

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

THE AMERICAN BAPTISTS

VIII. THE BAPTISTS OF VIRGINIA

No chapter of Baptist history, European or American, fills honest hearts with warmer gratitude and thanksgiving than that of Virginia. The first settlers of this colony were cavaliers, from the upper classes of English society, profoundly loyal to the English government and zealous of religious observances. The Virginian charter of April 10th, 1606, made the Church of England the religion of the colony, and devotion to the king, its head and defender, the test of loyalty; hence all were taxed for its support. Before Plymouth Rock was known, and nearly a quarter of a century before Massachusetts Bay Colony was organized, the soil of Virginia was hallowed by praise to God in public worship. Captain John Smith tells us this beautiful story of his religious acts at Jamestown:

'When I first went to Virginia, I well remember we did hang an awning, which is an old sail, to three or four trees to shadow us from the sun. Our walls were rails of wood, our seats unhewed trees, till we cut planks, our pulpit a bar of wood nailed to two neighboring trees. In foul weather we shifted into an old rotten tent. This was our church, till we built a homely thing like a barn, set up crotchets, covered with rafts, sedge and earth, so was also the walls, the best of our houses of the like curiosity, but the most part far much worse workmanship, that could neither well defend wind or rain. Yet we had daily common prayer, morning and evening; every Sunday two sermons, and every three months the Holy Communion, till our minister, Mr. Hunt, died. But our prayers daily, with a homily on Sunday, we continued two or three years after, till more preachers came. And surely God did most mercifully hear us, till the continual inundations of mistaken directions, factions and numbers of unprovided libertines, near consumed us all, as the Israelites in the wilderness.'

Happy had it been for the colonists if this freedom and simplicity of voluntary worship had been continued amongst them, as this noble character commenced it in his rude Jamestown temple, without doubt the first ever erected in North America. The charter made withdrawal from the Episcopal Church a crime equal to revolt from the government. It further required that if any one were drawn away from the 'doctrines, rites and religion, now professed and established within our realm of England,' the person so offending should be 'arrested and imprisoned, until he shall fully and thoroughly reform him, or otherwise when the cause so requireth, that he shall with all convenient speed be sent into our realm of England, here to receive condign punishment, for his or their said offense.

Each successive Governor promulgated his own code of laws, directing his subordinate in the details of administration. That of Sir Thomas Dale, in 1611,

provided that every man or woman, 'now present or hereafter to arrive' should give an account of his or their faith and religion, and repair unto the minister, that their orthodoxy might be tested. Upon refusal to do this the minister should give notice to the Governor or chief officers of the town, and for the first refusal the offender was to be whipped, for the second to be whipped twice and to acknowledge his fault on the Sabbath day in the congregation, and for the third offense he was to be whipped every day until the acknowledgment was made and forgiveness craved. The very severity of this code prevented its full execution, and succeeding Governors relaxed these provisions in their several codes. But though corporal punishment was gradually abandoned, the spirit of intolerance as to any departure from the Church of England remained the same, being quite as severe as that of Massachusetts Bay against all dissent from Congregationalism. Hening says that the General Assembly appears to have devoted itself to enforcing attendance on the services of the Church of England in the colony. In 1623 it provided that public worship should be held in every plantation according to its canons, that its ministers should be paid by a tax upon the people, and that no other ministers but those of that Church 'shall be permitted to preach or teach, publicly or privately,' and that the Governor and Council shall take care that all Non-conformists depart the colony with all conveniency.

The first nine Acts of 1661 provided for the support of the State Church; in each parish a church edifice was to be built out of the public treasury, together with a parsonage house and the purchase of a globe for the minister's use. He was to receive a salary of ,80 sterling, a provision subsequently changed to 16,000 pounds of tobacco, to be levied on the parish and collected like other taxes. Each minister must be ordained by a Bishop in England, all other preachers were to be banished; every person who wilfully avoided attendance on the parish Church for one Sunday was to be fined fifty pounds of tobacco; every Non-conformist was to be fined ,20 for a month's absence, and if he failed to attend for a year he must be apprehended and give security for his good behavior, or remain in prison till he was willing to attend Church. Much pretense has been made, that because the early settlers of the colony were cavaliers, they were less austere, more polished and of gentler blood than the Puritans of Massachusetts. But the brutal intolerance of the English Court was faithfully copied by them, and no darker or more bloody pages stain English or Massachusetts history than those that defile the early records of Virginia. White tells us of a band of men who were driven from Virginia 'for their religious opinions' in 1634. [Annals of Annapolis, p. 23] Bulk records the revolting barbarities inflicted on Stevenson Reek for the same cause in 1640. He 'stood in the pillory two hours with a label on his back, paid a fine of ,50, and was imprisoned at the pleasure of the Governor,' for simply saying, in a jocular manner, that his majesty was at confession with my lord of Canterbury.' [Ecc. Hist. of Va., ii, pp. 51-67] Holmes details, at length, that in 1648 four missionaries were sent from Massachusetts to Virginia, Messrs. James, Knollys, Thompson and Harrison. They held a few meetings there in private, but their little congregations were violently broken up and the missionaries banished, while many of their hearers were imprisoned.' [Annals, 289] James Ryland, a member of the House of Burgesses

from the Isle of Wight County, prepared a Catechism which was pronounced 'blasphemous' for which he was expelled in 1652; and for some other trivial religious offense a member from Norfolk was expelled in 1663. Virginia had adhered to the king against Cromwell and the Commonwealth, and Dr. Hawks, the eloquent Episcopal historian of Virginia, tells of four of Cromwell's soldiers who were 'rudely hung, as a warning to the remainder' in 1680, for their religious opinions, under the pretense that 'their assemblages' were 'perverted from religious to treasonable purposes', 'these religious assemblages themselves being regarded as a subversion of the government.' [Hist. of Episcopacy in Va., pp. 71-72]

Hening states that the 111th Act of the Grand Assembly of 1661-62 declared that, 'Whereas, Many schismatical persons, out of their averseness to the orthodox established religion, or out of the new-fangled conceits of their own heretical inventions, refuse to have their children baptized; Be it therefore enacted, by the authority aforesaid, that all persons that in contempt of the divine sacrament of baptism, shall refuse when they may carry their child to a lawful minister in that county, to have them baptized, shall be amerced two thousand pounds of tobacco; half to the informer, half to the public.' [Statutes at large, ii, pp. 165-166]

This was a blow dealt at the Quakers, as there seem to have been no Baptists in the colony at that time. Several Acts of the Assembly in 1659, 1662 and 1693 made it a crime for parents to refuse the baptism of their children. Jefferson writes: 'If no execution took place here, as in New England, it was not owing to the moderation of the Church or the spirit of the Legislature, as may be inferred from the law itself, but to historical circumstances which have not been handed down to us.'

When William and Mary came to the throne, in 1689, their accession was signaled by that enactment of Parliament called the ACT OF TOLERATION. Even this, as Dr. Woolsey remarks, 'removed only the harshest restrictions upon Protestant religious worship, and was arbitrary, unequal and unsystematic in its provisions.' Still, it was the entering wedge to religious freedom, and while the Baptists of England gladly availed themselves of it and organized under it in London as a great Association for new work, a hundred and seventeen Churches being represented, the authorities of Virginia thought it inoperative in their colony. It was not until a score of years after the passage of this Act that the colonial Legislature gave to the colonists the meager liberties which it granted to the British subject. When, however, news of this Act reached Virginia, the few individual Baptists then scattered abroad there resolved on their full liberty as British subjects under its provisions. They entreated the London Meeting to send them ministers, an entreaty which was followed by a correspondence running through many years. In 1714 Robert Nordin and Thomas White were sent as ordained ministers to the colony, but White died upon the voyage. Up to this time there seems to have been no organized body of Baptists in Virginia, although there are traces of individuals in North Carolina as early as 1696, who had fled from Virginia to escape her intolerance. Semple finds the first Baptist Church of Virginia organized in association with the labors of Nordin at Burleigh,

Isle of Wight County, in 1714, on the south side of the river and opposite Jamestown. Howell thinks that before the coming of Nordin there had been a gathering of citizens there, joined by others from Surry County for consultation, and that they had petitioned the London Baptists to send them help. Be this as it may, Nordin was soon followed by two other ministers, Messrs. Jones and Mintz, and under the labors of these men of God the first Church was formed in that year, and soon after one at Brandon, in the County of Surry. The first is now known as Mill Swamp; it is thought that the Otterdams Church is the second. These were General Baptists, but in a few years they embraced Calvinistic sentiments, and Nordin labored in that region till he died, in 1725. While this movement was in progress in the southern part of Virginia, the influence of the Welsh Baptists, in Pennsylvania and Delaware, began to be felt in Berkeley, London and Rockingham Counties, which were visited by their ministers. Semple thinks that these laborers first readied the colony through Edward Hays and Thomas Yates, members of the Saters Baptist Church, in Maryland, and that Revs. Loveall, Heaton and Gerard soon followed them. Churches were then gathered at Opecon, Mill Creek, Kettocton and other points in rapid succession, which became members of the Philadelphia Association, from which they received the counsel and aid of David Thomas, John Gano and James Miller, which accounts in part for the rapid spread of Baptist principles in North Virginia. They were soon strengthened, also, by the labors of two men of great power, formerly of other denominations, who became Baptists. Shubael Steams, a native of Boston, Mass., was converted under the preaching of George Whitefield, and united himself with the revival party of the Congregationalists, called New Lights, in 1745. He continued with them for six years, when lie became convinced, from an examination of the Scriptures, that infant baptism was a human institution and that it was his duty to confess Christ on his faith.

Accordingly, he was immersed by Elder Palmer at Tolland, Conn., May 20th, 1751, and was ordained a Baptist minister. After continuing in New England for about three years, he longed to carry the Gospel to the regions beyond, and made for Berkeley and Hampshire Counties, Va. There God made him wonderfully successful, and his fame spread through all the region. He itinerated largely in North Carolina as well as in Virginia, and gathered an immense harvest for Christ. Morgan Edwards describes him as a marvelous preacher for moving the emotions and melting his audiences to tears. The most exciting stories are told about the piercing glance of his eye and the melting tones of his voice, while his appearance was that of a patriarch.

Tidence Lane, who afterward became a distinguished Baptist minister, says that he had the most hateful feelings toward the Baptists, but curiosity led him to hear Mr. Steams:

'Upon my arrival, I saw a venerable old man sitting under a peach-tree, with a book in his hand and the people gathering about him. He fixed his eyes upon me immediately, which made me feel in such a manner as I never had felt before. I

turned to quit the place, but could not proceed far. I walked about, sometimes catching his eyes as I walked. My uneasiness increased and became intolerable. I went up to him, thinking that a salutation and shaking of hands would relieve me; but it happened otherwise. I began to think that he had an evil eye and ought to be shunned; but shunning him I could no more effect than a bird can shun the rattlesnake when it fixes its eyes upon it. When he began to preach my perturbations increased, so that nature could no longer support them and I sank to the ground.'

Rev. Daniel Marshall was brother-in-law to Steams, and had formerly been a Presbyterian minister at Windsor, Conn., but had served for some years as a missionary to the Indians on the upper Susquehanna. War between the colony of Maryland and the Indians had arrested his work, and on examining the Scriptures, he, too, became a Baptist, being immersed near Winchester, Va., in the forty-eighth year of his age. He and Steams preached in Virginia, North and South Carolina, and Churches were multiplied in every direction. Dr. Howell, in treating of this period, says that 'The fields were white to harvest. God poured out his Holy Spirit. One universal impulse pervaded, apparently, the minds of the whole people. Evidently hungering for the bread of life, they came together in vast multitudes. Everywhere the ministry of these men was attended with the most extraordinary success. Very large numbers were baptized. Churches sprang up by scores. Among the converts were many able men, who at once entered the ministry, and swelled continually the ranks of the messengers of salvation.'

So quickly did the work of God spread amongst the people in every direction, that the influence of our Churches began to be felt in shaping the political destinies of the colony; and that influence has continued to our times. Prominent amongst the causes of this rapid growth was the character of the preaching. The preachers were from the people to whom they spoke, so that they understood their necessities and difficulties. Reports of many of these early sermons are extant. They are characterized by great simplicity of thought and structure, are peculiarly adapted to arouse the conscience to the need of Christ, to present his finished work in all its gracious bearings, and to lead to immediate decision in his service. Colonial life had fostered independent thought and a willingness to meet peril in shaking off the State Church, whose ministers no longer commanded the respect of the people. Formalism had engendered license in the pulpit as well as in the pew, so that many of the clergy were not only cruel, but immoral, also. The very means which in earlier years had been taken to hinder the spread of Baptist doctrines now contributed to their dissemination, and the people hungered for the bread of life.

Persecution, as usual, over-reached itself, and the reaction was very great. John Leland says, the Baptist 'ministers were imprisoned and the disciples buffeted.' James Madison, in writing to a Philadelphia friend, in 1774, said:

'That diabolical, hell-conceived principle of persecution rages among some, and to their eternal infamy the clergy can furnish their quota of imps for such purposes.

There are at the present time, in the adjacent county, not less than five or six well-meaning men in close jail for proclaiming their religious sentiments, which are the main quite orthodox.'

Yet this hard flint of persecution struck the true fire of soul liberty. Dr. Hawks is compelled to admit of the State clergy that they were in many cases a disgrace to their profession; and Hammond denounces them thus: 'Many came, such as wore black coats and could babble in a pulpit, roar in a tavern, exact from their parishioners and, rather, by their dissoluteness, destroy than feed their flocks.' These so embittered the spirits of the baser class against the pure and godly men who went everywhere preaching the word that, even after the Toleration Act had compelled the colony to modify her laws, and they could not legally be imprisoned for preaching the Gospel, mob law was let loose upon them everywhere, and they were thrust into prison for the sin of others in disturbing the public peace. Everywhere their congregations were disturbed and broken uup. Howe says: 'A snake and a hornet's nest were thrown into their meeting, and even in one case fire-arms were brought to disperse them.' [Hist. Collections of Va., p. 379]

Taylor says that the Baptist ministers were 'Fined, pelted, beaten, imprisoned, poisoned and hunted with dogs; their congregations were assaulted and dispersed; the solemn ordinance of baptism was rudely interrupted, both administrators and candidates being plunged and held beneath the water till nearly dead; they suffered mock trials, and even in courts of justice were subjected to indignities not unlike those inflicted by the infamous Jeffreys.'

Dr. Semple, actuated by the same sweet spirit and sincere honesty which moved Taylor, gives this description of the Baptist ministers: They 'were without learning, without patronage, generally very poor, very plain in their dress, unrefined in their manners and awkward in their address; all of which, by their enterprising zeal and unceasing perseverance, they either turned to advantage or prevented their ill effects.'

Yet they had the stoutest hearts, the most masculine intellects, and some of them were eloquent to a proverb; a perfect phalanx of Christian Spartans. About thiry of them were put in prison, some of them several times, but by preaching Jesus through the gates and on the high walls many were brought to Christ. Rev. Eleazar Clay, the guardian of the great statesman, Henry Clay, wrote from Chesterfield County to John Williams: 'The preaching at the prison is not attended in vain, for we hope that several are converted, while others are under great distress and made to cry out, What shall we do to be saved?' and he begged him to come down and baptize the converts. Crowds gathered around the prisons at Fredericksburg, in the counties of King and Queen, Culpepper, Middlesex and Essex, Orange and Caroline. They were preached to by Harris, Ireland, Pickett, the Craigs, of whom there were three brothers, Greenwood, Barrow, Weathersford, Ware, Tinsley, Waller, Webber and others whose names will be honored while Virginia exists. And there are some noted cases of holy triumph, as in the prison at Culpepper, whence Ireland, much

after the order of Bunyan, who was 'had home to prison in the county jail of Bedford,' dated his letters, from 'my palace in Culpepper.' On the very spot where the prison stood, where powder was cast under the floor to blow him up, and brimstone was burnt to suffocate him and poison was administered to kill him; on that spot where he preached through the iron grates to the people, there the Baptist meeting-house now stands; and the Church which occupies it numbers more than 200 members. These diabolical schemes were all frustrated and, after much suffering, he barely escaped with his life; yet he says: 'My prison was a place in which I enjoyed much of the divine presence; a day seldom passed without some token of the divine goodness toward me.' Waller, a most powerful man, who before his conversion was the terror of the good, being known as the 'Devil's Adjutant and Swearing Jack,' spent 113 days in four different prisons, besides enduring all forms of abuse; but in Virginia alone he immersed 2,000 believers and helped to constitute eighteen Churches. Want of space demands silence concerning a list of most illustrious ministers and laymen, whose names will never be honored as they deserve, until some equally illustrious son of Virginia shall arrange and shape her abundant mass of Baptist material with the integrity of a Bancroft and the eloquence of a Macaulay. For three months in succession three men of God lay in the jail at Fredericksburg for the crime of preaching the glorious Gospel of the blissful God-

Elders Lewis Craig, John Waller and James Childs. But their brethren stood nobly by these grand confessors. Truly, in the words of Dr. Hawks, 'No dissenters in Virginia, experienced for a time harsher treatment than did the Baptists. They were beaten and imprisoned; and cruelty taxed its ingenuity to devise new modes of punishment and annoyance. The usual consequences followed. Persecution made friends for its victims; and the men who were not permitted to speak in public found willing auditors in the sympathizing crowds who gathered around the prisons to hear them preach from the grated windows. It is not improbable that this very opposition imparted strength in another mode, inasmuch as it at last furnished the Baptists with a common ground on which to make resistance.' [Hist. Prot. Ep. Ch. in Va., p. 121]

We shall see much more of their struggles for liberty to preach the Gospel when we come to consider the period of the Revolutionary War, and for the present must look at their internal affairs and growth. Although they multiplied rapidly in the latter half of the eighteenth century, they were much divided by controversies amongst themselves; first, on the question of Calvinism, and then, strangely enough, on Episcopacy. The Calvinistic controversy had been imported by the General and Particular Baptists, who had come from England.

For a time they lived happily with each other, probably held together by the cohesive power of opposition from without. But by and by, as they became stronger, they dropped the names of General and Particular and conducted their doctrinal contest under the name of Separate and Regular Baptists. Samuel Harris, John Waller and Jeremiah Walker were leaders on the Arminian side, while E. Craig,

William Murphy and John Williams were leaders on the Calvinistic side; but while they conducted their debates with great freedom of utterance, they also clung to each other with brotherly love. Having suffered so much together in a common cause, the thought of separation was too painful to be endured. They, therefore, treated each other with all the cordiality of Christian gentlemen, or, as Mr. Spurgeon would say, they agreed to keep two bears in their house, 'bear and forbear;' and the result was, after a long and full discussion in 1787, they agreed to know each other, and to be known to others, as The United Baptist Churches of Christ in Virginia.

The manner in which our Virginia fathers were exercised on the question of Episcopacy would be a topic of amusement to the Baptists there in our times, if reverence for their sires did not honor all their sincere convictions. The early General Baptists of England raised the question whether Ephesians 4:11-13, did not continue the Apostolic office in the Church after the death of the Apostles; and thinking that it did, they selected an officer whose prerogatives were above those of an Elder, and for fully a century this officer visited their Churches as a Messenger or Superintendent, as they thought Timothy and Titus might have been. He was commonly elected and set apart to his work by an Association, and his chief duty was to itinerate, preach the Gospel, plant Churches and regulate their affairs. In the Confession of the General Baptists of 1678 his duties are thus laid down: 'The Bishops have the government of those Churches that had suffrage in their election, and no others ordinarily; as also to preach the word in the world.'

Hook says that their work was 'to plant Churches, ordain officers, set in order things that were wanting in all the Churches, to defend the Gospel against gainsayers, and to travel up and down the world for this purpose.' The Virginia Baptist fathers, wanting to observe every thing that they thought was done in the Apostolic Churches, decided by a majority vote, at the General Association of 1775, that his office was to be continued, and appointed Samuel Harris for the district lying south of the James River; shortly after which, Elijah Craig and John Waller were appointed for that on the north side. At the previous meeting of, this body, after two days' debate, they had deferred the further consideration of the subject for a year. That year was spent in warm discussion of the matter. Walker advocated the doctrine in a pamphlet, Ford opposed it in another, and the Association then unanimously elected Harris an Apostle by ballot. They observed a day of fasting before the ordination, at which Elijah Craig, Waller and Williams offered prayer, then each ordained minister present laid hands upon the head of Harris and gave him the hand of fellowship. At the autumn meeting Waller and Craig were ordained, and these three Baptist Bishops were let loose upon the Churches under this rule:

'If our Messenger, or Apostle, shall transgress in any manner, he she'll be liable to dealing in any Church where the transgression is committed; and the said Church is instructed to call helps from two or three neighboring Churches; and if by them found a transgressor, a General Conference of the Churches shall be called to excommunicate or to restore him.' [Semple's Hist. Va. Baptists, pp. 58-59]

As might have been expected amongst Baptists, the advocates of the measure were not chosen; the Churches put on their glasses and brought out their New Testaments to see where they could find this crotchet, and not finding it, at the next year's meeting of the Association the 'Apostles' were very chop-fallen, and reporting their cold reception and discouragements, quit their high episcopacy at once. The Association was so much mortified at this play at priests that it had not the patience to pass an act abolishing the apostolate, but let it die a natural death; afterward, however, the body took a solemn farewell of its defunct bishopric by recording on its minutes the following declaration, as a sort of epitaph: 'That the office of apostles, like that of prophets, was the effect of miraculous inspiration; and does not belong to ordinary times.' Nor since that day have Virginia Baptists seen any times extraordinary calling for the resurrection of their 'apostles.'

The primitive Baptists of Virginia were often treated with contempt because many of their ministers were not classical scholars, and yet some of them were the peers of the first men in the pulpits of the colony, no matter of what denomination; not only in all that enstamps with a high and practical manhood, but also in the higher branches of education. They were men of profound knowledge in all that relates to Gospel truth, to the true science of human government, and to that patriotism which has made the Virginia commonwealth so great a power in our land. They wrought a work which even the heroes of Rhode Island did not equal in some respects. Just as it is harder to purify a corrupted system than to originate one that is right and true, so far they excelled our brethren there. Their contest was steady, long and fiery, yet they never wavered, took no rash steps nor violent measures, but, with true loyalty to their holy convictions, pressed on against all odds, until their resistless wisdom and energy, directed by an enduring perseverance that never flagged, gave them their deserved victory. Touching the question of education, it is little less than cruel to accuse them of ignorance, in view of the fact that they were not allowed to found schools, or build places of worship, nor to be at peace in their own homes. But as soon as they had conquered the right to breathe as faithful citizens and to organize Churches, despite their grinding oppressions, they at once betook themselves to the founding of schools and colleges, which have since become an honor to the State and nation. As it was, however, with their slight classical and theological attainments, they did not fail to reach some of the first minds in Virginia. So pure were they, so biblical and so true to high conviction, that many of her first citizens openly identified themselves both with their cause and Churches. Some who stood high as statesmen and as educators felt and confessed their powerful influence.

Amongst these we find Dr. Archibald Alexander, born in 1772, and President of Hampden- Sidney College in 1796, one of the first scholars and divines in our country. In the frankest manner he unbosomed his heart thus:

'I fell into doubts respecting the authority of infant baptism. The origin of these doubts were in too rigid notions as to the purity of the Church, with a belief that receiving infants had a corrupting tendency. I communicated my doubts very freely

to my friend, Mr. Lyle, and Mr. Speece, and found that they had both been troubled by the same. We talked much privately on the subject, and often conversed with others in hope of getting some new light. At length Mr. Lyle and I determined to give up the practice of baptizing infants until we should receive more light. This determination we publicly communicated to our people and left them to take such measures as they deemed expedient; but they seemed willing to admit the issue. We also communicated to the Presbytery the state of our minds, and left them to do what seemed good in the case; but as they believed that we were sincerely desirous of aiming at the truth, they took no steps and I believe made no record. Things remained in this position for more than a year.

During this time I read much on both sides, and carried on a lengthened correspondence, particularly with Dr. Hoge. Two considerations kept me back from joining the Baptists. The first was, that the universal prevalence of infant baptism, as early as the fourth and fifth centuries, was unaccountable on the supposition that no such practice existed in the times of the apostles. The other was, that if the Baptists are right they are the only Christian Church on earth, and all other denominations are out of the visible [Catholic] Church.'

The soundness of the conclusions reached by this great head of the Alexander family, in the Presbyterian Church, will be differently estimated by different minds; but, at the least, he shows the spreading influence of the Virginia Baptists at the close of the last century. His objections to the Baptists were essentially those of the Roman Catholic to our principles and practices; and, illfounded as they were, they prevented him from following his convictions on the main point at issue.

In another chapter it will be needful to treat of the Virginia Baptists, touching their active participation in the Revolutionary War, together with their prominence in settling the State policy of the Old Dominion, and the character of the Constitution of the, United States. This chapter, therefore, must close with a reference to their alleged molding power upon THOMAS JEFFERSON, in his political career, as one of the founders of our government. Many historical writers have told us that he was in the habit of attending the business and other meetings of a Baptist Church near his residence; that he closely scrutinized its internal democratic policy and its democratic relations to its sister Churches; that he borrowed his conceptions of a free government, State and Federal, from the simplicity of Baptist Church independency and fraternity; and that, frequently, in conversation with his friends, ministers and neighbors, he confessed his indebtedness to their radical principles for his fixed convictions on the true methods of civil and religions liberty. If this popular tradition were entirely unsupported by contemporary testimony, his earnest and public co-operation with the Baptists in Virginia politics, and the close identity between our form of government, which he did so much to frame, and that of the Baptist Churches, must ever contribute to keep it alive; the strength of the coincidence being sufficient in itself to create such a tradition even if it did not already exist. Curtis says:

'There was a small Baptist Church which held its monthly meetings for business at a short distance from Mr. Jefferson's house, eight or ten years before the American Revolution. Mr. Jefferson attended these meetings for several months in succession. The pastor on one occasion asked him how he was pleased with their Church government. Mr. Jefferson replied, that it struck him with great force and had interested him much, that he considered it the only form of true democracy then existing in the world, and had concluded that it would be the best plan of government for the American colonies. This was several years before the Declaration of Independence.' [Progress of Baptist Principles, p. 356]

This author also says that he had this statement at second-hand only, from Mrs. Madison, wife of the fourth President of the United States, who herself had freely conversed with Jefferson on the subject, and that her remembrance of these conversations was 'distinct,' he 'always declaring that it was a Baptist Church from which these views were gathered.' Madison and Jefferson stood side by side with the Baptists in their contest for a free government, and they served together in the Committee of Seventeen in the Assembly of Virginia, when it was secured in 1777. 'After desperate contests in that Committee almost daily, from the 11th of October to the 5th of December,' the measure was carried; but Jefferson says of his struggle, in his autobiography, that it was 'the severest in which he was ever engaged.' No person then living had better opportunities for knowing the facts on this matter than had Mrs. Madison. Then the records of the early Baptists in Virginia show that there were Baptist Churches in Albemarle County, where Jefferson lived, which fact presents strong circumstantial evidence to the accuracy of this report. Semple mentions two such bodies, the Albemarle, founded in 1767, and the Toteer, 1775. John Asplund, in his Register for 1790, gives four Churches in that county, namely, 'Garrison's meeting, Pretey's Creek, Toteer Creek and White Sides Creek;' Garrison's having been organized in 1774; the others are given without date. He also says that these Churches had 258 members and 5 ministers, namely: William Woods, Jacob Watts, Bartlett Bonnet, Martin Dawson and Benjamin Burger. This renders it certain that besides Jefferson's intimacy with John Leland and other well-known names of our fathers, he had opportunities enough at home to become acquainted with Baptist principles and practices. Though he was skeptical on the subject of religion, he always spoke warmly of his co-operation with the Baptists in securing religious liberty. In a letter written to his neighbors, the members of the Buck Mountain Baptist Church, 1809, he says: 'We have acted together from the origin to the end of a memorable revolution, and we have contributed, each in the line allotted us, our endeavors to render its issues a permanent blessing to our country.'

It would be a pleasant task to trace the lives of some of the distinguished servants of God who filled Virginia with Baptist Churches; but their work erects for them an imperishable monument to which it is only needful to refer. We find that while the first Church was planted in the colony in 1714, in 1793 there were in the State 227 churches, 272 ministers, 22,793 communicants, and 14 Associations. Abiel Holmes says, in his American Annals (ii, 488 p.), that in 1793 the Baptists of the United

States numbered 73,471, so that at that time Virginia contained nearly one third of the whole. In order to combine their efforts, a General Association was formed in 1771, which was dissolved in 1783 and, in 1784, a General Committee was organized to take its place, consisting of two delegates from each Association; this again was superseded in 1800 by the General Meeting of Correspondence, which was composed of delegates from all the Associations and acted as a State Board of Baptist co-operation on all subjects of general interest. The statistics of our own times, however, far eclipse the ratio of growth in the most prosperous days of the last century. At the present time, 1886, the Virginia Baptists have 42 Associations, 868 ordained ministers, 1,608 churches, into whose fellowship there were baptized last, year 12,182 persons, making a total membership in the State of 238,266; being the largest number of Baptists in any State excepting Georgia. This prosperity is the more remarkable when we take into account that within the present century the largest defection from the regular Baptist ranks that has been known in this country took place in Virginia, under the late Rev. ALEXANDER CAMPBELL. Without a brief sketch of that movement the history of the Baptists there would be very imperfect, hence it is here submitted. Alexander Campbell, a seceding minister from the North of Ireland, came to America in 1807, and became pastor of a Presbyterian Church in West Pennsylvania. Soon his father, Thomas Campbell, came to differ materially in some things with that Church, and set up worship in his own house, avowing this principle: 'When the Scriptures speak, we speak; where they are silent, we are silent.' A number adopted this doctrine and gathered at the meetings. Andrew Munro, a clearheaded seceder, said at once: 'If we adopt that as a basis, there is an end of infant baptism.' Soon both Thomas and Alexander, his son, with five others of the family rejected infant baptism, and on June 12th, 1812, were immersed on profession of their faith in Christ, in Buffalo Creek, by Elder Luce, and were received into the fellowship of the Bush Run Baptist Church. After this Alexander began to call in question the scripturalness of certain Baptist views and usages, chiefly in relation to the personal agency of the Holy Spirit in regeneration, the consequent relation of a Christian experience before baptism and the effect of baptism itself. As nearly as the writer could express Mr. Campbell's views, after much conversation with him, he held: That no man can be born of God but by the word of truth as found in the Bible; that the Scriptures, being inspired by the Holy Spirit, the only agency of the Spirit which acts on the soul is exerted through the word of Scripture; that the act of regeneration is not completed until the soul obeys Christ in the act of baptism; and that, as baptism is Christ's appointed method of confessing him, the washing away of sin is connected with that act or evinced thereby. The Baptists from whom he retired also held to the full inspiration of the Holy Scriptures, and that God addresses himself to the soul of man through that word, but that the Holy Spirit applies that word to the soul in so powerful a manner, by his direct and personal agency, as to lead it to a perfect trust on Christ for salvation and that then he is born from above, or regenerated. That when the Spirit bears witness with his spirit that he is a child of God, and he can testify of the grace of God in saving him, he has then become a fit subject for baptism; and so the act of baptism publicly attests his love for Christ, his obedience to him and the remission of his sins, as one who is dead indeed unto sin and alive

unto God. The point of divergence between him and the Baptists, was so vital and radical, that every step which followed widened the distance. Mr. Campbell came to regard what is known as the relation of Christian experience, not only as savoring of mere impulse at the best, but as often running into superstition and even fanaticism; while the Baptists insisted on satisfactory testimony from the Holy Spirit to the convert's heart, and then from his own lips to the Church, that a moral renovation was wrought in his whole moral nature by the Holy Spirit himself, in which work he had used the inspired word as his divine instrument in effecting salvation.

Of course, much warm controversy ensued, the convictions of each party deepened with the progress of the contest, divisions took place in Churches and Associations, the rent ran not only through Virginia but through the entire South and Southwest, and the two bodies appear to be about as far apart as ever, with this difference, that time and circumstances have softened old asperities and cooled the heat of fierce debate. The leaders in the combat were men of might on both sides. Mr. Campbell possessed a powerful intellect, which largely predominated over the emotional in his nature. He was of French descent on his mother's side; of Irish and Highland Scotch on his father's. He was very positive, unyielding, fearless and capable of wonderful endurance. Without being over-polite or ceremonious, his manners were bland and conciliating, while his mind was entirely self-directing, there was no show of vanity about him; and while not an orator in a high sense, his manner of speaking was prepossessing from the utter absence of cant in expression or whine in tone. There was a warm play of benevolence in his face and a frank open-heartedness in his speech, which was clothed in the dress of logic and armed with pointed artful sarcasm which seldom failed to influence his hearers. Probably the nearest counterpart to himself whom he found amongst all his opponents, and who most counteracted his influence as a strong and cool reasoner, was DR. JEREMIAH B. JETER, one of the broadest and best men that Virginia ever produced either in the Baptist ministry or any other. He was a native of that State, born in 1802, and was baptized in 1821, addressing the crowd on the bank of the Otter River as he ascended from the water. He began to preach in Bedford County, and was the first missionary appointed by the General Association of Virginia, in 1823. He filled various pastorates in that State until 1835, when he became pastor of the First Church in Richmond, where he continued for fourteen years. He had baptized more than 1,000 persons before he went to Richmond, and was honored by the baptism of about the same number while in this Church. In 1849 he took charge of the Second Church in St. Louis, but returned to Richmond as the pastor of Grace Street Church in 1852. The last fourteen years of his life were spent as editor of the Religious Herald. As early as 1837 he had shown himself a master of the pen in his Life of Clopton, and this work was soon followed by the memoirs of Mrs. Schuck and of Andrew Broadus. All this had been but a training for his remarkable polemic work, in which he examined and answered the positions of Mr. Campbell. It is in this work chiefly that the fullness and roundness of his character appear. Clear, vigorous, courteous, unassuming and child-like, devoid of boastfulness, forgetful of himself and apparently unconscious of his own ability, he throws a blending of

beautiful virtues into a majestic logic that no other writer has approached on that subject. He far excels Mr. Campbell in the graces of style and in suavity of spirit, while he is fully his equal in self-possession and out-spoken frankness, and more than his match in that manly argumentation which carries conviction to devout men. Dr. Jeter did splendid work in the pulpit and in building up the educational and missionary interests of the South. It is right and meet that a statue of this princely man should adorn the Memorial Hall at Richmond and that his manuscripts should increase its wealth, but his truest likeness is traceable in his writings, and it will be bright and fresh there when the marble has moldered into dust. These two great men of Virginia have gone to give their account to God, and their memory is cherished by thousands of their friends, nor will either of them be soon forgotten as gladiators for the truth as they respectively saw truth. While the name of the one lives, that of the other can never be blotted out. This chapter may properly be closed by a sketch of another nobleman, who, though not a native of Virginia, is perhaps, taking him in all things, its first citizen at this time.

Jabez L. M. Curry, D.D., LL.D., was born in Lincoln County, Ga., June 5th, 1825. He was graduated from the University of Georgia in 1843, and from the Dane Law School, at Harvard University, in 1845. In 1847, '53 and '55 he served in Congress from Alabama. He was known there as an active friend of public and higher education and of internal improvements; as chairman of the proper committee he wrote a report and introduced a bill favoring geological survey. In 1856 he was chosen as Presidential Elector for Alabama, and in 1857-59 was again returned to Congress from Alabama. During the Civil War he served in the Confederate Congress and army, at its close was elected President of Howard College, in Alabama, and two years later, first Professor of English in Richmond College, then Professor of Constitutional and International Law, and also of Philosophy, in the same institution. When he resigned his professorships he was chosen President of its Board of Trustees. He was appointed General Agent of the Peabody Education Fund in 1881, and addressed every Southern Legislature, some of them two or three times, in behalf of public and normal schools. He is one of the most ardent and eloquent advocates of the education of the Negro, as the best qualification for the maintenance and exercise of his fullest civil and constitutional rights. No man in our country has written, spoken and planned more earnestly in behalf of national aid for the removal and prevention of illiteracy.

In September, 1885, President Cleveland appointed him, without application on his own part, Minister Plenipotentiary to Spain. His reception by that court has been most cordial, and his labors there for the protection of American rights and the promotion of American commerce have been successful. His brethren repose great confidence in his practical wisdom and integrity.

For this reason they commonly place him in responsible places when his presence is available. He is an able debater, perfectly conversant with parliamentary law. For several years he was Clerk, then Moderator of the Coosa River Association, President of the Alabama Baptist State Convention, also of the Virginia General

Association, and of the Foreign Mission Board of the Southern Convention. Dr. Curry is a powerful and enthusiastic preacher of the Gospel. He received the degree of D.D. in 1857 from the Mercer University, and has preached much; but, though often invited, he has uniformly declined to become a pastor. The address which he delivered before the Evangelical Alliance, in New York, in 1873, on the union of Church and State, excited universal attention, and the Liberation Society of Great Britain adopted and stereotyped it as one of their effective documents. The Rochester University conferred upon him the degree of Doctor of Laws in 1872. He demands of all, and in himself presents, unsullied integrity in public life and the inseparableness of private and public morality.