



He was the first American to advocate and activate complete freedom of conscience, dissociation of church and state, and genuine political democracy. ~ Cyclone Covey

- **"The most fascinating figure of America's formative seventeenth century," Roger Williams has now gained general acceptance as a symbol of a critical turning point in American thought and institutions. He was the first American to advocate and activate complete freedom of conscience, dissociation of church and state, and genuine political democracy.** From his first few weeks in America he openly raised the banner of "rigid Separatism." In one year in Salem he converted the town into a stronghold of radical Separatism and threw the entire Bay Colony into an uproar. Banished for his views, after being declared guilty of "a frontal assault on the foundations of the Bay system," he escaped just as he was to be deported to England.

He settled in Providence with thirteen other householders and in one year formed the first genuine democracy, as well as the first church-divorced and conscience-free community in modern history. **Williams felt that government is the natural way provided by God to cope with the corrupt nature of man. But since government could not be trusted to know which religion is true, he considered the best hope for true religion the protection of the freedom of all religion, along with non-religion, from the state.**

- Cyclone Covey in *The Gentle Radical: Roger Williams* (1966)

- **All civil states with their officers of justice in their respective constitutions and administrations are proved essentially civil, and therefore not judges, governors, or defenders of the spiritual or Christian state and worship.**
- I observe the great and wonderful mistake, both our own and our fathers, as to the civil powers of this world, acting in spiritual matters. **I have read ... the last will and testament of the Lord Jesus over many times, and yet I cannot find by one tittle of that testament that if He had been pleased to have accepted of a temporal crown and government that ever He would have put forth the least finger of temporal or civil power in the matters of His spiritual affairs and Kingdom.**  
Hence must it lamentably be against the testimony of Christ Jesus for the civil state to impose upon the souls of the people a religion, a worship, a ministry, oaths (in religious and civil affairs), tithes, times, days, marryings, and buryings in holy ground...
- The civil state is bound before God to take off that bond and yoke of soul oppression, and to proclaim free and impartial liberty to all the people of the three nations to choose and maintain what worship and ministry their souls and consciences are persuaded of; which act, as it will prove an act of mercy and righteousness to the enslaved nations, so is it of a binding force to engage the whole and every interest and conscience to preserve the common freedom and peace; however, an act most suiting with the piety and Christianity of the Holy Testament of Christ Jesus.