

CHAPTER IV.

THE ANTINOMIANS AND AQUEDNECK.

Not quite a year had passed after the banishment of Williams when another movement dared to oppose the soul-crushing theocracy of Massachusetts, and like its predecessor, by persecution and banishment, was speedily suppressed. And again Rhode Island was to be the gainer. Only the briefest account of this controversy—commonly called the Antinomian movement—can here be given.¹ It was in September, 1634, that there arrived at Boston a woman endowed with unusual intellectual power and emboldened with an energy that amounted almost to fanaticism. At her home in England she had listened to the sermons of Cotton and her brother-in-law, John Wheelwright, and had now come to enjoy again the preaching of the former. She soon began to hold at her house religious meetings for women, which, from her nimble wit and courageous attitude on religious questions, became very popular. By the spring of 1636 her influence, especially in Boston, seemed to be at its height. In May of that year she had been joined by her brother-in-law, Wheelwright, and during the same month there had been elected to the office of governor a man whose political prestige was eventually to give great aid to her cause. This was Henry Vane, a young Englishman, whose high birth, brilliant intellectual powers, and ability in diplomacy make him a dazzling figure against the dull Puritan background. Winthrop tells us that he “forsook the honors and preferments of the court, to enjoy the ordinances of Christ in their purity here”. If so, his life in New England, as a recent English commentator has remarked, must have been a “continuous disenchantment”.

It was just about at this time that the popularity of Mistress

¹This movement has been treated in a most satisfactory manner by C. F. Adams in his *Three Episodes of Mass. History*. Reference should also be made to G. E. Ellis, *Puritan Age in Mass.*; B. Adams, *Emancipation of Mass.*; and *Publications of the Prince Society*, vol. 22. There is an enumeration of authorities in *Mem. Hist. of Boston*, i, 176.

Hutchinson began to assume a dangerous attitude. Actuated by religious enthusiasm, she occasionally drew invidious comparisons between certain ministers, saying that "none of them did preach the covenant of free grace, but Master Cotton, and that they have not the seal of the Spirit, and so were not ministers of the New Testament".¹ This "covenant of grace", which was to form the war-cry of the Antinomians in their struggle, and which was destined to lead them into much unintelligible and profitless discussion over doctrine, related to the evidencing of justification. How was a man to justify himself before his God? By his "faith", or by his "works"? The Hutchinson party denied the intrinsic efficacy of good works as means of salvation, and claimed to be living under a "covenant of grace", all the time denouncing their opponents as being made under a "covenant of works". The contention over these two doctrines—of which Winthrop keenly remarked, "no man could tell, except some few who knew the bottom of the matter, where any difference was"²—divided the whole community into two religious parties. Governor Vane, Cotton, and all but half a dozen of the Boston Church espoused the cause of Mrs. Hutchinson and Wheelwright. Arrayed against them were Winthrop, Wilson—the pastor of the Boston Church—and virtually all the clergy in the colony outside of Boston. The excitement was intense; disputations were frequent, each side accusing the other of holding heresies and disturbing the peace of Church and State.

At this juncture, in December, 1636, an incident occurred which gave more of a political bearing to the controversy and placed the character of Vane in a light not entirely to his credit. One day he called the court together and announced that he must immediately return to England to attend to certain private affairs. A sorrowful remonstrance greeting this communication, he asserted that he would have hazarded all private business, had he not foreseen the danger liable to arise from the prevalent religious dissensions, of which it had been scandalously imputed that he was the cause. The court silently acquiesced to his departure and made arrangements for the election of his successor. But again he changed his mind. After a day's reflection, in which he listened to the persuading influence of some of the Boston congregation, he declared that he was an obedient child of the church and did not dare to go away. So the whole affair held over

¹Welde, *Short Story*, p. 36.

²Winthrop, 1, 213. Antinomianism, literally interpreted, meant a denial of the obligations of moral law. The opponents of Antinomianism were called legalists.

until the next May election. Vane's vacillating conduct on this occasion has greatly prejudiced his reputation. Whether he had grown weary of religious dissension, or really feared danger to the colony, or was merely testing the strength of his position is all a matter of surmise. Surely no one of these reasons is becoming to the conduct of a true statesman.

The controversy now began to assume the attitude of bitter partisanship. The court, the majority of whom were legalists, interfered and convoked the ministers to give their advice. Debates, disputations, and exhortations followed in quick succession, all of which only served to spread the doctrines more widely. In March, 1637, the court found Wheelwright guilty of sedition and contempt in a fast day sermon preached a few weeks before. The sermon—which is fortunately preserved—does not show the least evidence of either sedition or contempt. That a verdict could be brought from such unwarrantable charges only shows how far these ecclesiastical dictators could pervert justice in order to suppress opposition to their ideas. As soon as the judgment was announced, the Boston church signed a respectful petition in Wheelwright's behalf, which noble remonstrance was later to subject them to unreasonable severity.

The election of May, 1637, resulted in the choice of Winthrop as governor and the implacable Dudley as deputy-governor. Vane was entirely displaced, as were also his followers, Coddington¹ and Dummer; but Boston retaliated by electing both Vane and Coddington as deputies. The legalists, however, were now strongly in power, and henceforth took the initiative. By their first act the court ordered that no person should entertain any emigrant for more than three weeks without sanction of the magistrates. This flagrant law was aimed directly at the Antinomians, who were expecting fresh adherents to their party from England, and occasioned so much outcry that Winthrop thought it necessary to publish an apology. In this he claimed the abstract right of the state to exclude those who disturbed its peace, but in admitting that religious differences were the cause of the legislation, rather invalidated his argument. Vane, after a somewhat weak reply to Winthrop, sailed for England.

¹William Coddington, who was later to figure so prominently in Rhode Island affairs, was also one of the most prominent men in the Boston Colony. For his early life see Adams, *Three Episodes*, p. 546; Austin's *General Dict. of R. I.*, p. 276; *N. E. Hist. and General Reg.* xxviii, 13, xxxvi, 138; and *Mag. of N. E. History*, 1, 228. The oft-quoted statement that he owned the first brick house in Boston originated in his *Demonstration of True Love*, p. 4 (quoted in Palfrey 1, 328); although the fact that it was brick is traceable only to Callender, *Hist. Discourse*, p. 3 of preface.

With this powerful friend of Antinomianism out of the way, the legalists set about to crush out their opponents. In August, 1637, a synod of all the divines, held at Cambridge to settle the existing differences, passed condemnation on eighty-two "erroneous opinions" and nine "unwholesome expressions". Cotton, one of the strongest allies of the Hutchinson party, now saw how the stream was flowing and, desirous to recover "his former splendour throughout New England", deserted to the stronger party. The rest of the leaders, however, remained unconquered, and the question now was chiefly as to the mode of applying the punishment.

The court, at its November session, summoned Wheelwright, and upon the strength of his conviction in March, sentenced him to banishment. So, on a bitter winter's day, with deep snows upon the ground, he journeyed forth to the Piscataqua, the first of his party to undergo bodily suffering for voicing his religious opinions. A pretext for punishing the other leaders was found in the petition which several of Wheelwright's friends had presented in his behalf eight months before. The petitioners were given their choice of disavowing their act or bearing the consequences. Aspinwall was banished; Coggeshall, who had merely approved the petition, was disfranchised; Coddington and nine others were given leave to depart within three months or abide the action of the court; others were disfranchised and fined; and somewhat later seventy-one more persons were disarmed.

The trial and subsequent fate of Anne Hutchinson, the author of the whole controversy, forms a fitting sequel to these deeds of harshness and oppression. It was before this same November court that the poor woman, feeble in health, but undaunted in courage, was brought to answer to the various charges of calumny and contempt and heresy. The doings of this assembly read more like the proceedings of a Spanish inquisitorial court than the action of a body of law-loving Englishmen. The presiding justice, attorney-general, and foreman of the jury were one and the same person; the witnesses for the prosecution were allowed to testify without oath; and the few who dared to speak in the defendant's favor were speedily intimidated. But through it all she remained firm and unshaken. Not a loophole did she leave, whereby her opponents could trump up a charge against her, until on the second day of her trial she broached the doctrine of inward revelation, claiming herself to be inspired. Eagerly did the prosecution seize upon this slender thread, and cried out against the perniciousness of her words. It was then that Coddington arose and exclaimed, "I do not for my own part see any equity in the court in all your proceed-

ings. Here is no law of God that she hath broken, nor any law of the country that she hath broke, and therefore deserves no censure".¹ But this was a case where appeals to justice could be of no avail. The trial was a mere formality, the verdict of guilty being a precluded result. The sentence of banishment was passed, but execution was postponed until spring. In the mean while it was hoped that she would recant. Her courage, however, stood her in good stead, and in spite of the persecution of several ministers, in spite of excommunication from her church, she remained unshaken and gloried in her sufferings. In March, 1638, the execution of the sentence was issued, and the arch-heretic departed into exile, never again to return to the scene of her former triumphs.

Thus ended the Antinomian movement. Giving as an excuse "political necessity", the legalists had frightened the timid into submission, and persecuted and banished those who dared to offer opposition. And what had the Antinomians accomplished? They had brought only harm upon themselves and left the clergy in a more unassailable position than before. Charles Francis Adams well summarizes their movement when he says, "There was need enough for reform; but, to be useful and healthy, reform had to come more slowly and from another direction. Neither did Anne Hutchinson or her following hold forth any promise of better things. Theirs was no protest against existing abuses. On the contrary, in their religious excesses, they out-did even the clergy—they out-heroded Herod. Their overthrow, accordingly, so far as it was peculiar to themselves and did not involve the overthrow of great principles of religious toleration and political reform, was no matter for regret".² As for the Puritan prosecutors, their proceedings are less defensible than in the case of Williams, whose arguments more closely touched the civil power. Persecution was one of the precepts of their faith, and if presumed political necessities compelled them to choose between justice and oppression, they invariably chose the latter. Thus they established a religious absolutism which was to remain all-powerful for forty years. But this so-called period of tranquillity was really a period of torpor, in which superstition and bigotry repressed every form of a social and intellectual activity. As a keen English writer has justly remarked,³ "The spiritual growth of Massachusetts withered under the shadow of dominant orthodoxy; the colony was only saved from mental atrophy by its vigorous political life."

¹*Prince Soc. Publ.* xxii, 280.

²*Three Episodes*, p. 574.

³Doyle, *Puritan Colonies*, 1, 140.

To the evidenced desire of the Massachusetts government to be rid of a body of its most intelligent and prosperous colonists, Rhode Island owes the origin of what for a century and a half was her leading town. In the late autumn of 1637 several of the Antinomians, realizing that if they thought as their consciences dictated they could never live at peace with the Puritan clergy, decided to begin a settlement elsewhere. Accordingly, they deputed John Clarke and a few others to seek out a place. The cold of the ensuing winter inducing them to go toward the south, they embarked one day in the early spring, with but little idea as to their eventual destination. But the narrative of their journey is best told in Clarke's own words.¹ "So, having sought the Lord for direction, we all agreed that while our vessel was passing about a large and dangerous Cape, we would cross over by land, having Long Island and Delaware Bay in our eye for the place of our residence; so to a town called Providence we came, which was begun by one M. Roger Williams . . . by whom we were courteously and lovingly received, and with whom we advised about our design; he readily presented two places before us in the same Narragansett Bay, the one upon the main called Sowwames, the other called then Acquedneck, now Rode-Island". The narrative goes on to relate how Williams, Clarke and two others journeyed to Plymouth to find out whether the lands in question were claimed by that government. The answer was "that Sowwames was the garden of their Patent, and the flour in the garden", but if Aquedneck was decided upon, "they should look upon us as free, and as loving neighbors and friends should be assistant unto us upon the main".

Since the local sachem was tributary to Canonieus and Miantonomi, it was from these chiefs that Aquedneck had to be obtained.² On March 24, 1637, the whole island, together with the grass on several smaller islands, was conveyed to William Coddington and his friends for forty fathoms of white peage and a few extra gratuities to local sachems.³ About a fortnight previous they had organized themselves into a political body, according to the following compact: "The 7th day of the first month, 1638. We whose names are underwritten do here solemnly in the presence of Jehovah incorporate ourselves into a

¹John Clarke's *Illl Newes from New England*, 1652, reprinted in *4 Mass. Hist. Soc. Coll.* ii, 1.

²Roger Williams records that "It was not price or money that could have purchased Rhode Island, but 'twas obtained by that love and favour which that honored gentleman, Sir Harry Vane and myself, had with the great Sachem Miantonomo." *Narr. Club Publ.* vi, 305.

³The deed and receipts for gratuities are in *R. I. Col Rec.* i, 45.

Bodie Politik and as he shall help, will submit our persons, lives and estates unto our Lord Jesus Christ, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, and to all those perfect and most absolute laws of his given us in his holy word of truth, to be guided and judged thereby.¹

Having taken this initial step, they elected Coddington "judge", or chief magistrate, he engaging to "do justice and judgment impartially according to the laws of God". They also appointed a secretary and clerk. All these preparatory proceedings had been enacted at Providence. They now were ready for settlement, and chose as the most desirable situation the land around the cove at the northeasterly end of the island.² Here they planted, enacting as their first law that none could become inhabitants except those who should be "received in by the consent of the Bodie and do submit to the Government". During the ensuing year they passed many local acts, making provision for the maintenance of peace and order, for military organization, for the location of a meeting-house, for validating land titles and for many other needs—all somewhat in contrast to the loose and inefficient enactments of the earlier settlement at the head of the Bay.

Before the settlement was a year old there came a slight change in the governmental organization. The original compact had provided for a perfect democracy, in which all laws were passed by the general body of freemen, of whom the judge was merely the presiding officer. But now, as at Providence, an approach toward delegation of power was deemed expedient. On January 2, 1639, it was enacted that the judge, assisted by his three "elders", should govern "according to the general rule of the word of God". Once every quarter they were to report to the assembled freemen, whose power of veto is thus quaintly

¹*R. I. Col. Rec.* 1, 52. It is subscribed to by Wm. Coddington, John Clarke, Wm. Hutchinson, Jr., John Coggeshall, Wm. Aspinwall, Samuel Willbore, John Porter, John Sanford, Ed. Hutchinson, Jr., Thos. Savage, Wm. Dyre, Wm. Freeborne, Phillip Shearman, John Walker, Richard Carder, Wm. Baulston, Ed. Hutchinson, Sr., Henry Bull, and Randall Holden. The Antinomian influence upon these first settlers is shown by the fact that all, except Coddington, Ed. Hutchinson, Jr., and Holden, were named in the disarming act of the previous November. (See *Mass. Col. Rec.* 1, 211.)

²One of the first orders was that "the Town shall be builded at the spring", at the head of the cove, which at that time had a navigable outlet to Narragansett Bay on the northern side. The first house-lots, mostly of six acres, were laid out on the westerly border of the cove. The remains of the settlement could a few years ago be clearly traced; but there is now no house or foundation remaining to show where these first settlers planted. The Indian name for the place of settlement, and also for the main land opposite, was Pocasset (see Callender's *Discourse*, p. 33). The name Portsmouth was agreed upon in July, 1639, although it seems to have been used earlier. (See *R. I. Col. Rec.* 1, 71-72.)

expressed: "If by the Body or any of them the Lord shall be pleased to dispense light to the contrary of what by the Judge and Elders hath been determined formerly, that then and there it shall be repealed as the act of the Body." This new mode of government lasted but four months. During this interval the Coddington faction seem to have urged that the officers in power should be granted a larger amount of authority. Failing, apparently, to impress the majority of the settlers with the wisdom of this course, they determined to build another town.¹ On April 28, they met at Pocasset and drew the following instrument: "It is agreed by us whose hands are under written, to propagate a Plantation in the midst of the Island or elsewhere; and doe engage ourselves to bear equall charges, answerable to our strength and estates in common; and that our determinations shall be by major voice of judge and elders; the Judge to have a double voice."²

The five officers of the little settlement and four others signed this compact, and taking the records of the town in their possession, proceeded to seek a new plantation. The remainder of the inhabitants, thus deprived of their officers and their records, immediately set about the organization of a new government. On April 30 they made as their first entry on a new record-book the following: "We whose names are underw[r]itten acknowledge] ourselves the loyal subje[cts of his Majestie] King Charles, and in his na[me do bind our]selves into a Civill body Politicke: a[ssenting] unto his lawes according [to right and] matters of Justice"³ They then chose William Hutchin-

¹I do not at all agree with Callender and Arnold in assuming that the increase of population caused the planting of a new town. Infant settlements are not often burdened with over-population; nor are there any records to show there was a notable increase. Callender dedicated his book to Coddington's grandson, and for personal reasons could not impute unworthy motives to the grandfather; and Arnold simply follows Callender. Coddington, as we shall see in his later life, strongly believed in centralization of power, especially when that power was centralized in him. It is probable that there was some tumult in the process of separation, although the evidence of that fact comes from the pens of Massachusetts writers who would have been only too willing to give credence to the slightest rumor of insurrection on the Island. (See Winthrop, 1, 295.) The seceders were in the minority, but they evidently held the political control in the community.

²*R. I. Col. Rec.* 1, 87. This compact is signed by Wm. Coddington, Judge; Nicholas Easton, John Coggeshall and William Brenton, Elders; William Dyer, Clerk; and John Clarke, Jeremy Clarke, Thomas Hazard, and Henry Bull.

³*Portsmouth Rec.* p. 1. The words within the brackets are supplied to complete the sense. The thirty-one names, headed by Wm. Coddington and Samuel Gorton, signed to this compact are for the first time rightly given in the recently issued Portsmouth records. The names questioned in Arnold

son as judge and elected eight assistants.¹ Provision was made for a quarterly court of trials, with a jury of twelve men, although small cases could be tried before the assistants. This was a government constructed according to English law—the first in the colony to acknowledge allegiance to the king or to provide for an English jury trial. It differed widely from the government of the seceders. They judged “according to the word of God”, which gave to the judge considerable latitude in Biblical interpretation. The Portsmouth settlement, although it had the stronger polity and was also stronger numerically, soon showed its inevitable dependency on the Coddington party. Being the natural leaders, they speedily acquired control of the Island. The Portsmouth records are henceforth given over to the recording of local items; and the subsequent history of Aquedneck must be traced in the doings at Newport.

Meanwhile, how had the seceders fared? On April 30, only two days after the compact, Nicholas Easton came with his two sons to a little island, which they named Coaster’s Harbor. On the following day they arrived at Newport, where they planted and erected the first English house.² It is evident that the rest of the signers immediately followed, for on May 16, 1639, they made as their first town order that “the Plantation now begun at this Southwest end of the Island, shall be called Newport”, and that “the Towne shall be built upon both sides of the spring, and by the sea-side southward”.³ They also made

1, 133, should be John Sloffe, Wm. Heavens, George Cleare, and John More. (See *R. I. H. S. Publ.* vi. 85.)

¹*Portsmouth Rec.* p. 3. Hutchinson’s name, torn off in the mutilated record, is preserved by Winthrop, i, 295. The eight (not seven) assistants were Wm. Baulston, John Porter, John Sanford, Wm. Freeborn, John Walker, Philip Sherman, Wm. Aspinwall, and one other, probably Adam Mott.

²The source of the Easton narrative is in a diary noted on the margin of Morton’s *N. E. Memorial*. It is printed in Bull’s *Memoir* (in *Newport Mercury*, Dec. 26, 1857), and in *Narr. Hist. Rep.* viii, 240.

³*R. I. Col. Rec.* i, 88. Bull, in his *Memoir of R. I.* (*R. I. Hist. Mag.* vii, 191) relates the tradition of settlement as follows: The land fronting on the harbor where Thames street now is, was then an impenetrable swamp, which circumstance so discouraged the settlers that they concluded to locate the town near Easton’s Beach; but on further survey, they found the roadstead there unsafe for shipping, which obliged them to resort again to the spot where Newport now stands. Miss E. C. Brenton repeats this tradition (*Hist. of Brenton’s Neck*, p. 5), and adds that the swamp was fired, cleared and filled in by the Indians for the gift of a coat with brass buttons. The spring in question rose on the west side of Spring street, near the State House, and ran northwesterly into the harbor. Home-lots of four acres each, most of them extending from Spring street to the bay, were assigned to the proprietors. The first houses were built in the vicinity of the present Parade, the Easton house being on the easterly side of Farewell street, a little west from the Friend’s Meeting House. The Coddington house, torn down in 1835, was

the division from Pocasset on a line five miles north and east from the town, and then proceeded to the laying out of their lands.

Now that the Coddington party had erected a government according to their own liking, they decided to draw their Portsmouth comrades back into the fold. They appointed commissioners to "negotiate with our brethren of Pocasset", and by October 1 thought this project far enough advanced to assume practical union. On that date was issued a "Catalogue of such who, by the general consent of the Company were admitted to be inhabitants of the Island now called Aquedneck". This included lists of Portsmouth and Newport settlers, all of whom, according to the record, had "submitted themselves to the Government that is or shall be established, according to the word of God therein". Whether or not this partnership seemed undesirable to the Pocasset "brethren", the action of the Newport body on November 25 is significant. They then made an order concerning courts, prefacing it by what is undoubtedly a concession to the Portsmouth principle of English allegiance: "In the fourteenth yeare of the Reign of our Sovereign Lord King Charles, it is agreed that as natural subjects to our Prince, and subject to his Laws, all matters that concern the Peace shall be," etc. Two men, furthermore, were appointed to take steps about "obtaining a Patent of the Island from his Majestie". They styled themselves as "the Body Politicke in the Ile of Aquethnee", and at the same meeting issued further orders to the commissioners as to effecting a union with Portsmouth. Their efforts were now finally crowned with success. On March 12, 1640, decreed two months before as Election Day, the "brethren" came in. The first entry in the records on this day reads that William Hutchinson and the other leaders of the neighboring settlement, all mentioned by name, "presenting themselves, and desiring to be reunited to this body, are readily embraced by us". This preliminary proceeding having been settled, it was then agreed by "this Bodie united" that the chief magistrate of the island should be called governor, and the next deputy-governor, and the rest of the magistrates assistants. The governor and two assistants were to be chosen in one town, and the deputy and two other assistants in the other town. The election resulted in the choice of Coddington as governor and William Brenton as deputy-governor.¹ The union was complete, but the joint signers were not to be equal

on the north side of Marlborough street, fronting Duke street. Stephen Gould, however, in a letter to John Howland (MS. in R. I. H. S.) stated that this house was built about 1670, Coddington's first residence having been near Coddington's Cove.

¹For these and other Newport proceedings, see *R. I. Col Rec.* 1, 87-101.

partners in the contract. It was the Newport settlement that was henceforth to control both the initiative in legislation and the power in government.

Now that the two separated towns were consolidated, the injection of the Portsmouth idea of self-governing democracy with its right to political existence vested in royal authority, seems to have borne immediate fruit and rendered dormant any autocratic aspirations of the Coddington party. In March, 1641, one year from the date of union, it was recorded that "the Government which this Bodie Politick doth attend unto in this Island, and the Jurisdiction thereof, in favor of our Prince is a Democracie, or Popular Government; that is to say, it is in the power of the Body of freemen orderly assembled, or the major part of them, to make or constitute just laws, by which they will be regulated, and to depute from among themselves such ministers as shall see them faithfully executed between man and man".¹ The government thus existed as a democracy until the union of the towns into a colony in 1647. In May, 1644, a name was provided for this colony in the following words: "It is ordered by this Court, that the island commonly called Aquethneck, shall be henceforth called the Isle of Rhodes, or Rhode Island."²

¹*R. I. Col. Rec.* i, 112. This same assembly ordered that a seal—a sheaf of arrows with the motto *Amor vincet omnia*—should be provided for the "State". The Newport records exist through 1642, and for one meeting in 1643 and 1644 respectively. There are no records from 1645 until the meeting under the patent in May, 1647. The only record for this interval exists in the action of the Court of Trials. These records, which often throw important light on the history of the period, are as yet unprinted, Bartlett having printed the Colonial Records as far as 1679 from the Gyles copy of the *assembly records*.

²*R. I. Col. Rec.* i, 127. The origin of the name of Rhode Island has given rise to much discussion. That it was transferred from Block Island, compared by Verrazano to the Isle of Rhodes; that it came from the Dutch "Roode Eylandt," the reddish appearance of a certain island in the Bay having been noted by Block; and that the action of the Assembly in 1644 is sufficient reason for its origin—have all been advocated as theories. Dr. J. C. Kohl sums up all the theories (*Mag. Am. Hist.* ix, 81) and adds another—that the name was given to immortalize a Mr. Rhodes who might have lived there. He makes no preference, however, and assumes that all these theories are accountable for the origin. Most authorities favor the Dutch origin, instancing the fact that the name "Roode Eylandt" occurs in all the early Dutch maps; but they overlook the fact that the name does not occur on the *earliest* Dutch maps, and that the first to have the name was the Visscher map of 1650-56 (see Asher's *Biblog. Essay*, 2d suppl. p. 17). It is significant that this was nearly a decade after the island had been expressly named Isle of Rhodes, or Rhode Island. The first Dutch use of the name is in 1645, and then it is called Rhode Island and not Roode Eylandt (O'Callaghan's *Col. of Hist. Mss.* p. 98). In all subsequent references until the publication of the Visscher map, it is called by the English name or else "Island of Nahi-

The social and religious, as well as the political, framework of the Newport settlement was already in a far better condition than at Providence. Although a few of the many slanders of their Massachusetts neighbors may have been true of the earlier settlement, they could scarcely apply to Aquedneck. The Boston magistrates had a woeful habit of treating as heretics and atheists all those who differed from them in the non-essentials of religion; and the Antinomian exiles formed no exception to this rule. All their religious endeavors were but new broachings of heresy, and the smallest of petty crimes were taken as symptoms of sure disorder. But, as we shall see, the Aquedneck settlers were as watchful of their spiritual welfare as their former brethren of the Bay, and were certainly far more advanced in solving the problem of true religion.

At Portsmouth we have seen that one of their first acts was to provide for the location of a meeting-house. Although this place of worship was undoubtedly not then erected, it is certain that they held religious meetings, as Mr. Clarke is described by Winthrop as "a preacher to those of the island".¹ This same author, writing in May, 1639, says, "They also gathered a church in a very disordered way; for they took some excommunicated persons, and others who were members of the church at Boston and not dismissed".² This church,

cans" (as in the Hartgers map, 1651). These facts lead to the conclusion that the origin of the name Rhode Island, as decreed by the Newport Assembly in May, 1644, was not all due to the Dutch "Roodt Eylandt", which probably owed its origin to the English name. Roode Eylandt, moreover, is merely the Dutch equivalent for the English name, so far as pronunciation is concerned. It has already been noted (p. 9) that Block's "little reddish island" applied to an island in the western part of the bay, and not to Aquedneck. S. S. Rider, in a review of Kohl's theories (*Book Notes*, vii, 29, 37) clearly disposes of the Dutch etymology, and shows that all the historical facts point toward a Greek origin. Roger Williams in a letter of 1637 (*Narr. Club. Publ.* vi, 18) mentions "Aquedneck, called by us Rhode Island, at the Narragansett's mouth"; and in a letter of 1666 (*R. I. H. S. Publ.* viii, 152) he says, "Rhode Island, in the Greek language, is an Ile of Roses".

¹Winthrop, p. 271, under date of Sept., 1638. Callender's assumption (p. 63) that the meeting-house was built is merely an inference from the records, disproved by subsequent facts.

²Winthrop, p. 297. This Puritan opinion, as Arnold remarks, "will not be held to militate against the piety or prudence of our ancestors". That this church was not organized, but merely a religious gathering, is proved by the statement of Francis Hutchinson, in July, 1640, desiring from the Boston church dismissal "to God and the word of his grace, seeing he knew of no church there [at Portsmouth] to be dismissed to" (Ellis, *Anne Hutchinson*, p. 338), and also of Lechford, in 1641, who says: "At the other end of the island there is another towne called Portsmouth, but no Church: there is a meeting of some men, who there teach one another, and call it Prophecie." (*Plaine Dealing*, p. 41.)



GOVERNOR WILLIAM CODDINGTON. .

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which lost the best part of its strength upon the secession of its officers, was Congregational in its tenets. The Portsmouth settlers, says Callender, "were Puritans of the highest form". They had emigrated from Massachusetts through dissent as to the evidencing of justification, and were now, as then, at one with their former brethren on most points of doctrine.

These same Congregational ideas were doubtless also held by the early Newport seceders, as anabaptism had not yet made much headway on the Island. At Newport, however, there was more of a semblance of church organization than at Portsmouth. Coddington, Dyer, and Coggeshall, according to a Boston record of 1640, had "gathered themselves into church fellowship",¹ being officiated over by Dr. John Clarke and Robert Lenthall. In August, 1641, a contention over some points of doctrine created a schism, and although the records of the proceedings are somewhat misty, it would seem that one side, headed by Coddington, embraced views later taken up and held by them as Quakers, while the other side, led by Clarke, united to form a Baptist church in 1644.²

Enough has been said to show that the Aquedneck settlers were not neglectful of their spiritual welfare. That they were equally regardful of the religious faith of others who perhaps dissented from their mode of worship is manifested by their acts protecting the rights of conscience. In March, 1641, the Court ordered that "none be accounted a delinquent for Doctrine; provided, it be not directly repugnant to the Government or laws established", and at the following session in September it was enacted that "the law made concerning Libertie of Conscience in point of Doctrine is perpetuated". It is true that these laws, so contrary to the prevailing spirit of the age, permitted enthusiasts, visionaries, and fanatics to live and work and talk side by side with orthodox thinkers; but it was precisely the absence of such laws that induced these settlers to leave England and later Massachusetts. They had no intention of allowing posterity to belittle them for denying the free discussion of religious problems—the very principle for which they themselves had contended.

¹Keayne MS. in *Prince Soc. Publ.*, xxii, 401; also Winthrop, i, 329. The Keayne MS. reports the proceedings of a commission sent by the Boston church to reclaim their brethren on the Island. It is needless to say that the delegation received little satisfaction.

²Winthrop ii, 40, enumerates the causes of the schism; see also Arnold i, 151. Lechford's MS. draft of his *Plaine Dealing* (see Trumbull's edition, p. 94) should be consulted in this particular. For the traditional date of 1644 as the founding of the Baptist Church, see Comer's statement (quoted in Jackson, *Churches in R. I.* p. 95), and Callender's *Discourse*, p. 63.

In their provisions for the execution and recognition of the arm of the law, there exists fully enough evidence to vindicate the Aqued-neck colonists from any aspersions of their Massachusetts neighbors. If their Boston brethren asserted that they "denied all magistracy", they could well retort that they never called in the clergy to pass judgment on civil offenses. Scarcely a New England community, while in its infancy, provided so careful and liberal a framework for the execution of justice. We have seen how the Portsmouth settlers, at the time of the separation, organized a quarterly court, with an English jury trial. Those at Newport soon followed suit. Although their small number did not require at first any regular court organization, yet, in 1640, the second year of their settlement, we find established an orderly judicial system, with monthly courts, right of appeal to quarter sessions, and trial by jury.¹ The accessories of justice—the stocks and the whipping post—were provided for in each town, and at Newport a prison was soon built.² All these provisions for the vindication of violated laws and the absolute impartiality of their execution stand out somewhat in contrast to the situation at Providence, where the decision of such matters by arbitration often led to wrangling and disorder. It is through the observation and study of these provisions that we can fully believe John Clarke, when he thus describes the condition of the Island in 1652: "Notwithstanding the different understandings and consciences amongst us, without interruption we agree to maintain civil justice and judgment, neither are there such outrages committed amongst us as in other parts of the country are frequently seen."³

A study of the foregoing facts should offer convincing proof that the Massachusetts imputations of disregard of religion and law certainly were not true of Newport. A comparison with the condition of affairs existing at Providence will not be amiss at this point, and will also serve to show whether the aspersions of the Bay may not possibly have applied to the earlier Rhode Island colony. Although the actuating impulses of Roger Williams himself were religious, the chief end

¹*R. I. Col. Rec.* 1, 103, 106, 124.

²From the absence of many Newport records between 1643 and 1647 it is not shown when this prison was built, but there is a reference to its existence in 1649 (*R. I. Col. Rec.* 1, 219.) It is worthy of remark that these provisional laws were not a dead letter, and also that the distinction of rank offered no obstacle to their execution. In the same month that two miscreants were fined for drunkenness, Nicholas Easton, an assistant, was fined for attending public meeting without his weapon.

³*Ill. News from N. E.* (*4 Mass. H. S. Coll.* 11, 25.)

of the majority of his associates was to obtain as much land as possible in the new settlement. It was this aim, together with the presence of so many varying views on theology, that induced four-fifths of the community to take no part in the forming of what for many years was the only church in the town. Dissent in religion or else entire absence of it were for a long time obstacles to spiritual progress.

As for courts, there was a much more striking dissimilarity with the Newport settlement. Since judicial, as well as legislative, affairs were transacted in open town meeting, there was no court organization, no judge, no jury. After arbitration had failed, a suit was carried before the freemen as a body, where wrangling and lack of defined powers often left it to languish for several years. It was exactly this method of investing the town meeting with all the different powers of government that formed the great point of dissimilitude between the two settlements. A democracy, when possessing constitutional safeguards as to representation and division of authority, may be an excellent mode of government. But at Providence all possible contingencies were settled by the general body of freemen, and laws were inevitably the results of momentary suggestion. Such a method tended to aggravate rather than remedy existing disorders, and the government proved inefficient from sheer inability to enforce its own decisions. When we consider that to these faults of system were added the totally differing political views of the settlers, we can perhaps realize the justice of Sir Henry Vane's admonition sent to the Providence Colony in 1654 at the request of Roger Williams: "How is it there are such divisions amongst you? Such headiness, tumults, disorders and injustice? The noise echoes into the ears of all, as well friends as enemies, by every return of ships from those parts. . . . Are there no wise men amongst you? No public, self-denying spirits, that at least, upon the grounds of public safety, equity and prudence, can find out some way or means of union and reconciliation for you amongst yourselves, before you become a prey to common enemies?"¹

What were the reasons for the contrast in the condition of affairs at the two towns? The dangers incident to settlement, such as famine and Indian depredations, threatened both alike. The chief cause of contrast lay not in any exigencies due to geographical location, nor yet in the slight disparity of population that existed, but in the difference of motive that inspired the planters of each community. Roger Williams's first design was to christianize the Indians, and when circum-

¹R. I. Col. Rec. 1, 285, under date of Feb. 8, 1654. The Town of Providence answered the letter on Aug. 27.

stances induced him to alter this plan and lay the foundation of a town, he was compelled to make many political concessions to his associates, some of whom cared as little for his opinions as did the people of the Bay. The primary settlement, then, was hasty and unprepared. Those who arrived later to help in the process of formation and who subsequently constituted the bulk of the population, came for the most part for two reasons: either as exiles from the Bay for various offenses, or else hoping to better an impoverished condition by obtaining profitable grants of land. Neither class was the most desirable to aid in the building of a town.

At Aquedneck, on the other hand, the motive was first and solely to form a political and religious community outside of the jurisdiction of Massachusetts. With this end always in view, the emigrants decided upon a suitable location and carefully laid their plans of settlement. Although a separation in their number occurred about a year after the planting, a reconciliation soon took place and thenceforth they were at one on most points of policy. Whatever petty strifes did arise—whether over land or debt or some criminal case—were quickly settled in orderly constituted courts. Their government possessed enough power to enforce execution of its decrees, and if obnoxious persons threatened their existence, they did not appeal to Massachusetts for aid in solving the difficulty. It is true that their order, their power and their unity were greatly furthered by the fact that as a class their social rank was superior to that of their Providence brethren. Of the latter, Williams was the only one who possessed a liberal education or who had attained to any prominence in Massachusetts. But at Newport, Coddington, Clarke, Coggeshall, Jeffries, the Hutchinsons, were men of wealth, learning and social acquirements, all of whom had been highly esteemed at their coming to New England. It was undoubtedly due to the influence of these men that such early provision was made for public education.¹ But in spite of the contrast between the two settlements in their legislatures, their courts, their churches, and their schools, the counteracting influence of such dissimilar communities undoubtedly worked for good in the end.

¹On August 20, 1640, Robert Lenthal was called by the town to keep a "publick school", land being set aside for his use and for the school. This school has been claimed to be the first school supported by public taxation in America. Although schools were established in Ipswich, Boston, Charlestown, and Salem between 1633 and 1637, they were wholly or partially supported by private subscription. The school organized at Dorchester in 1639, being supported by a tax upon the proprietors, has a well established claim to priority. (See summary in Davis, *N. E. States*, iv, 1833, and W. A. Mowry's *The first Amer. public school in Education*, xxi, 535.)

While the Newport idea tended toward conservatism in public affairs, the Providence principle injected considerable vitality into political assemblies. If a "vigorous political life", as was once remarked, could save a colony from "mental atrophy", then Rhode Island's future was insured forever.

CHAPTER V.

SAMUEL GORTON AND THE FOUNDING OF WARWICK.

The third settlement instituted within the borders of the future Rhode Island was Warwick, founded by Samuel Gorton and his followers. Like the two preceding settlements, it was primarily formed through stress of circumstances—the disinclination of the Puritan magistrates to tolerate certain views far too advanced for their narrow minds. It was a community, moreover, whose earliest history centered closely about the person and fortune of a single man. This man, who, through his peculiar political and religious opinions and his pertinacity in stating them, has been assailed with much undeserved abuse, was Samuel Gorton.¹ The story of his life must be briefly told. Arriving at Boston in March, 1637, at the age of forty-four, he found that colony in the throes of the Antinomian controversy. He must have soon observed that this austere commonwealth was no place for liberal thinkers, for we find him two months later removed to Plymouth, where he "gave hopes of proving an useful instrument". But little by little, the narrative runs, "he discovered himself to be a proud and pestilential seducer, and deeply leavened with blasphemous and familistical opinions".² At last the Plymouth magistrates became

¹For the chief accounts of Gorton, see under *Biography* and *Warwick* in *Bibliography* at end of last volume. The most important original authorities are Winslow, *Hypocritie Unmasked*, 1646, and a MS. draft in Deane's *Gorton*; Gorton, *Simplicities Defence*, 1646 (reprinted by Staples as v. 2 of *R. I. H. S. Coll.*), and his *Letter to Morton*, 1669 (printed in Force's *Tracts*, iv, no. 7); and Winthrop, *Hist. of New England*. See also an enumeration of authorities by Justin Winsor in *Mem. Hist. of Boston*, i, 171.

²Morton, *N. E. Memorial*, p. 108. The accusations of familism made against Gorton by several early writers are, from all evidence now at hand, utterly without foundation. None of his writings show that he espoused the doctrines of the disciples of Nicholas. He was guilty of this charge only in so far as familism could be construed as a general term for heresy. (See A. C. Thomas, *Family of Love in Haverford College Studies*, no. 12.)