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#### IV. THE EARLY VIRGINIA PURITANS:—FOUNDERS OF AMERICAN PRESBYTERIANISM.

The busy Presbyterian has been too indifferent to the history of his church. More concerned with principles and having to face ever impending crises, he has not exercised himself enough about the gathering and presenting of facts for present vindication and future information. Partisan statements and public opinion have gone unchallenged. If care had been taken to examine the facts, the mists of not a few popular fancies would have been dissipated and the real form of truth brought into view, to disturb the over-confident calm of some. Too often we have hurried through the records of the past without taking care to separate the doubled leaves or to read the foot-notes. For this reason we have failed to see much that Presbyterians have been and have done.

The Presbyterian faith and form exist in many lands where the name is not popularly adopted. Holland, France, Switzerland, Germany and other countries have their Presbyterians in principle and practice. And if this be true of other countries to-day, it is just as true of other ages. In many periods of the Christian era the principles and forms of what is known as Presbyterianism have exercised beneficent and extensive influence. The presence of Huguenot and Waldensian elements in our own Church is clear evidence of community of interest and concord of faith in all ages.

This applies particularly to that important factor in English life and history, commonly called "Puritanism." There has never been a time in the history of the British Isles, when the principles and customs of apostolic Christianity were not stoutly maintained. The great truths, that found emphasis and propagation on the Continent through the Reformation, were always in evidence in some part of the

islands across the Channel. The Gospel was first carried to the Britons by the Roman soldiers, who were sent to garrison the country, and when the trials and dangers of Rome began to multiply these legions were withdrawn to strengthen and defend the heart of the Empire. Thus they left the Christianity of the Bible, not yet corrupted by the apostacies and innovations of the South. Patrick, Columba and others like-minded continued the aggressive work of a church, comparatively pure. Even the acceptance of Rome's religious supremacy by the Saxon kings did not eradicate the freedom and simplicity of the old faith; and almost down to the eve of the Reformation the Scottish Church was not submissive to Rome.

John Wyclif, the "Morning Star of the Reformation," espoused mightily and enthusiastically the great truths, peculiar to Presbyterianism in all ages. Through him the English people received the Bible in their own language. He was the founder of the Lollards, who kept the fires of pure faith and true piety alive, until they blazed out into the great Reformation. Wyclif taught that the Bible, not church traditions and papal bulls, is the rule of faith and life; that only two Church offices are necessary to a Scriptural Church: the elders, or bishops, and the deacons; that transubstantiation is false; that itinerant preachers, called "Bible-men," should be instructed and sent out to teach and evangelize, and that the ceremonies and inventions of the papacy are impious. Fierce persecution thinned and scattered the Lollards, but their cherished principles were perpetuated in devoted hearts and pious homes, which finally turned the tide of English life to the Reformation.

The Puritans, so-called first in the reign of Elizabeth, were in part the spiritual heirs of the Lollards, and in part the adherents of the Continental reformers, especially the Dutch and Genevan, who like the Lollards were thoroughly Presbyterian. Puritan and Presbyterian were practically the same. Doctor Wm. Hill (*American Presbyterianism*, pg. 2 and 3) says, that, with reference to their opposition to

papacy and prelacy and their advocacy of a government by elders, they were called Presbyterian ; with reference to their hostility to vestments and the forms and ceremonies of the Anglican Church, they were called Puritan. The name, Precisian, was also given them because of their high ideas of morality. The evidence is convincing that the Puritans were more closely allied to the Presbyterian Church than to any other, if indeed we may not consider them thorough-going Presbyterians. The following are some of the facts in evidence :

(1) Their leaders went for instruction, and times of peril for shelter, to the Presbyterians of the Continent. Among these notable refugees were Hooper, who refused to be consecrated bishop in episcopal vestments, and suffered martyrdom under "Bloody Mary," and Cartwright, the theologian of Cambridge and organizer of Presbytery in England.

(2) On the other hand many of the Dutch and Swiss leaders came to England to be teachers and advisers of the Puritans, rapidly rising to prominence. Bucer and A. Lasco were two of these.

(3) John Knox was a minister of the Church of England during the reign of Edward VI. Drysdale (*Presbyterians in England*, pg. 62) says that being "released from the French galleys by the King and council, he devoted five of his best years, 1549-1552, to their service in England." He was a royal chaplain and was offered a bishopric. We know what kind of a Puritan Knox was.

(4) The religious elements in the struggle between Charles and Parliament were divided between three parties : Romish, Independent and Presbyterian. The last was strongest of the three. In the Westminster Assembly, selected and called by this parliament, the majority were Presbyterians ; and representatives of the Scotch Church were welcomed to their sittings. The Presbyterian system formulated by this notable gathering, and subscribed by millions of Presbyterians to-day, must have been the expression of an exceedingly strong and numerous body.



(5) After the death of Charles I petitions from many of the eastern counties of England for the organization of Presbyteries were presented to parliament, and in some counties the organizations were really effected. Now Puritanism was the strongest factor in that section and in London, this strength being explained, in part at least, by the great number of refugees from Holland and France, who settled there and were principally Presbyterian.

(6) The questions in dispute between the High Church party and the Puritans were precisely those that distinguish between Presbyterianism and Prelacy.

Among the Puritans themselves there were two parties. The first and smaller party was composed of the Separatists, or Independents, who would not conform in the least degree to the moderate Anglican Church, many finding refuge on the Continent, whence the Pilgrims sailed for Plymouth. Knox, the great reformers of the Continent, and the leading Puritans themselves, disapproved of this separation, and expressed their disapproval in strong terms. The larger and more influential body of Puritans preferred to remain in the national church, cherishing with good reason the hope of more thorough reformation, enjoying a measure of liberty and honor. They were bound to the existing order by political, social and material interests; and Presbyterians have always been conservative and loyal. In this way they furnished to the Anglican Church its low, Calvinistic and evangelical element, which has been its brain, bone and muscle. The principles of those stalwart Puritans, Hooper, Ridley and Cartwright, are too thoroughly Presbyterian to admit any doubt of their adherence to that time-honored faith. At one time federation between the Presbyterian bodies of the Continent and the Church of England was contemplated, Parker, Archbishop of Canterbury, agreeing to the plan of union, on condition that his church should retain its prelatic claims, notwithstanding as being received "from Pope Gregory of Rome, but from Joseph of Arimathea." (Dyrcdale, *History of Presbyterians in Eng-*

*land*, p. 97) We have always suspected just what this eminent Anglican discloses, that their beloved claim of Apostolic Succession is as visionary as the connection of Britain with Joseph of Arimathea.

Admitting then, as we must, the existence of a strong and thorough Presbyterian party in England at the time of the early settlements in Virginia, we should like to know what part it had in the origin and character of the new colony. Presbyterians always make their influence felt, and we should be surprised to find that they had nothing to do with one of the most important enterprises of that age. What are the facts? Have they all been made known? Let us see. Careful reading of the history of the seventeenth century leads to the conviction that the Puritans, or English Presbyterians, were profoundly interested in the new colony and exercised decided influence on it. This statement is based upon the following proofs:

1. The original purpose in the colonization of North America was the formation of a Protestant power, which would cripple Spain by cutting off the sources of her wealth. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries almost unceasing war was waged between Catholic and Protestant nations, and Spain, the most powerful nation of Europe, had pledged her strength to the Catholic cause. She had poured out five thousand millions of her treasure in the effort to crush Protestantism. The hope of European peace was the overthrow of Spain, and Protestant nations determined to bring this about by stopping the inflow of her gold and silver from America. This purpose was carried out in the development of the Dutch and English navies, and the colonization of North America. The effort of that noble Huguenot, Coligny, to plant a Protestant colony in Florida was ruined by the Spaniards, who attacked and utterly destroyed the first colony on St. John's River. Sir Walter Raleigh was in sympathy with Coligny's idea, and adopted his plan (Fiske, *Old Virginia*, p. 30); but his first attempt also was frustrated by the war between Spain and England,

and the expedition of the Spanish Armada. The little Roanoke Island colony, cut off from its friends at home, was lost beyond recovery, when the relief expedition arrived. But early in the reign of James I a permanent settlement was effected in Virginia, which grew rapidly into a strong colony, the first-fruits of a great nation, which in these days of ours has indeed broken all the strength of Spain. What better people could be found for such a colony than the English Presbyterians, the readiest to oppose Rome and the last to surrender to or compromise with her !

2. Virginia was not a crown colony in the beginning, but was granted to a chartered company, known as the "Virginia Company of London," which had complete control and through which the colony was formed. Many of the members of this company, and its officers for several years, were in sympathy with the Puritan party. The Earl of Southampton, for four years treasurer of the company, whose name is borne to-day by a Virginia county, was of Puritan inclination. Sir Edwin Sandys, also treasurer at one time and controlling spirit of the company during most of its existence, was of the same party. He was the son of Dr. Sandys, Archbishop of York, who was a refugee on the Continent during the reign of "Bloody Mary," and returning to England, became prominent in the Church of England at a time when Puritans were influential in it. That he never lost his Puritan convictions is evident from his own words while Bishop of Worcester: "Disputes are now on foot concerning the Popish vestments, whether they should be used or not ; but God will put an end to these things." (*Stowell's History of the Puritans*, p. 116.) His son, Sir Edwin, was a pious man, opposed the High-Church and autocratic tendencies of the Stuarts, and during his administration as treasurer, inaugurated representative government in the colony. His brother, George, went to the colony in 1621 as its treasurer. The majority of the Virginia Company were of the same mind as Sandys, and from 1620 until the revoking of their charter they were in open con-

flict with the king. Drysdale, in his *Presbyterians in England*, says: "On account of these tendencies in the Virginia Company its charter was revoked by King James in 1624." It could not but be expected that a company with such decided Puritan tendencies, would favor their own faith in their colony. And we shall see that they did.

3. The reigns of James and of Charles, until the meeting of the Long Parliament, were perilous days for non-conformists. The true Protestants of England were sorely disappointed by Elizabeth's attitude toward them. Instead of the spirituality and liberality of Edward VI., she soon developed Romish ideas and tyrannical opposition to freedom of faith. James, notwithstanding his early years in Scotland, brought them no relief. Quickly abandoning his Presbyterian professions and espousing high-churchism, he threw open the doors to Rome. Taking the prelatical yoke upon himself, he gave order that the whole kingdom should bear it with him. In a conference held at Hampton Court in 1604, which has been characteristically described by Carlyle, the Puritans, or Presbyterians presented to the King the Milienary Petition, so-called because signed by a thousand ministers. It contained four demands: a correct translation of the Bible: the use of a seventh part of "lay tithes" for the support of ministers in dark regions, which had none; the organization of Presbyteries by districts; and that "pious preachers might not be cast out of their parishes on account of genuflections, white surplices, and such like, but allowed some Christian liberty in external things." Of the demands of this noble petition only the first was granted, by which the Presbyterians secured for the English-speaking peoples that glorious possession, the Authorized Version of the Bible. The others were denied with this brutal threat: "I shall make them conform themselves, or I shall harry them out of this land." (Stowell's *Puritans*, p. 227-229). This he quickly made good by proclamation enforcing conformity, and on account of the resulting persecution multitudes fled from the kingdom. Stowell, p. 232,



quoting Rayn, goes on to say: "For that reason great numbers of these people resolved to go and settle in Virginia. Accordingly some departed for that country; but the Archbishop (Bancroft) seeing many more ready to take the same voyage, obtained a proclamation, enjoining them not to go without the King's license. The Court was apprehensive this sect would become in the end too numerous and powerful in America." This occurred just at the beginning of the Virginia Colony. The same reasons for the escape of Presbyterians and other dissenters existed for more than thirty years after this, while at the same time James and Charles made conditions at home too much to the liking and comfort of churchmen for them to leave and face the hardships of the new world.

4. The same causes that sent the Puritans to New England after the landing of the Plymouth colony, existed before that time. Whither, then, did the persecuted flee for refuge before 1620? Much that is false has been said about the social and religious differences between Virginia and New England in the early years of their settlement. The terms "Cavalier" and "Puritan" have been generally misunderstood and misapplied. Dr. William Hill, John Fiske and others have conclusively disproved the existence of such sharp distinction. Many Puritans of both Virginia and New England represented families of the highest standing in England; and Presbyterianism, which claimed an exceedingly strong following among English Protestants, was a prominent factor in New England's religious life. The formation of the Virginia and New England companies was effected under similar conditions. The relations between the two colonies were generally cordial, and comparative intimacy was maintained by the coming and going of colonists and by frequent intermarriages. The need of such a refuge as New England offered existed for years before the first settlement there, and we cannot avoid the conclusion that from 1607 to 1620 the "harried" Puritans must have sought greater liberty in Virginia. The periods of

most rapid colonization correspond to the times of severest persecution in the old country. While decrees and orders for conformity were numerous in England, none was issued in Virginia until 1531, and none was enforced until 1642. Surely these facts mean something.

6. The section of England, from which the majority of the early colonists came, is evidence of the presence of many Puritans among them. In the latter half of the sixteenth century, and in the early years of the seventeenth, there was constant coming and going of persecuted Christians between England and the Continent. The hunted Huguenots, and the Netherlanders, suffering under the tyranny of Charles and Philip, fled to England; while the Scotch and English, oppressed by the conformity laws of Mary, Elizabeth and James, sought safety and freedom on the Continent. This passing and sojourning made London and the East and South of England strong dissenting communities. The Southeast especially was near to and in close touch with the Netherlands; and there the French and Dutch found homes and opportunity to live and propagate their faith. There were, during this period, foreign Protestant congregations in London on the Genevan plan. Even the University of Cambridge, located in this section, was in sympathy with the Puritans. Many foreign Protestants taught in its halls; Calvin and his followers were the popular models for Cambridge professors and students, and Cartwright, the great Presbyterian, was long professor of theology there. The Presbyterian majority in Parliament was sent largely from this same section, and the various counties sent up to the Long Parliament petitions for the organization of a Presbytery in each.

It was from this part of England that the great majority of the early Virginia settlers came, as the "Original Lists," of these colonists, published by John Camden Hotten, conclusively show. The local names in Virginia still testify to the origin of her first settlers: Norfolk, Suffolk, Southampton, Isle of Wight, Surry, Essex, New Kent, Sussex,

Middlesex, Portsmouth, all remind us of Eastern and Southern England.

6. We know that many of the prominent persons in old Virginia were staunch Puritans. Their influence in the colony and the positions of responsibility to which they were chosen, indicate a large following among their fellow-colonists. The names and record of some of these worthies will bear repetition. These men, who laid so well the foundations of our country, were not the refuse of the earth, but in many cases were the best that old England had to give.

It has already been shown that the Sandys family was interested in the colony, and that Sir Edwin was with the Puritan party. Two other members of the same family were among the colonists: George, for years an official of the colony and a man of extensive literary attainments, and "Mr. David Sandys," supposed to have been another brother, who was a minister and was enrolled in the muster of Capt. Samuel Matthews, a Puritan leader in Virginia. The company that "Mr. Sandys" kept, as well as his kinship, shows us what his religious convictions were.

Several of the early governors of Virginia were men of well-known Puritan views, and what we know of the associations and characteristics of some others causes a strong presumption that they were of the same mind. All of these were good men and true, serving well their own age, and leaving honored names as a heritage to their country and their posterity. Governor Edward Digges, who sought to introduce silk-culture into Virginia, who also brought the quarrel between Virginia and Maryland to a happy end, was probably a Puritan, having been governor during the supremacy of Cromwell, and having as associates such men as Bennett and Matthews. Sir Francis Wyatt became governor in 1621. He was elected by the company in opposition to Samuel Arzall, a tool of the king. Wyatt's wife was the daughter of Lord Samuel Sandys and the niece of Sir Edwin. He was twice governor, being appointed again in 1639.

Sir Thomas Dale and Sir George Yeardley, who were appointed governors in the early years of the colony, were two of the ablest and best men of early Virginia. Dale was a soldier, having learned his profession in the Netherlands. When he came to Virginia in 1611, he brought with him Alexander Whitaker, the Puritan and missionary. Dale's administration was one of severe discipline, but also of rigid morality, of thorough organization and of great progress for the colony. Whitaker, in a letter to a cousin, wrote thus of him: "Sir Thomas Dale, with whom I am, is a man of great knowledge in divinity and of good conscience. Every Saturday night I exercise in Sir Thomas Dale's house." Yeardley went out to the colony so early as 1609. He was able, industrious and thrifty, and became deputy-governor under Dale. After Dale's departure he was made governor and knighted. During his administration, in 1619, representative government was inaugurated, and laws were enacted against drunkenness and "excessive apparall." He was elected again in 1625, but died soon after. In 1616 Whitaker was the minister of the parish in which he lived. Neill, in his "Virginia Company of London," p. 142, says of Governor Yeardley: "His wife's name was Temperance, and it is supposed his sympathies were with the Puritan party. He died lamented, in November, 1627, and left two sons. Both were on the Puritan side during the civil war."

Capt. Samuel Matthews came to Virginia in 1622. He was well-connected in London, and soon became the wealthiest man, and one of the most influential, in the colony. He received grants of land in different counties, but had his home in Warwick county, which was described by a visitor of those days as the ideal Virgiuia home. He won distinction in the wars against the Indians, and also served in the Colonial Council for many years. He was the third governor to serve under the Commonwealth, being elected in 1656 to succeed Diggs, and continuing in office until his death. Capt. Matthews was one of the indignant and resolute councillors who in 1635 forcibly deposed Governor



Harvey, the tool of King Charles, for the perversion of the wealth and rights of the colony, and sent him to London to give account of his evil deeds. He was not only a staunch Puritan, but evidently an earnest Christian, for in Hatten's List of Virginia Settlers appears the name of "Mr. David Sandys, Minister," on the muster of Capt. Matthews' plantation, and an inmate of his home. Fiske calls him "that brave gentleman and decorous Puritan"; while a writer of 1648 describes him as "worthy Captain Matthews, a most deserving Commonwealth man." He was influential in Virginia, not only during Cromwell's ascendancy, but in all the nearly fifty years of his life there. He was the friend and helper of Richard Bennett and William Claiborne, of whom we shall now hear.

One of the noblest and most useful men in Old Virginia was General Richard Bennett, of Nansemond, the first governor under the Commonwealth. He also was of a wealthy and influential London family. The large plantation of his uncle, Edward Bennett, was in Isle of Wight county. Rev. William Bennett, the first minister of the Puritan settlement, and Robert Bennett were of the same family. His valor and wisdom in the wars with the Indians, who from time to time assailed the settlements south of the James, won for him honor and preferment. He held a prominent place in the colony for half a century, as soldier, statesman, planter and Christian. He was successively burgess, councillor and governor. His ample plantation was in Nansemond county on the river bearing that name. The many Puritans, who came to Virginia, settled principally south of the James River in Isle of Wight, Nansemond and Norfolk counties. Bennett was a leader of these, and in 1641, after Nansemond had been divided into three parishes, he united with others in a petition, which was borne to the New England churches by Philip Bennett, for three dissenting ministers. In 1649 he was driven to Maryland by Governor Berkeley's persecutions in order to enforce conformity to the Church of England. But returning in 1651 with Wil-

liam Claiborne, they having been appointed Parliament's Commissioners to remove Berkeley, he was elected governor. It is unfortunate that we know so little of the life of this good and brave man; for nearly all of the Nansemond records have been destroyed.

In the oldest parish-book of Lower Nansemond Parish, now existing, there is an extract from his will, copied in 1749, by which he bequeathed three hundred acres to the parish, the rental of which should be used for the care of the poor. The name of this brave and useful elder deserves an honored place in the annals of the Presbyterian Church, as also in the esteem of his countrymen. Bennett's piety and fidelity are still bearing fruit in the active Presbyterianism of Eastern Virginia, which he, more than any man of his time, helped to pass through the dark days of persecution. In 1675, full of honor and years, he fell asleep. Nine years later Francis Makemie, not the founder but the organizer of the Presbyterian Church in America, was preaching to the faithful Presbyterians of Virginia, the "Old Guard," which had survived the battles and hardships of more than half a century.

William Claiborne, another Puritan, came over about 1621 as Surveyor of the Colony. We hear of him in 1630 as Secretary, at which time he was sent to England to represent the colony in matters of importance. The tyrannical Harvey thrust him out of his office in 1635, but he was at once restored, when the colony passed under the authority of Parliament. Claiborne's chief distinction was the persistent energy with which he maintained the claims of Virginia to the northern part of the Chesapeake Bay and its shores, which he believed, and with much reason, the Stuart Kings had dishonestly signed away to the Baltimores. Claiborne established lucrative fur stations in that region and planted a settlement on Kent Island. Naturally collisions resulted between his men and the followers of Lord Baltimore, in one of which he was defeated, captured, and imprisoned for a time. Because of this, Bishop Hawkes was pleased to write

of him as a renegade convict, which is an insult without justification, an unwarranted calumny on one whose known record is his best defence. Failing to win Maryland for Virginia, he was nevertheless liberally indemnified for his own losses by large tracts of land in Virginia, and died in 1676 at the good age of eighty-nine. To the last he was a non-conformist, being kindly disposed toward the Quakers in his old age.

Time and space permit a sketch of just one more interesting character from the goodly list of original Virginia Presbyterians. The name of Daniel Gookin, Junior, is associated with both Virginia and New England. The elder Gookin was a native of Kent, but moved to the neighborhood of Cork, Ireland, whence he came in 1621, with eighty colonists and a thorough equipment, to Virginia and settled in the vicinity of Newport News. He was a man of large estate, and shortly after the Indian massacre of 1622 returned to the old country, and so far as we know never made Virginia his home. His large interests there were left in the care of his son, Daniel. About 1640 Captain John Gookin, probably another son, married the widow of Adam Thoroughgood, one of the most influential men of Lower Norfolk County. The younger Daniel received in 1637 a grant of twenty-five hundred acres on Nausemand River, to which he soon removed ; and in 1642 he was president of the court of Upper Norfolk County. The Gookins' could not have been Catholics, as they would not have been permitted to settle in Virginia ; nor were they Scotch-Irish, as Dr. William Hill, p. 65, has supposed ; but English Presbyterians, who took advantage of the "Ulster Plantation" to settle in Ireland. This is evident from their origin, the time of emigration to Ireland, and their subsequent history. When William Tompson, the New England minister, labored so earnestly in Virginia in 1642 Daniel Gookin, Junior, was one of the many converts, and returned with the minister to New England, when Governor Berkeley banished him. He rose to such prominence in his new home, that Cotton Mather wrote of him in his memoir of Tompson :

“A constellation of great converts there  
Shone round him, and his heavenly glory wear,  
Gookin was one of them, by Tompson’s pains,  
Christ and New England a dear Gookin gains.”

In all probability the many colonists and laborers, who came with the Gookins’, were of the same faith. They were known as the Irish Colony, and were so serviceable that the Virginia officials wrote high praise of them, and wished for the coming of more.

These are not all of the Puritan worthies of Old Virginia, but time would fail to tell of them all. It is by no means claimed that Virginia was altogether a Puritan colony ; but it is maintained that the Puritan element was a larger and more influential body than historians have admitted or the general public has supposed ; and that their beneficial influence has continued to this day.

7. Another proof of this is found in the early Virginia ministers, some of whom were unmistakeably Puritan. It is to be regretted that so little is known of them, often nothing more than the name. Mention has been made already of David Sandys, minister of the Mathews plantation ; and of William Bennett, first minister of the Puritan community south of the James River, who came over in 1621, but died two years later. He was a near relative of Edward and Richard Bennett. His successor in the Isle of Wight congregation was Henry Jacob, who took refuge in Holland in 1593. Returning to England in 1616 he became pastor of the first Congregational church in London ; but eight years later came to Virginia as the successor of Bennett, remaining there until his death. Neill in the *Virginia Company*, p. 194, ventures this opinion of the Isle of Wight settlement : “The first settlers were Puritans, and they may have built the Smithfield church still standing.” This seems quite probable, when we remember that Jacob was in charge in 1624, remaining until his death, while that church was erected in 1632.

Rev. Haut Wyatt, brother of Governor Wyatt, came to Virginia, but returned to England in a few years. There



“opposing the retrograde tendencies of Archbishop Laud, he was arraigned before the High Commission” (*Virginia Company*, p. 222). This position and his family connection suggest that he too was a Puritan. In the same year, 1621, Thomas White was sent out by the Company, as a “worthy minister of good sufficiency for learning and recommended for integrity and uprightness of life.” The Governor and Council were so well pleased with him, that they sent thanks to the Company, and requested more of such learned and sincere ministers. But Harvey, who became Governor in 1630, and was evidently in sympathy with the civil and religious attitude of the Stuarts, censured Mr. White because he could show no orders. Whereupon he went to the Maryland colony, in which there were so many of his own faith (*Neill's Virginia Company*, p. 248). Two other ministers “without orders” are mentioned in the same work: Samuel Macock and William Wickham, both friends of the Puritan Governor, Yearley, and members of his council. Wickham took up the work of Whitaker at Henrico. About the middle of the century there were two non-conformist ministers on the Eastern Shore. Daniel Richardson, who was set aside when Berkeley fled to Accomac during Bacon's rebellion, and Francis Doughty, who had been in charge of a parish in Essex county, and in both places was complained of as a non-conformist.

In addition to these there were several ministers, whose history is better known, and whose Puritan convictions are beyond question. The first of these was the noble Alexander Whitaker, “Apostle of Virginia,” who gave up much when he left England with the purpose, not only of preaching to the colonists, but also of evangelizing the Indians. Fiske speaks of him as “a staunch Puritan, son of an eminent Puritan divine, who was Master of St. John's College, Cambridge.” He was minister at Henrico, and was the friend, as we have already seen, of Dale and Yearley. Pocahontas was instructed, baptized and married by him. He was drowned in the James River in 1617, but a short

time before his death wrote a letter to London lamenting that so few Puritan ministers had come to Virginia, where neither the surplice nor subscription, against which they were so hot in England, were even spoken of. "When in 1617 the good Whitaker was drowned, he was succeeded by George Keith, who was also a Puritan." (Fiske, *Old Virginia*, Vol. I, p. 302). Keith did come at this time, but did not settle at Henrico. Hatten's Original Lists place him at Elizabeth City.

Patrick Copeland, a missionary in the East Indies, became interested in the Virginia colony; and as early as 1621, while returning from the East, he began a movement which led to the founding of America's second college. On this homeward journey he collected "for the good of Virginia" seventy pounds, which the Company in London devoted to the founding of a free college in the colony. Copeland then preached a sermon for the Company in the interests of this institution, and much more money was subscribed. Henrico was chosen as the site, and Copeland was made Rector, with every prospect for successful establishment. But the Indian massacre of 1622 and the revoking of the Company's charter caused indefinite postponement. In 1625 Copeland went to the Bermudas as a minister, and with authority to establish a free school there, in which Indian boys from Virginia should be educated. He soon took his place in the ranks of the non-conformists, and endeavored to bring about union of the dissenters in Virginia and Bermuda. It is well worth remembering that the agitation begun by this Puritan minister finally resulted in the establishing of William and Mary College.

In 1641 the Assembly divided Upper Norfolk county, which included the present Nansemond and a part of the present Norfolk county, into three parishes; and shortly after Richard Bennett and about seventy other prominent men of these parishes signed a petition and sent it to Boston by Philip Bennett, asking for three ministers to take charge of these parishes. This proves beyond doubt that

the Norfolk section was overwhelmingly Puritan, and that the colonial assembly winked at it. This petition met with a hearty response, for William Tompson, John Knowles and Thomas James sailed at once for Virginia. In the meantime Sir William Berkeley had become governor. He was determined upon conformity; and the labors of the New England ministers speedily brought down his wrath upon them and led to stringent legislation against non-conformists. Knowles and James returned at once to Boston; but Tompson remained several months longer, by able and heroic service gathering into the church more than a hundred souls. He also was forced to leave at length, and some of the new converts returned with him to New England, notably, Daniel Gookin, Junior, whose acquaintance we have already formed.

But the good work was not left to die. God raised up an able and courageous successor to Tompson in the person of Thomas Harrison. It is supposed that he was the son of Benjamin Harrison, of Nansemond, who was clerk of the Council for many years. A copy of a call from Lower Norfolk parish for the services of Thomas Harrison in 1640 is recorded in the old Order Book of the Lower Norfolk County court. In 1642 he became Berkeley's chaplain, and acquiesced in the banishment of the New England ministers. But the Indian massacre of 1644 seemed to him the Divine retribution for the Governor's cruelty. He not only repented, but also rebuked Berkeley, for which of course he was dismissed; and then became the minister of the Nansemond Puritans. After a faithful service among them he was driven out of the colony by Berkeley, sojourned for a time in New England, and finally went to England, where he attained distinction as a Puritan minister.

From the beginning of the century until the coming of Makemie we hear little of Puritan ministers in Virginia. But surely under the protectorate of Cromwell these non-conformists of Nansemond and Norfolk must have had their own ministers in all honor and peace. Indeed there is a

record in the old book of Lower Norfolk County, preserved in the Clerk's office in Portsmouth, that the non-conformists of that county called a minister in 1656. But of this again—

8. Our last proof, and it is one of the surest, of the existence of strong Puritan sentiment in the Virginia colony is found in the religious laws and customs of the time. In 1618 King James issued the famous "Book of Sports," in which certain social and athletic games were recommended for Sunday diversion, such as archery, leaping, wrestling, dancing. We do not need to be told that this went against the Puritan grain. It met with such indignant opposition that the King had to forbid interference with these pastimes on the part of ministers and civil officers; and ordered that the strict Sabbatarians should either "conform themselves or leave the country," which many brave and true souls for conscience sake at once proceeded to do. The King's action was immediately followed by a season of rapid growth for Virginia; it was at this time also that the section South of the James River, notably Puritan, began to be settled. The Bennetts, Matthews, Claibornes, Gookins and kindred spirits were emigrants of this period. The enactments of the Virginia Assembly concerning the Sabbath were radically different from the Book of Sports, and clearly reveal Puritan influence. In 1631 it was ordered that no person should take a journey on the Sabbath, "except it be to church, or for other causes of extreme necessitie." It was forbidden to fire a gun on that day, except for defense against the Indians. Swearing was made punishable, strict laws were enacted against gambling and all other dishonest dealings. Simplicity in dress and the avoidance of slander, flirting and many other evils, too common and too little rebuked in these unregenerate days of ours, were exacted by the pious fathers of early Virginia.

One of the chief subjects of controversy in the Church of England during the second half of the sixteenth century and nearly all of the seventeenth, was the wearing of vest-



ments by the ministers. The high churchmen held to them as part of the order and worship of the church ; others regarded them with indifference, while the great Puritan party made opposition to these "relics of Popery," a principle of their religious existence. Hooper, in the days of Edward VI., refused to be consecrated Bishop of Gloucester in the Episcopal vestments, because they savored of Romish superstitions ; the Puritans of later days refused to have to do with them, because they were unscriptural. For some reason, that the historians of olden and modern days have not been pleased to state, the clerical vestments were not worn by the ministers of Virginia. There is abundant and undisputed evidence of this. What other reason can there be than that the early Virginia settlers and their ministers belonged in large measure to the Puritan or Presbyterian party in the Church of England ? Here we see one of their great principles put into practice. Alexander Whitaker, in a letter in 1614, states that vestments were not worn there in his day. Surplices began to be used in Virginia about 1724. (See Fiske, Vol. I., p. 302, note.)

It must be acknowledged that the state of religion in Virginia in early colonial days was not all that might be desired. Separation from home and religious associations tended to indifference, if not irreligion, then as now. Rigid laws were enacted, therefore, to enforce church-going, and also to keep the ministers in moral bounds. The worst specimens were sent out from England, and too often were cock-fighters, horse-racers, gamblers, drunkards and brawlers. Meade tells of one athletic specimen, who had a free fight with his vestrymen, floored them all, and justified himself the following Sabbath to the congregation by a sermon from the text, "and I contended with them, and cursed them, and smote certain of them, and plucked off their hair."

With such conditions existing we are not surprised that hundreds of dissenters in the Nansemond and Norfolk district were ready to leave their comfortable homes and

goodly acres rather than conform to such a church, and that the godly seed, which remained, was willing to endure persecution until the Revolution in order to keep alive a better faith and a purer life. It is probable that the Puritan fathers of Virginia preserved their principles by home worship and instruction, where they were too few to form a congregation, and that some, as Samuel Mathews, had ministers in their homes.

We are now prepared to accept the conclusions to which the preceding facts of history necessarily lead. The first concerns the character of the Episcopal church in Virginia. This body is famous for its low-church proclivities and its evangelical and conservative position. In no other part of our country does this church show such uniform spirit of sympathy toward other denominations, and so little of that senseless and unchristian intolerance, which in other sections is the chief reproach and weakness of a noble Church. In one of the oldest counties of Tidewater Virginia, where the old spirit still lives and the old manners are still cherished, there is a very feeble Presbyterian church. The Episcopalians have rallied liberally to the pastor's support, have taken part in a union Sabbath school and in evangelistic meetings, and have even united with their Presbyterian brethren in the Communion service. The writer shall always remember with sincere pleasure the hearty Christian welcome given him by the intelligent and evangelical Episcopalians of that county, while he was assisting the pastor of our little church in special services. This commendable liberality is not an accidental virtue, nor an inexplicable freak; it is to be understood only as a heritage from the days of old, the abiding influence of the Presbyterian fathers of Old Virginia. We could wish that such a worthy example might be emulated by their church at large and the good day at last come, when even Episcopalians shall be given grace to recognize that a Christian is a Christian for a' that.

Another necessary result of early religious life in Vir-

ginia, as influenced by the Puritans, has been the fitness and possibility of Presbyterianism for Eastern Virginia. Dr. Charles Hodge has said: "The Presbyterian Church in the Atlantic portion of Virginia was, in great measure, built up by those who had been previously Episcopalians" (*Presbyterian Church in the U. S.*, p. 46). At the present time no denomination is enjoying more substantial growth in this old section than the Presbyterian. Within the past fifteen years the number of ministers, pastorates and communicants has been doubled in the territory now included in Norfolk Presbytery. And this is just as it should be. No other church has a clearer title to the field; no other is better suited to the people; and if past history and present promise are trustworthy indications, our churches have only to go forward courageously and earnestly, and they will possess the land.

A fitting close to this paper, and a suggestive summary of its contents, will be a brief review of the long and honorable history of the Norfolk Presbyterian Church, which evidently deserves the honor of being known as the oldest Presbyterian organization in America, still maintaining its existence.

1608. It has been shown already that as early as 1611, or even 1608, according to Starnell's testimony, many Puritans emigrated to America under the conformity acts of James; and as New England was not settled until 1620, these early settlers came to Virginia and were distributed through the colony, exerting good influence on it, we may be sure. Among this goodly company were Alexander Whitaker and George Yeardley. In the expedition of Sir Thomas Gates and Sir George Somers, which left England in 1609, but was detained by shipwreck in the Bermudas for some time, were some Puritans, "one of whom, Stephen Hopkins, assisted Chaplain Buck in conducting the services" (Neill, *Virginia Company*, p. 34).

1618. A much larger number of Puritans came at a later period, from 1618 to 1622, during the Sabbath controversy

in England, to which reference has been made. In 1618 one hundred and fifty Presbyterians, under the leadership of Elder Francis Blackwell, sailed for Virginia. All except twenty died during the voyage, but the coming of this small party shows the Puritan drift toward Virginia. About the same time Capt. Edward Brewster, son of the famous William Brewster, the Plymouth Pilgrim, came to Virginia. The Bennetts, the Gookins, the Wyatts, Mathews and others were emigrants of this period. To some extent they were scattered throughout the colony, but seem to have settled principally south of the James River in Isle of Wight, Nansemond and Norfolk Counties; and it is in this particular section that they gave their steadfast testimony to truth: it is here they left an honored memory and an abiding Church.

1621. The first minister to these Puritans was William Bennett, of whose work we have already written. It is by no means a contradiction of our claim that Bennett's name is found in the Bishop of London's list of Virginia ministers; for at that time the Puritans had not separated from the Church of England, but were the Presbyterian party in it. And what is still more decisive, the names of well-known non-conformists are found in the same list, for example that of Jacob, Bennett's successor.

1622. William Bennett's life in Virginia was brief. Dying about 1623, he was succeeded at once by Henry Jacob, who continued in service until the time of his death, which is unknown to us. It is to be regretted that we know nothing more of the life of this brave and zealous man.

1632. A prominent figure of those days was Capt. Nathaniel Basse, who came over in 1622, was one of the founders of the Isle of Wight plantation, and for many years was one of the governor's councillors. Little is known of his religious sympathies; but a recorded item of 1632 leaves the impression that he also was of the Puritan persuasion. At that time he was authorized by the colonial council to invite New Englanders, who "disliked coldness of climate



and barrenness of soil" to emigrate to the shores of Delaware Bay (Neill's *Virginia Carolorum*, p. 91). The question at once rises: was not Capt. Basse appointed to this duty because of religious affiliation with the New England dissenters? About the same time, through Archbishop Laud's influence, the Virginia Assembly passed an order for religious conformity; but there is no record nor indication that it was enforced. Indeed the evidence is to the contrary; for ten years later Governor Berkeley found much lack of conformity, and at once re-enacted the former law.

1637. The younger Daniel Gookin crossed over from Newport News to Nansemond in this year, having received a grant of twenty-five hundred acres on the Nansemond River. He was soon president of the court of Upper Norfolk County, and prominent in all the affairs of the section, especially the religious, having been one of those who called the New England ministers in 1641. About this time John Gookin, probably his brother, married the widow of Adam Thoroughgood, who was a large landowner in Lower Norfolk County and had been the president of its court in 1637; and thus another prominent family in that section is shown to be closely allied with the Puritans.

1641. Since the days of Bennett and Jacob the Virginia Puritans had been growing in numbers and influence, until in this year they were strong enough to have the colonial legislature divide the Nansemond District into three parishes, for each of which they at once called a minister from New England. When Tompson, Knowles and James came, they found fields white to harvest; the heart of Virginia was open to their gospel, and the progress of their work could only be checked by bitter persecution. Berkeley had come to the colony as its governor in the meantime. He at once reissued the decree for conformity, and banished the three ministers and some of their followers from the colony.

1644. But the wrath of man was made to praise God. Thomas Harrison, the governor's chaplain, formerly min-

ister of Lower Norfolk Parish, who had given reluctant consent to the harsh measures against the New England ministers, was greatly moved by the Indian massacre of 1644, believing that it was a divine retribution, and himself became the minister of the Nansemond non-conformists. The church grew steadily under his care, but again in 1648 the heavy hand of Berkeley fell upon them, and Harrison, Bennett, Durand and others were forced to leave Virginia. Harrison first went to Boston, where he said that a thousand dissenters were in Virginia, and that many of the Council of the Colony were in sympathy with them.

1651. Berkeley's downfall was at hand. In 1651 he was forced by Cromwell to surrender his post as governor; and Gen. Richard Bennett, sent as one of the commissioners to receive the surrender, was then elected governor by the Council. Doubtless many of the exiles returned with Bennett to their Virginia homes and fields, and the people of the Nansemond parishes rejoiced again to worship God according to the dictates of conscience. Beyond controversy, peace and praise were the happy lot of the Virginia Puritans during the Commonwealth; but after the preaching of Harrison until near the close of the century references to them are so rare, that we only have enough evidence to prove that they lived on and kept the faith.

1656. Among the old records of Norfolk County, which are in Portsmouth, the following interesting document has been found:

“Copie of a letter sent Mr. Moore, a minister of New England.

MR. MOORE:—Sir, after salute please take notice that we are informed by Capt. Fran: Emperor that at his being at the Mannadus hee treated with you concerning your coming over hither amongst us, and that you were unwilling to come at such uncertainties or without the knowledge or good likings of those you were to come amongst; and further that you weare pleased to promise him not otherwise to dispose of yourselfe till you heard from him.

Therefore wee underwritten in behalf of the whole, gladly embracing such an opportunity, do engage ourselves that upon your arrivall here for the maintenance of yourself and family to allow unto you the yearly quantity of tobacco and corn, and also to provide for your present entertainment upon arrivall and convenient habitation and continuance amongst us, to the content of yourselfe and credit of us, upon whom at our invitation you have throwne yourselfe, and for the transportation of yourselfe and family wee have taken full and sufficient course with Capt. Rich: Whiting, and to these promises we underwrittsn have subscribed."

We do not know whether "Mr. Moore" threw himself upon the underwritten without the knowledge or good liking of them; but this unique letter does prove that the Norfolk Puritans of 1656 had freedom to call a minister of their own faith and the means to support him.

1675. Governor Richard Bennett died in 1675. The fragment of his will, which we have, says that he remained a Christian to the end of his life. We may also court it as certain that he watched over and nourished the church, in whose behalf he had suffered persecution and exile. A good evidence that he helped to maintain the faith is the fact that within nine years after his death Mekemie was preaching to the congregation in Norfolk county.

1678. While Makemie was ministering to the people on the Elizabeth River in 1684 he wrote a letter to Increase Mather, in which he states that the people of Lynnhaven parish had a dissenting minister from Ireland, who died the preceding August. There has been much speculation about this dissenting minister, Makemie's predecessor. The old records of Norfolk county offer the solution of the mystery. On August 14, 1678 a marriage contract was fully, firmly and freely concluded between the parties following, viz: James Porter, minister of Linhaven, on the one partie and Mrs. Mary Ivy, Lawfull daughter of Capt. Thos. Ivy on the other part." This Mary Ivy was the sister of Thomas Ivy, Jr., whose house on the eastern bank of the Elizabeth River

was one of Rev. Josias Mackie's licensed preaching points. Mr. Porter's will,\* a very lengthy document disposing of very little, was made June 8th, 1683, and admitted to record Dec. 16th of the same year. He must have died between the two dates, which exactly agrees with Makemie's account.

1684. Francis Makemie, as he was going toward Charleston, in 1685, visited the people of Lynnhaven parish; and being driven back by contrary winds from his southward journey, he accepted the invitation of Col. Anthony Lawson and other inhabitants of the Lynnhaven section, and spent the whole or yart of a year with them. He must have kept in close touch with that congregation, for his will in 1708 makes mention of his "lot and house at the town in Princess Anne county on the Eastern Branch of the Elizabeth River." It deserves to be noticed that Makemie does not say that he preached to a congregation of dissenters, but to the inhabitants of the parish of Lynnhaven. Nor does he say that his predecessor, James Porter, was the minister of a dissenting church, but the dissenting minister of the parish. "Mr. Moore" was probably called by the same parish in 1656. Evidently the preaching of Harrison and Tompson was bearing fruit in a community either thoroughly Presbyterian or thoroughly happy under Presbyterian preaching.

1692 The next minister to the congregation on the

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\* The will of Rev. James Porter begins thus: "The only soveraigne wise God, who hath only power of life and death, by the voice of his rod calls me to fix my thoughts and desires upon the time of my dissolution, for which cause as one of the nigh forlorn and undone souns of Adam, I betake myself to the satisfaction and blessed merits of his deare and only Sonne Christ Jesus, Renouncing all Selfe Righteousness, I alonely Relye on his for salvation, and that my sins are out of measure sinfull and for multitude innumerable, yett hath hee spoken peace to my soul, and given me assurance of Remission and the Lively hope of a blessed and joyful resurrection at the last day. Being at this time sound of judgement and memory and not desirous that the settling of my poor affayres or simple Estate may be troublesome to any when I am gone, I have taken the paynes to dispose particularly thereof myself."



Elizabeth River was Josias Mackie of County Dougal, Ireland. In all probability he was induced to come to Virginia by Makemie. There is a record in the books of the County Court of Lower Norfolk that in 1692 Mr. Mackie took the oath required by every minister, renouncing the Roman Catholic Church, declaring allegiance to the King, and accepting the "Articles of Religion" with the exceptions allowed to dissenters. He had four preaching points, which were registered by the County Court: the house of Thomas Ivy on the Eastern Branch of the Elizabeth River; a house belonging to John Phillpot, in Tanner's Creek precinct; another belonging to John Roberts on the Western Branch; and Mr. John Dickson's house on the Southern Branch. All of these are near the present site of the city of Norfolk. Mr. Mackie died in 1716, after a quarter-century of service.

1801. We do not know who were the ministers of this congregation during the remainder of the eighteenth century; but near its close the Rev. Benjamin Porter Grigsby, while on a missionary tour through Eastern Virginia, became acquainted with the descendants of the early Puritans, still worshipping God as an organized congregation. They made him a call in 1801, and accepting it, he entered at once on his labors in Norfolk. In 1804 a substantial brick church was erected, which is still standing, but was superseded in 1836 by the present and more commodious church building. This noble old church, whose beginnings we have traced far back into early colonial days, is surrounded to-day by eight daughters and grand-daughters, but she herself remains unsurpassed by any of them in strength and zeal.

EDWARD MACK.

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