arrived in Boston in November, 1637. There is no evidence that he was a Baptist at this time, but rather he seems to have been a Puritan, much like Roger Williams when he landed there; and as Clarke expected to practice medicine in Boston, he would scarcely have been tolerated there at all as a Baptist. At that moment the Congregational Churches of Boston and vicinity were in a warm controversy with Mrs. Hutchinson and her brother-in-law, Mr. Wheelwright, touching their doctrines. After they were banished, November 20th, 1637, excitement ran high, and a number of persons who had more or less sympathy with them, either on account of their views or their banishment, determined to retire from the colony and found one of their own, where they could have peace. Clarke went with this band, it is supposed to New Hampshire, where they spent the winter of 1637-38 at or near Dover.

Finding the climate too severe, in the spring they determined to make either for Long Island or Delaware. When they reached Cape Cod, they left their vessel to go overland and make for Providence, where Roger Williams welcomed them warmly, from which time the names of Clarke and Williams become inseparable in the political and religious history of our country. Williams suggested that they remain in that region, and after deliberate consideration, Clarke purchased of the Indians, through the agency of Williams, Aquidneck, otherwise and now called the island of Rhode Island, whose chief city is Newport. "Their first settlement was at the north end of the island, at what is now Portsmouth. Here, March 7th, 1638, their first step was to form a civil government, declaring themselves a 'body-politic,' submitting themselves to Christ and his holy 'truth, to be guided and judged thereby,' much after the form of the Pilgrims at Plymouth. They then chose Coddington as judge or magistrate, appointed civil officers, and voted a whipping-post, a jail and a pair of stocks. At one time, it was supposed that this was a religious compact, because they appointed 'three elders,' January 2d, 1639. These,

however, were civil officers, or associate judges in the Hebrew sense. They were to assist Coddington 'in the execution of justice and judgment, for the regulating and ordering of all offenses and offenders,' and they were to report to the freemen quarterly. They also determined that in laying out the town, two civil commissioners should locate the meeting-house for Portsmouth. These settlers numbered eighteen, most of them being Congregationalists and members of Cotton's Church in Boston, but some of them were under its censure and that of the Court of Massachusetts for imbibing certain peculiar views of Christian doctrine. Whether Anne Hutchinson was with them at the moment does not appear, but her husband was. So far as appears none of them were Baptists, but sympathized with her in theological sentiments, as John Cotton and Sir Henry Vane did at one time, and now determined to enjoy the freedom of their consciences. It is not clear whether Clarke was at this time a Congregationalist, but they formed a Church, to which he was the preacher, whether or not he was the pastor. Winthrop's Journal implies that there were no Baptists amongst them. Indeed, why should the State Church at Boston send a deputation to a Baptist Church at Portsmouth? He says that they 'gathered a Church in a very disorderly way; for they took some excommunicated persons, and others who were members of the Church in Boston and were not dismissed.' . . . That 'many of Boston and others, who were of Mrs. Hutchinson's judgment and partly removed to the isle of Aquiday; and others who were of the rigid separation, and savored of anabaptism, removed to Providence.'

Had he known of a Baptist at Portsmouth, he would have been likely to say so, and would not have contented himself with mentioning that this Church was gathered in a disorderly way. In February, 1640, the Boston Church sent three of its members 'to understand their judgments in divers points of religion formerly maintained by all or divers of them.' This committee of discipline reported to that Church, March 16th, 1640, that the new Church at Portsmouth was irregular in that they followed the unwarrantable practice of taking the Lord's Supper with excommunicated persons; but the deputation gives no hint that any of them were Baptists. The Portsmouth Church refused to hear these messengers, demanding: 'What power one Church hath over another?' When they reported to Cotton's Church: 'The elders and most of the Churches would have cast them out, as refusing to hear the Church, but all not being agreed it was deferred.' In 1638 Newport was settled, at the south end of the island, where a Church was formed in 1641, of which Clarke was pastor, probably another Congregational Church, for we have no sign that even then he held Baptist views of the ordinances. Lechford, who visited the Rhode Island colonies, and speaks freely of them (1637-41) says: 'At Providence, which is twenty miles from the said island (R.I.), lives Master Williams, and his company, of divers opinions; most are Anabaptists.' But of Newport, which he also visited, he says: 'At the island called Acquedney are about two hundred families. There was a Church where one Master Clarke was elder. The place where the Church was is called Newport. But that Church, I hear, is now dissolved.'

The next most reliable account of Clarke is from John Callender, the sixth successor to Clarke, as pastor of the First Baptist Church at Newport, who preached the

Century Sermon at Newport, March 24th, 1738. In his discourse he uses this language: 'It is said that in 1644 Mr. John Clarke and some others formed a Church on the scheme and principles of the Baptists. It is certain that in 1648 there were fifteen members in full communion.' In 1730 Comer, an earlier successor of Clarke, says that this body maintained 'the doctrine of efficacious grace, and professed the baptizing of only visible believers upon personal profession by a total immersion in water, though the first certain record of this Church is October 12th, 1648.' An interesting item may be mentioned here, namely: That Samuel Hubbard and his wife, of Fairfield, held to the baptism of believers, and she being arraigned twice for this faith, they removed to Newport and united with Clarke's Church November 3d, 1648. These things taken together lead to the highly probable conclusion, that Clarke became a Baptist somewhere between 1640 and 1644, but we have no record of the time of his baptism, or that of his Church. A long train of circumstances indicate that his steps had led in the same path with those of Williams in the main; through Puritanism, love of religious liberty, disgust at the intolerance of Massachusetts, and so into full Baptist positions. Williams was not a Baptist when he first met Clarke, early in 1638, nor was he immersed till March, 1639, a year afterward. With the brotherly affection which subsisted, between them, the intervention of Williams in securing the island of Rhode Island to Clarke, and their common views on soul-liberty, is it reasonable to suppose that Williams would have sought baptism at the hands of an immersed layman, if Clarke, his next neighbor, was then a Baptist? True, Williams had ceased to be a Baptist when the Baptist Church of which Clarke became pastor was formed, so that he could not have baptized Clarke. But other elders had taken the Church that Williams had left, and Clarke could have received baptism of one of them at Providence, as easily as William Vaughn, of the First Baptist Church at Newport, could go to Providence and receive imposition of hands from Wickenden in 1652. Be this as it may, however, there is nothing to show that Clarke was a Baptist in England, but much to indicate that his love for liberty of conscience led him to embrace Baptist principles and practices in Rhode Island. Morgan Edwards writes of the Newport Church:

'It is said to have been a daughter of Providence Church, which was constituted about six years before. And it is not at all unlikely that they might be enlightened, in the affair of believer's baptism, by Roger Williams and his company, for whom they had the greatest kindness. . . . Clarke, its first minister, 1644, remained pastor till 1676, when he died. . . . Tradition says that he was a preacher before he left Boston, but that he became a Baptist after his settlement in Rhode Island, by means of Roger Williams.' [Materials for Hist. of Baptists in R.I.] His services in the cause of God and liberty were a marvel. In 1651 the colony sent him and Williams to obtain a new charter, which would set aside Coddington's. Williams returned in 1654, leaving Clarke alone to manage the affair, which he did during the Protectorate, and in 1663 he secured from Charles II that remarkable document which was held as fundamental law in Rhode Island till 1842. It was an immense triumph of diplomacy to obtain a charter from Charles II, which declared that 'no person within the said colony, at any time hereafter, shall be anywise molested, punished, disquieted, or called in question for any differences of opinion or matters

of religion.' No wonder that he was hailed with delight on his return to Rhode Island in 1664, after an absence of twelve long years on this high mission.

He served the public in the General Assembly as Deputy Governor, and in other capacities, requiring strength of judgment and versatility of talents. His 'News from New England,' 'Narrative of New England Persecutions,' with several other works, bear the marks of a powerful pen. Callender said of him: 'No character in New England is of purer fame than John Clarke.'

The Historian of Rhode Island says that 'to him Rhode Island was chiefly indebted for the extension of her territory on each side of the bay, as well as for her royal charter.' And Roger Williams bears this testimony: 'The grand motive which turned the scale of his life was the truth of God--a just liberty to all men's spirits in spiritual matters, together with the peace and prosperity of the whole colony.' As a consistent Baptist, he displayed a healthy comprehension of all our principles and gave a beautiful unity to our infant cause in the colonies. And it is equally beautiful to see how he accepted from Williams all that related to liberty of conscience, although Williams did not agree with him in regard to Church life. Williams, at Providence, made the distinction between Church and State, radical and complete from the first. Clarke at first took the Bible as the code of the civil State, so that in Providence Church and State were distinct, but in Aquidneck they were confounded, and only after severe experience did that colony come to adopt the Providence doctrine. When this was done, Baptist Churches sprang up in different directions, under the missionary influences of the Newport Church, and people came from many places to unite in its fellowship.

These two Baptists shaped the early history of the present State of Rhode Island, and her religious policy has since shaped that of all the States. After the Providence Plantations and the people of Narraganset Bay became united under one charter, an old writer said of them: 'They are much like their neighbors, only they have one vice less and one virtue more than they; for they never persecuted any; but have ever maintained a perfect liberty of conscience.' After quoting these words, Edwards remarks: 'In 1656 the Colonies of Plymouth, Massachusetts, Connecticut, and New Haven pressed them hard to give up the point, and join the confederates to crush the Quakers, and prevent any more from coming to New England. This they refused, saying: "We shall strictly adhere to the foundation principle on which this colony was first settled, to wit: That every man who submits peaceably to the civil authority, may peaceably worship God according to the dictates of his own conscience without molestation." This answer made the said colonies hate them the more, and meditate their ruin by slanderous words and violent actions. They had to resist Old England as well as New England. Sir Henry Vane admonished them in a letter. Williams says: "I spent almost five years' time with the State of England to keep off the rage of the English against us."

Letter-writers calumniated them as the scum and runaways of other countries which, in time, would bring a heavy burden on the land--as sunk into barbarity,

that they could speak neither good English nor good sense, as libertines, antinomians, and every thing except what is good, as despisers of God's worship, and without order or government. In their address to the Lord Protector, 1659, they say: "We bear with the several judgments and consciences of each other in all the towns of our colony, the which our neighbor colonies do not; which is the only cause of their great offense against us." [Materials for Hist. of Baptists in R.I.] Mr. Clarke passed through several severe controversies. One, on the 'inner-light' question, with those who claimed to be led entirely thereby. Many of them were called 'Seekers,' and some became 'Friends.' Against this doctrine Clarke contended manfully for the Baptist claim of the sufficiency of the Bible as the rule of faith and practice, and carried the public sentiment with him. In 1652, while he was in England, the question of 'laying on of hands' as a test of membership arose. A number withdrew from his Church in 1656, on this issue, and formed a 'Six Principle' Baptist Church in Newport; then, in 1671, another body went out and formed a 'Seventh Day' Church, on the persuasion that the seventh day is the divinely appointed Sabbath. The first successor of Clarke as pastor was Obadiah Holmes, 1676-82; the second Richard Dingley, 1689-94; then William Peckham, 1711-32; John Comer, 1726-29, a colleague to Peckham. John Callender became pastor in 1731, died in 1748, and from him the pastoral succession has gone on in a line of worthies which would honor the history of any Church, while many of its deacons have been known as the first men in the commonwealth. The Church has always been Calvinistic, and has practiced singing as a part of public worship, excepting for a time, in the early part of the eighteenth century. In 1726 it voted to take 'a weekly contribution for the support of the ministry.' It has been a living, working band of Christians from its organization, and stands on the old platform where it has stood for nearly two and a half centuries as prominent and healthful as a city on a hill.