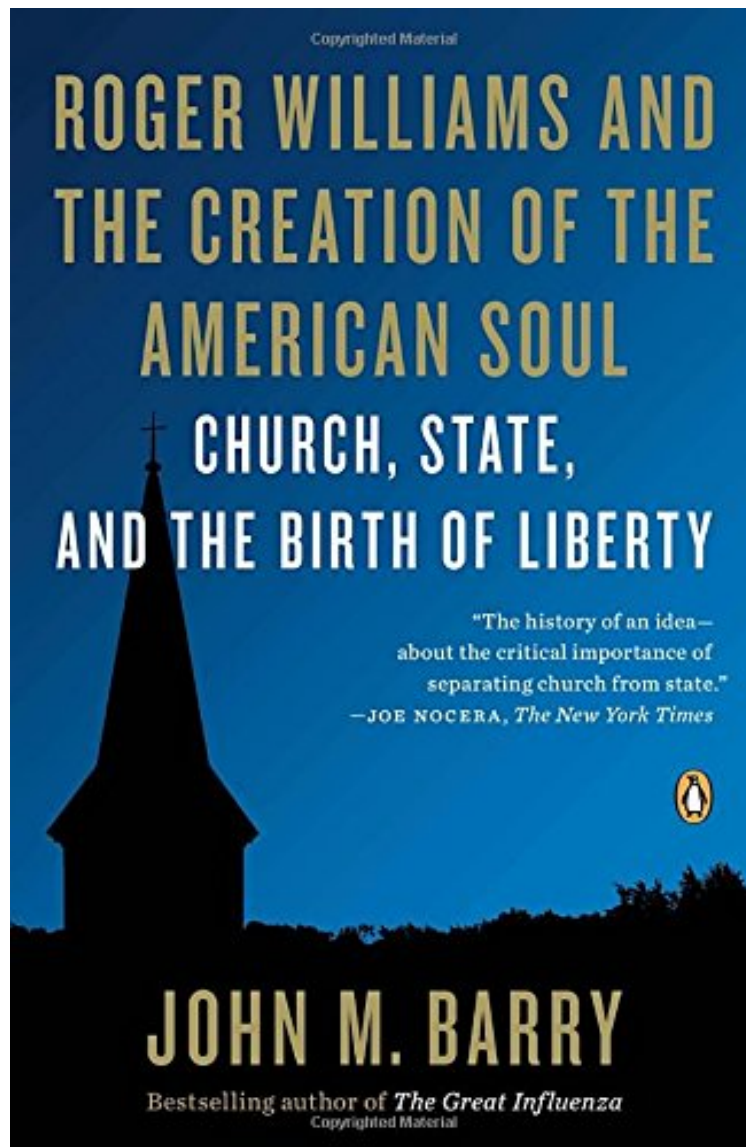


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## Roger Williams and the Creation of the American Soul: Church, State, and the Birth of Liberty

John M. Barry

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**John M. Barry : Roger Williams and the Creation of the American Soul: Church, State, and the Birth of Liberty** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Roger Williams and the Creation of the American Soul: Church, State, and the Birth of Liberty:

34 of 35 people found the following review helpful. Church and State: 2012 By Richard Scott Review of Barry Roger Williams and the American soul I ordered Barry's book immediately after reading the review by Chaplin a month ago (Jan 1). I read it to remind me of my past and to refresh my knowledge of Williams. I too graduated from Brown a few years before Barry and enjoyed my study with Hedges, McLaughlin and Bridenbaugh. I spent a considerable time reviewing the early social and economic history of seventeenth century Rhode Island. My personal family history includes the fact my ancestor left the Bay colony for Providence in 1637, owned the adjoining land to Williams then, and Mrs Scott was influential in convincing Williams of the need for adult or believers baptism. I found Barry's discussion of Chaplin's review a bit contentious. That Barry discusses at length the qualities of Williams which are essential in how his ideas were used in the ensuing centuries, the book is more about how he developed these ideas. Barry has worked diligently to see how the ideas matured over time through a careful and chronological review of the maturing ideas. It would take a host of intellectual and religious historians to review how Williams ideas were pulled from his tracts and letters and used over the last two centuries. We all read history from our own point of view. So, in reading this the obvious parallels between theocracies, oligarchies, and ethnic killings are clear. Would it not be good were all people to attempt to follow soul liberty. The early history of Williams relations with Coke and Bacon, his presence as a youth in the Star Chamber and his closeness with those puritans who would later oust him from Massachusetts is essential to understand his later course. The book covers the middle years of Williams thoroughly. This required great effort. Reading the Winthrop papers and the Williams letters and tracts is difficult. Even those included here are hard to read. It would have been easier had he followed Perry Miller in his biography of Williams of 1953 in which the texts were translated into more readable English for those of us today. I did purchase the "Key into the Language of America" in its facsimile edition and remember again now how hard it is to read. Perry Miller has always been a major source in understanding the puritan Calvinist tradition as the theology developed. Barry recognizes the debt to Edmund Morgan who is one of the more important historians of the period. His book, "Roger Williams the Church and the State" from 1967 and reprinted in 2006 covers most of the concepts in detail. The difference is its size: only 142 pages versus 395 and more importantly organization. Barry works diligently to help see subtle changes in thought through time and approaches the biography in a chronological order. The last period of Williams life is more briefly reviewed than the early . Perhaps details of the meetings movements and life in the period when he returned alone to work with Cromwell and Milton is not discoverable. Nor is it clear to me why Charles II supported Williams, given his treatment of Vane. By the time of his return to Providence, the land was in use for farming, as Bridenbaugh wrote "Fat Mutton" and times were changed socially. The long legacy of Williams was the preservation of soul liberty certainly here, but it would appear also in England. I heartily recommend this to all. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. In the beginning ... By QQ The book does a wonderful job clarifying the early history of religion in New England, especially as it relates to what was going on in England, which was a lot (English Civil War, etc). The Puritans clearly have elements of the Taliban in them. They wanted to run their "plantation" as a test of theocracy -- and they sometimes were brutal in enforcing discipline. Guess what? For many people, it didn't work. Williams, highly educated and highly intelligent, chafed under the system. Yes, the Puritans came here for religious freedom. But they wouldn't give it to anyone who questioned the Bible as they interpreted it. Have you noticed that this sort of thing is constantly playing out in America and the world? (Warning: One tires of reading letters and books as written before there was discipline/conformity in spelling. And, man, there were a lot of people being drawn and quartered in Merrye Olde England.) 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Separation of Church and State - how and why it happened in America By Elizabeth KGAWD help me (no pun intended) this was a complicated and detailed book! I learned so much but dang- should have been in two volumes, perhaps "Roger Williams: American Religion Roots in England. and "Roger Williams: American Religion in the Early Colonial Times." This book tells why virtually all the new colonists rejected the English Church that evolved from the TUDORS, and how the British King James and his descendants wanted to be sacred beings, immune to public opinion and centuries of English Common Law. You discover why the Puritans were ...well ... Puritans, and why the Pilgrims were a different people. However, the desire to establish "Jerusalem on the Hill" in America led to frightening consequences that today are way too 'un American' for our modern thinking and counter to the Declaration of Independence, and the Bill of Rights, to be written a hundred years later. A better system of the Early American Democratic Republic evolved in rebellion to the early attempt at theocracy that ALMOST won. And as an aside you have the thinking leading up to the Salem Witch Trial Era (which is later than the time frame of the book) much better explained. America had a rougher start than we have been taught But allow a solid 20 to 40 hours to get through it.

A revelatory look at the separation of church and state in America from the New York Times bestselling author of The Great Influenza For four hundred years, Americans have fought over the proper relationships between church and state and between a free individual and the state. This is the story of the first battle in that war of ideas, a battle that led to the writing of the First Amendment and that continues to define the issue of the separation of church and state today. It began with religious persecution and ended in revolution, and along the way it defined the nature of America and of individual liberty. Acclaimed historian John M. Barry explores the development of these fundamental ideas through

the story of Roger Williams, who was the first to link religious freedom to individual liberty, and who created in America the first government and society on earth informed by those beliefs. This book is essential to understanding the continuing debate over the role of religion and political power in modern life.

From Booklist\*Starred \* Barry traces American separation of church and state back to earliest colonial days, when John Winthrop (1588-1649), first governor of Massachusetts Bay, and Roger Williams (1603-1683), founder of Rhode Island, argued over whether government should enforce religious conformity, a dispute that eventuated in besides such more immediately consequential things as banishment (and worse) for dissenters from colonial theocracies Williams' written formulation of the concept Jefferson boiled down to wall of separation between church and state. Barry likes to get to the roots of his subjects, so he delves farther back about Williams, in particular, to the inspiration he took from his patron Edward Coke, England's greatest jurist, and Coke's bitter rival in government, Sir Francis Bacon. From Coke, Williams garnered faith in the law and due process as well as, through Coke's battles with James I and Charles I, the importance of maintaining the rights of Englishmen (Coke's concept) against divine-right regimes, whether under king or, as in Massachusetts Bay, council. From Bacon, Williams imbibed a penchant for real-world (scientific) testing of beliefs (hypotheses) that led him to launch Rhode Island. Winthrop and Williams were on cordial terms almost to the former's death, which is just one fascinating strand in the swath of history Barry brings to urgent life with the same focused intelligence that distinguished his *The Great Influenza* (2004). --Ray Olson "A gifted author." *The New York Times Book Review* "John Barry's *Roger Williams and the Creation of the American Soul* establishes Williams as a brave thinker and also a deft political actor . . . Mr. Barry puts Williams squarely among our great political thinkers, crediting him with bringing liberal democracy to the American colonies." *The Wall Street Journal* "Barry now turns his meticulous hand to the origins of two fundamental and perpetual American fixations: the conflict between church and state and that between the power of the state and the conscience of the citizen. . . . Present-day implications of an elemental clash of ideas may hover over every page, yet the vital drama of Barry's story emblazons two competing visions of American destiny: John Winthrop's city on a hill vs. Williams's community of conscience. As Barry shows well and often prophetically, the national soul formed out of that drama remains a troubled, and occasionally tortured, one." *The Washington Post* "To call it a biography sells it short. What it is, really, is the history of an idea about the critical importance of separating church from state. So revolutionary was this idea that it caused Williams to be banished from Massachusetts. . . . Williams created the first place in the Western world where people could believe in any God they wished or no God at all without fear of retribution." Joe Nocera, *The New York Times* "In *Roger Williams and the Creation of the American Soul*, New York Times bestselling author John M. Barry tells the story with passion and an eye for fine detail. . . . If the story were not compelling enough, Barry's dramatic first chapter of conflict, confrontation and banishment into the wilderness is worth the price of admission alone. . . . As Barry notes, the dispute 'opened a fissure in America, a fault line which would rive America all the way to the present.' John Barry deserves our thanks for illuminating this critical and timely chapter of American history." *The Seattle Times* "There's a recurring theme among the religiously political/politically religious that the United States was founded as a Christian nation and that in this modern era we have somehow strayed from God and from our roots. John M. Barry's new book *Roger Williams and the Creation of the American Soul: Church, State, and the Birth of Liberty* is a counterargument and it is a significant reminder of whence, exactly, this little experiment in democracy of ours came . . . Absorbing." *Los Angeles Times* "This biography should be read with today's headlines in mind . . . Thoroughly researched and accessibly written . . . This is an important book because it brings back an important founding point in the development of the American character. But it also is a timely reminder that the issues that drove Williams into exile in Rhode Island are very much alive and just as perilous today." *The Washington Times* "Fascinating... a swath of history Barry brings to urgent life with the same focused intelligence which distinguished *The Great Influenza*." Booklist "A commanding history...masterly." *Library Journal* About the Author John M. Barry is the author of the New York Times bestselling *The Great Influenza* and the prizewinning history *Rising Tide: The Great Mississippi Flood of 1927 and How It Changed America*. He divides his time between New Orleans, Louisiana, and Washington, D.C.